

NOAA's New Environmental Data Sharing Policy

What is the policy? A NOAA data sharing policy, effective January 1, 2013, requires all grant and cooperative agreement recipients to make environmental data¹ and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements visible, accessible, and independently understandable¹ to general users. This requirement also applies to any data developed as part of sub-awards. This shall be done at no or low cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or by security requirements. Also, grants and cooperative agreement applicants must submit a data sharing plan describing how the data will be shared as part of their application project narrative. State and territorial programs must follow this policy for FY13 and later awards, and it will be a new NOAA special award condition on all FY13 and later awards that will apply to all sub-awards.

Why do you need to do this? The policy was established for two reasons: the first is to make sure that geospatial data produced with federal funds are easily available and discoverable for public benefit. The other is to provide notice of your intent to collect geospatial data to facilitate collaboration and avoid duplication of effort.

What do you need to do to comply? There are several things that you will need to do:

A. With the Application

- 1) **Develop a Data Sharing Plan:** You need to summarize how you will accomplish tasks B 1 through 3 (below) in a data sharing plan that must be part of or accompany your FY13 application for funding. The data sharing plan is a written narrative of no more than two pages (see attached example) and should provide a brief description of:
 - The types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project;
 - The type of collection method, aircraft, ship, satellite, etc.;
 - The tentative date by which data will be shared;
 - The standards to be used for data/metadata format and content;
 - Your program's policies addressing data stewardship and preservation;
 - Procedures for providing access, data, and security; and
 - Your program's prior experience with publishing such data.

¹ The data must be accompanied with documentation, metadata and, if needed, tools to read the data that allow a user to interpret the data properly.

- 2) **Notice of Intent:** The Data Sharing Plan serves as your notice of intent to acquire new environmental data. Before you acquire environmental data (typically geospatial data like imagery, lidar, bathymetry, etc.) under a CZM cooperative agreement, you must provide notice of your planned data acquisition. NOTE: If it is determined that the requested environmental data already exists, the applicant will have an opportunity to reprogram the funds that were requested for producing this environmental data.

B. After Producing Environmental Data

- 1) **Create Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Compliant Metadata:** If you don't already create metadata for your geospatial data, you will need to start creating it, and it must be compliant with the FGDC's [Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata \(CSDGM\)](#).
- 2) **Expose your metadata to geo.data.gov:** If you don't already expose/export your metadata to geo.data.gov, you will need to do so. Geo.data.gov is a one-stop geospatial data portal to increase awareness of and access to federal geospatial data and services. While non-federal data is not displayed in Geo.data.gov, that System does pass the information to the Geospatial Platform.
- 3) **Publish Data Online:** You must publish your data online to provide free public access. This should be accomplished as soon as possible, but no later than two years after the data are first collected.

Can you get help to meet these requirements? Yes! NOAA, the Coastal States Organization (CSO) and the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) have teamed-up to simplify these tasks. The Data Sharing Plan, metadata production and posting of metadata can be easily accomplished by using the GIS Inventory, which is available at <http://gisinventory.net>. This site will automatically expose the metadata to geo.data.gov and the Geospatial Platform as required in the policy. All you need to do is create an account on the GIS Inventory and document your data. This process takes approximately 25 minutes to complete a personal profile (one time only) and then 2 to 3 minutes each time an individual geo-spatial data layer is documented. (NOTE: If you already have a process in place to provide notice of your intended data collection, create FGDC metadata and export your data to Geo.data.gov that works well for you, you are not required to use the GIS inventory.

In addition, if you have problems publishing your data online, we encourage you to consider using the Coastal Service Center's Digital Coast as a means to meet that requirement.

OCRM, the NOAA Coastal Services Center, CSO, and NSGIC are developing guidance on meeting the new requirement and will be providing a webinar for state and territorial program staff to walk you through requirements and how to use the GIS inventory. The webinar will be held in early 2013.

An example of a data sharing plan can be found in the attached **Appendix**.

Appendix 1 – Simple Data Sharing Plan

1. Types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project:

LiDAR data will be collected over Assateague Island to provide highly accurate and current elevation points that will enable the creation of a digital elevation model. This digital elevation model will be compared to previous models to determine changes and then used to develop safer and more resilient park facilities.

2. The type of collection method (e.g flight lines): We plan to contract with a private sector photogrammetric firm for airborne data acquisition over study area.

3. Tentative date by which data will be shared: The ‘raw’ point cloud LAS file will be shared with NOAA CSC immediately and the final DEM file will be posted to the State’s public-facing web mapping service within two months of the final acceptance of the data. FGDC- CSDGM compliant metadata will be posted with the data.

4. Standards to be used for data/metadata format and content: The contractor will be responsible for meeting or exceeding the latest version of the USGS/NDEP LiDAR Standard.

5. Policies addressing data stewardship and preservation. We will leave the data on the (insert name) website for at least three years. During that time period, we will ask NOAA if they have interest/resources for archiving the data and work with them as needed. If they do not have interest in archiving the data to provide for national access, we will arrange for data preservation at our State Archives.

6. Procedures for providing access to data and prior experience in publishing such data: We have not had experience sharing data in the past. We will use our ___State Clearinghouse or ___the GIS Inventory to document the data. We will work with ___our State GIS Coordination Office or ___NOAA CSC to provide data access via the Digital Coast.