



South Florida/Caribbean Network

Data Management Plan

Natural Resource Report NPS/SFCN/NRR—2008/064



ON THE COVER

Coral Monitoring transect pin. NPS Photo.

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Data Management Plan

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Approval Signatures by Board of Directors

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Change History

Titles of updated or revised sections of the plan will be followed by brackets containing the date of the latest version of that section and a brief update history. For example, the title of Section 2.2 may be followed by “[07/05/2007; Update History: 1/15/2005, 10/23/2004].” This indicates the current wording of that section was last updated on July 5, 2007 and it was previously revised on October 23, 2004 and January 15, 2005.

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Executive Summary

The central mission of the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program is to provide timely and usable scientific information about the status and trends of park natural resources to park managers. To meet this challenge, we need an information management system that can effectively produce, maintain and distribute the products of scientific investigation conducted in our parks.

Good data management is the means by which a thorough understanding of the value of scientific information about our natural resources can become a part of our National Park Service heritage. Data management refers to the framework by which data are acquired, maintained, and made available. Data management is not an end unto itself, but a means of maximizing the quality and utility of our natural resource information. A robust data management system is particularly important for long-term programs where the lifespan of a dataset will span the careers of several scientists. Viewed in this way, it becomes obvious that data management is vital to the success of any long-term research program.

The purpose of the South Florida/Caribbean Data Management Plan is to provide I&M and other park staff with a conceptual framework for a system of data management that will ensure the production and dissemination of timely and usable scientific information about the status and trends of park natural resources to park managers. Our strategy for achieving this goal can be summarized as follows: Ensure the quality, interpretability, security, longevity and availability of our natural resource data. Our objectives include:

- Confidence in the security and availability of natural resource data and related information
- Easy access to most information, and appropriate safeguards for sensitive information
- Awareness of the intended use and limitations of each dataset
- Infrastructure and documentation that encourages data exploration
- Compatibility of datasets for exploration and analysis at larger scales and across disciplines
- Implementation of standards and procedures that facilitate information management, and that reinforce good habits among staff at all levels of project implementation – project leaders, technicians, and volunteer data collectors
- A proper balance between the standards needed to ensure quality and usability, and the flexibility to meet specific needs and encourage innovation
- A team of natural resource professionals who view data not as a commodity but as the lifeblood of our work

This plan describes how our Network will:

- Support Inventory and Monitoring Program objectives
- Acquire and process data
- Assure data quality
- Document, analyze, summarize and disseminate data and information
- Maintain nationally developed data management systems
- Maintain, store and archive natural resources data and information