

Data Access Policy for the Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research Project

The information management policy for the Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research (VCR/LTER) Project is based on the following three principles:

- Scientific information is a resource that provides maximum benefits when it is shared.
- Producers of data and other information products have a right to first use of the data they produce.
- Users of scientific data and other information products have an obligation to properly acknowledge the producers of the data they use.

The specific policies are crafted to maintain an appropriate balance between the needs of the larger scientific community, the collectors of data and the users of data. In the event that researchers do not agree to adhere to the policies of the VCR/LTER, they may be excluded from access to the resources of the VCR/LTER. The VCR/LTER policy conforms to the larger [LTER Network Data Access Policy](#).

Researchers using the facilities of the VCR/LTER have the obligation to provide in a timely fashion (no more than 2 years after collection or creation) the following information resources to the VCR/LTER Information Manager:

- Copies of publications for posting in the NSF Public Access Repository
- Copies of student theses and dissertations (preferably in digital form)
- Datasets (with appropriate documentation)
- Physical specimens collected. This may be either the specimen itself, with appropriate documentation, or information on where a specimen has been accessioned in a collection elsewhere.

The Information Manager of the VCR/LTER shall assure that:

- The integrity of electronic datasets is maintained through off-site backups
- Metadata and other documentation are freely available
- Datasets remain secure and will not be distributed without the permission of the researcher responsible for data collection until:
 - The researcher responsible for the collection of a dataset has had the opportunity to publish papers based on the dataset. This is a 2-year period following the collection of the data unless a longer period is justified in writing by the researcher.
 - Students collecting data for a thesis or dissertation have either graduated or withdrawn from graduate school. In no case should this period extend beyond 5 years.

Users of data resources provided through the VCR/LTER are required to:

- Agree to a “data license” that dictates appropriate citation or acknowledgement of the data collector in publications and derivative information products.

- Agree that the University of Virginia, the VCR/LTER and the data collector shall not be liable for any damages suffered through the use of data and documentation.
- Data users planning on using data in a publication are strongly encouraged to contact the data provider(s) to discuss the data and to, if appropriate, serve as a co-author.
- Specific text of the license is:

Data License

This data is released under a CC-BY Attribution license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

The consumer of these data ("Data User" herein) has an ethical obligation to cite it appropriately in any publication that results from its use. The Data User should realize that these data may be actively used by others for ongoing research and that coordination may be necessary to prevent duplicate publication. The Data User is urged to contact the authors of these data if any questions about methodology or results occur. Where appropriate, the Data User is encouraged to consider collaboration or coauthorship with the authors. The Data User should realize that misinterpretation of data may occur if used out of context of the original study. While substantial efforts are made to ensure the accuracy of data and associated documentation, complete accuracy of data sets cannot be guaranteed. All data are made available "as is." The Data User should be aware, however, that data are updated periodically and it is the responsibility of the Data User to check for new versions of the data. The data authors and the repository where these data were obtained shall not be liable for damages resulting from any use or misinterpretation of the data. Thank you.