

VCR/LTER Information Management Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to lay out how critical information-management tasks are carried out by researchers and staff at the Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research Project. The goal of the plan is to assure that the VCR/LTER Information Management System (VCRIMS) meets the needs of VCR/LTER Researchers and the larger scientific community by integrating with scientific activities at the site, from project planning, through data collection, to quality control and assurance, metadata creation and, finally, archival curation.

Duties and Responsibilities

Researchers

Researchers, including PIs and research staff, have primary responsibility for the collection and quality assurance of data, and for creation of metadata. Each researcher is an expert in the type of data they collect and is best able to identify appropriate quality assurance procedures and to know the details of the research required for the creation of useful metadata.

Researchers interact with the VCRIMS in a variety of ways. During project planning they use information resources from the VCRIMS including past proposals, data sets, calendars, tide charts and online maps to create a Project Description using online web forms. Project Descriptions are used for planning by the site management and staff, are used to help generate needed research permits, and also serve as a way to link disparate data sets. Once data collection is underway, researchers periodically upload datasets via web forms and create metadata using a web-based forms system.

Information Manager

The VCR/LTER Information Manager has primary responsibility for the development and maintenance and security of the VCRIMS. Tasks include system administration, creating backups, installation of software, development of custom applications. Additionally, the Information Manager helps process submitted data into different forms and may provide a second level of quality assurance. However, except under rare circumstances (e.g., death of a researcher), the Information Manager will not make substantive changes to the data without the explicit permission of the originator (author) of the data.

The Information Manager is responsible for maintaining general site databases, such as the site bibliography and document archive. Additionally, for data sent directly from

automated sensors (e.g., meteorological stations) in the field via wireless networks, etc., the Information Manager is responsible for processing these data and making it available.

The Information Manager also serves as a liaison to the larger scientific community. Duties include participation in the activities of the LTER Information Management Committee, service on NSF panels, participation in workshops relevant to the development of Ecoinformatics, and facilitation of VCR/LTER involvement in network-level databases (e.g., ClimbDB, and SiteDB). The Information Manager also responds to questions from researchers (both at the site and from the larger community) regarding data and computer-related issues, and may also aid in the creation of specialized data products.

Site Executive Committee

The VCR/LTER Executive Committee provides oversight to the VCRIMS and the activities of the Information Manager and researchers. It is responsible for prioritizing needs for system development, for enforcing data policies, and for assuring that the VCRIMS uses best practices for meeting the information requirements of site researchers and the larger scientific community.

Policies and Other Information

Relevant information management policies are posted on the VCR/LTER web site (<http://www.vcrlter.virginia.edu>). Specific information on the system architecture, procedures and protocols are available either on the “monitoring” page (<http://www.vcrlter.virginia.edu/monitoring>) in the form of manuals, or, for sensitive information (schemas etc.) on the password protected area of the PI page (<http://www.vcrlter.virginia.edu/pi>).