



Northeast Pacific Acoustic Telemetry

N-PACT database User Agreement and Data Policy Version 2.1

The N-PACT user agreement and data policy is subject to open comment and will apply to all current and future N-PACT Node members. Contact the N-PACT Node team (npact@aoos.org) or the N-PACT Node Manager, Kady Lyons (kady@californiamsf.org), if you have questions or comments regarding this agreement. Last Updated: 28 January 2026.

Introduction

The N-PACT User Agreement and Data Policy was designed to be interoperable with other regional acoustic telemetry nodes and balance the utility of data sharing, both within the acoustic telemetry community that N-PACT serves and with the broader public, against the concerns of sharing sensitive data. N-PACT has adopted the [Ocean Tracking Network \(OTN\) data policy](#), in that the privacy concerns of the researchers studying tagged animals are addressed using an optional two-year embargo period. If the researcher chooses to opt-in to this embargo period, this grants the researcher enough time to complete their work while ensuring a pathway to the public domain for their data. In both states of embargo and publication, the citation and collaborative rights of the data-producing researcher are retained and respected.

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1. BACKGROUND

The **Northeast Pacific Acoustic Telemetry (N-PAcT)** Node, funded by the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), was created in 2024 as a way to facilitate collaborations among federal and state wildlife agencies, universities, non-profits, tribal and private research organizations that are tracking marine animals in the Northeast Pacific Ocean, from Alaska to Baja California, Mexico, bridging international borders in the same way animals do not recognize country or state border lines. In doing so, N-PAcT aims to better understand aquatic animal life history and movements via collaboration, data sharing, and data openness.

2. DEFINITIONS and ACRONYMS

Array Collaborator and Array Owner Those parties who deploy, maintain, retrieve, and share data from an array of acoustic receivers or other compatible acoustic telemetry gear

ATN Animal Telemetry Network of the United States

ATN DAC Animal Telemetry Network Data Assembly Center

Cross-matching or Detection-matching The act of identifying detections of transmitters from one project in the detection data of another project

Data Manager or Node Manager The person appointed by the N-PAcT Node to manage N-PAcT Node data

Dual Collaborator Those parties who act in the role of both Tagging Collaborator and Array Collaborator

ERDDAP Environmental Research Division Data Access Program. A NOAA data server that allows users to access and download subsets of scientific data in common file formats.

N-PAcT Database The hardware, instruments, and systems that store and make accessible the information lodged with the N-PAcT Node

N-PAcT Node Northeast Pacific Acoustic Telemetry Node, its staff, and infrastructure

NCEI National Centers for Environmental Information. A NOAA office that archives and provides access to oceanic, atmospheric and geophysical data

NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a US scientific agency within the Department of Commerce

OTN Ocean Tracking Network, a global research platform designed to expand knowledge and understanding of the oceans

OTNDC Ocean Tracking Network Data Center, its employees and infrastructure

Project Any research project or study with affiliated Tagging Collaborators or Array Collaborators

Regional Data Node or **Regional Node** Any repository of region-specific data formed on an ad-hoc basis. Data held in a Regional Data Node may or may not be mirrored to the OTN Database on a per-project basis, depending on the wishes of the Tagging Collaborator or Array Collaborator involved

Restricted Data The data which Tagging Collaborators have submitted to the N-PAcT Database on the condition that access to that data is restricted in accordance with this data policy

Tagging Collaborator Those parties who oversee the deployment of transmitters on aquatic organisms and provision the data to the N-PAcT Database

Unrestricted or Public Data All N-PAcT Data that is not Restricted Data

3. DATA SUBMISSION

a) Array and Tagging Collaborators agree to be responsible for ensuring that data associated with a project are uploaded to the N-PAcT data center in a timely manner after data are generated (twice/year at minimum) in accordance with predefined N-PAcT and OTN standards, as described in the provided [metadata submission forms](#) and their associated data dictionaries.

b) Array and Tagging Collaborators shall inform N-PAcT of any errors, inaccuracies, or necessary updates with respect to data which they have provided to N-PAcT as soon as possible after becoming aware of such issues.

c) On retrieval and downloading of a receiver, Array Collaborators will provide operational metadata laid out in the 'Instrument Deployment Metadata' template and the raw instrument files (e.g., .vrl, .vdat files).

d) On deployment of a tag, Tagging Collaborators will provide tag metadata laid out in the 'Tag Metadata' template.

e) Oceanographic observation data and equipment metadata collected by an outside source (e.g., a datalogger attached to a receiver) may also be submitted to N-PAcT along with Array submissions.

i) Public Data

a) Basic data regarding the species to which the transmitter is attached, release location and release date is generally considered unrestricted and will be published as soon as is practical. Exceptions are considered given any ecological or economic sensitivities as identified by the Collaborator and approved by the N-PAcT Steering Group.

b) Receiver metadata, including make, model, deployment location (to 2 decimal places), deployment date, download date, and retrieval date are also considered unrestricted and will be published as soon as is practical.

ii) Restricted Data

N-PAcT is following an opt-in data embargo policy. That is, the default is no embargo; everything will be released, including data/metadata described below as restricted data, as soon as feasible (~ during quarterly data pushes) unless tagging collaborators opt-in to the two-years-after-tag-expire embargo period, explained below.

a) Tagging Collaborators are expected to adhere to any data access requirement by their funding agency and any permit requirements for scientific work. In cases where those policies require more access or open data access on a quicker timeline, N-PAcT will honor those requirements.

b) Upon written request to the N-PAcT Node Manager, Tagging Collaborators will be provided with a Restricted Data embargo, which guarantees that their Restricted Data will not become Public Data for a default period of two years, which would commence at the end date of the data collection period for each tag deployment. The data collection period end date is defined as the date beyond which no collection is possible, which for telemetry studies is generally equivalent to the expected transmitter battery expiration date or the reported harvest date.

i) Animal morphology information and ongoing locational information in whatever capacity the instrument is capable of reporting it are considered by default to be Restricted Data.

c) Tagging Collaborators shall be entitled to require that access to embargoed data which they upload to N-PAcT initially be restricted to only those individuals who have been approved by that Collaborator in their sole discretion.

d) Tagging Collaborators whose projects may require a restricted access period that is greater than two years after the end of the data collection period may request an extension

from the N-PAcT Node Manager. Extension decisions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the N-PAcT Steering Group. Collaborators will be given notice of impending embargo end dates so that they may apply for an extension, should one be necessary. Embargo extensions will not be considered solely for reasons that involve publication of the data in a manuscript.

e) Tagging Collaborators have the option to make Restricted Data publicly available at any time prior to a transmitter's end date by contacting the N-PAcT Node Manager.

Please make your data embargo selection:

I wish my data to be made publicly available as soon as practical

I wish to restrict my data from being made public until after the 2-yr embargo period

4. DATA ACCESS AND USE

All Public Data held by N-PAcT will be routinely copied to ERDDAP for long term archiving. It will also be reported to international biodiversity facilities such as the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (www.obis.org) and the National Center for Environmental Information (www.ncei.noaa.gov), in all cases where such data types are compatible with the formats held at those facilities.

Data that is classified as Restricted due to an embargo period or otherwise will not be shared with these facilities until such time as it is no longer Restricted.

i) Public Data

a) Access to public N-PAcT data can be found through ERDDAP, OBIS, NCEI, and the OTN data portals.

N-PAcT Users agree to:

b) Give proper attribution for all data used in a publication to all contributing data providers, using their project citations, or otherwise via mutual agreement.

c) Acknowledge that N-PAcT, OTN, nor the provider is liable for inaccuracies in the data

d) Assume responsibility for investigating and understanding any limitations of the data

e) Report any problems with the data to N-PAcT

ii) Restricted Data

- a) Telemetry data, including tag metadata and detection data, by default are considered owned by the N-PAcT user who deployed the tag. Unless a special exemption is made, access to Restricted Data will only be granted for the owner of those data.
- b) Any registered N-PAcT user who wishes to access Restricted Data other than their own must obtain the consent of the Tagging Collaborator who submitted the Restricted Data, and consent shall be provided directly from the Tagging Collaborator to the N-PAcT Node Manager. Once consent has been received from the Tagging Collaborator who submitted the Restricted Data, access shall be provided on the terms set out by that Collaborator.
- c) If an N-PAcT member cannot state certain conclusions but for the detection data provided by another N-PAcT member, prior to submission for publication, both parties must agree on a suitable level of attribution. Attribution may include, but is not limited to, co-authorship and acknowledgement mentions.
- d) Those who wish to access records from the N-PAcT Node Database regarding individual receiver locations (coordinates) and precise time and date of tag detections for a given tag ID which they have released, will be asked to provide release metadata to be incorporated into the database so future detections may be assigned to the tag ID. If they choose not to provide release metadata, detection data may still be released with the permission of the Array Owner(s) who detected the tag.
- e) N-PAcT members are entitled to produce non-published reports including grant updates, on all data collected by their receivers, including transmitters they did not deploy. Where transmitters not owned by the author(s) of non-published reports are concerned, the reports may include metadata/summary data (or a combination therein) for species detected and counts of detections. Non-published reports must follow proper transmitter attribution as stated below in Section 4(f).
- f) All individuals who access N-PAcT Node data shall provide attribution to all Data Providers and the N-PAcT Node if N-PAcT Node data are used in a publication, product, or commercial application.
- g) N-PAcT member data may be used in informational material for the N-PAcT website and for reporting by resource management agencies. Informational material will not contain raw data but will contain summaries relevant to management. Consent of the N-PAcT member is required for the use of all information, except:
- 1) General receiver location (for mapping)
 - 2) Number, taxon, and species of animals carrying transmitters
 - 3) Project information including description and point of contact or PI.

5. DATA EXCHANGE

i. Between Regional Data Nodes

a) Curated project schemas containing data and metadata (transmitter and array) of N-PAcT members will be mirrored to Regional Data nodes for the purposes of cross-matching detections among projects (hereafter “cross-matching”). Project schemas of non-N-PAcT members held in compatible Nodes will also be mirrored to the N-PAcT Node for the purposes of cross-matching.

b) Use of detection data will follow the rules set forth by the node to which the transmitter owner is a member.

c) If detection data from an N-PAcT member project are matched to non-N-PAcT member transmitters, the detection data will be copied to the Project Schema belonging to the non-N-PAcT member in the appropriate Regional Data node.

d) Except in the case of section 5.i.b, mirrored data are not the property of the node to which they are mirrored, nor are they subject to its rules of data submission and access.

ii.) Outside Regional Data Nodes

a) N-PAcT members may disperse their data to researchers outside of the N-PAcT Node; however, N-PAcT members provisionally granted access to the Restricted Data of another N-PAcT member may not by proxy share these data, unless consent is given by the owner of those data.

b) N-PAcT members receiving requests for access to data from non-N-PAcT members will direct them to the Data Manager.

c) The Data Manager will attempt to resolve unmatched tags twice a year by providing the full tag identifier, date and general location of detection, and contact information of the array owner to Innovasea.

d) Data curated by the N-PAcT Node that is also shared with and held by OTN remains subject to standards laid out in this N-PAcT User Agreement.

I acknowledge that I have read the above policy and agree to adhere to it.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

6. References

The Ocean Tracking Network (OTN) Data Policy:

https://members.oceantrack.org/data/policies/otn-data-policy_2024.pdf/@@download/file

N-PAcT Data Center

<https://npact.aos.org/data-center/>