



Atlantic Cooperative Telemetry Network

User Agreement Version 1.3

This is the formal Atlantic Cooperative Telemetry (ACT) Network user agreement that incorporates changes discussed at the March 2026 ACT Network meeting and finalized on April 10, 2026, after an open comment period. Contact ACT Network Coordinator Matt Ogburn (ogburnm@si.edu) or ACT Network Data Manager Kim Richie (east.coast.telemetry@gmail.com) if you have questions or comments regarding this agreement.

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Contents

1. [Preamble](#)
2. [Definitions and Acronyms](#)
3. [Data Collection](#)
4. [Data Submission](#)
5. [Restricted Data Submission](#)
6. [Access to ACT Network Data](#)
7. [Use of ACT Data](#)
8. [Data Exchange Among Regional Data Nodes](#)
9. [Data Exchange Outside Regional Data Nodes](#)
10. [References](#)

1. Preamble

The ACT Network is a grassroots collaboration of researchers and partners using telemetry to resolve the life history of aquatic animals (Bangley et al. 2020). Success of the collaboration is built on adherence to a shared set of principles guiding the participation and activities of network members and other users of ACT Network data. Version 1.1 of the ACT Network user agreement was discussed at the 2019 Mid-Atlantic Telemetry Workshop and finalized on May 10, 2019, which was based on FACT Network and Ocean Tracking Network documents from that time. Version 1.2 involved minor changes related to the integration of the ACT Network and MATOS data management schemes on April 1, 2020, which led to the current ACT Network Database. Version 1.3 involves edits to clarify terminology, streamlines background information, and includes new opportunities for data sharing and archiving.

2. Definitions and Acronyms

ACT Network Data means the Unrestricted Data and the Restricted Data stored in the ACT Network database node (ACT Node)

ACT Network Steering Group means a representative body comprised of ACT Network Database users working to manage and advance the ACT Network and its community, the ACT Database, and the ACT Data Portal.

ACT Database means the instruments and systems that store and make accessible the information lodged with the ACT Network. The database is an ATN- and OTN-affiliated node called the ACT node, which facilitates interconnectivity between other OTN-compatible nodes, such as the FACT Network and OTN.

ACT Data Portal means the website (MATOS - matos.asascience.com until 06/01/2026) that enables users to create project pages, upload data for processing and submission into the database, and visualizing receiver locations.

ACT Database User means those individuals who have agreed to this ACT Network User Agreement or previous versions with a registered account on the ACT Data Portal .

ACT Data Portal User Types:

- I. **Investigator** – Principal investigator of ACT Network project(s), Array Owners, Array Collaborators, Tag Owners, and/or Tag Collaborators. Investigators set up and maintain project page(s), set sharing permissions on data types, approve data sharing requests, and manage approved users to download restricted data.
- II. **Technician** – Person(s) responsible for preparation, operation and/or maintenance of shipboard, laboratory or deployed scientific instrumentation. May also be the point of contact for project correspondence.
- III. **Researcher** – Person(s) who may use/analyze the data to answer research questions but is not the project lead. Can be a student if their involvement spans past the completion of an academic degree.
- IV. **Student** – Person(s) researching as part of a project in their work towards an academic degree.

Array Owners means those parties who own or manage an array of acoustic receivers with deployment metadata and detection files that are uploaded to a project in the ACT Database. This is equivalent to a Principal Investigator in other OTN-compatible networks.

Array Collaborators means those parties who deploy, maintain, and retrieve data from receivers but are not the owner or manager of the array. This could be any of a number of roles in the OTN-compatible networks, but is not a decision-making entity for a Project.

ATN Animal Telemetry Network of the United States

Data Manager means the person who manages ACT Network Data.

Data Push A regularly scheduled process by which detections are matched to tag owners across all data nodes.

Data Use Agreement means any agreement between ACT Network Database users or other parties that defines the process through which ACT Network Data may be accessed.

FACT Network Cooperative telemetry network in the southeastern US and Caribbean, a connected node

MARACOOS Mid-Atlantic Regional Association Coastal Ocean Observing System

NERACOOS Northeast Regional Association Coastal Ocean Observing System

OTN Ocean Tracking Network, a global telemetry infrastructure and data management platform that manages several compatible nodes and assists other organizations with data management systems.

Project Point of Contact (POC) is a person listed on the project page that can answer questions and data use requests.

Project Principal Investigator (PI) is a person that conceptually designed the project and is likely the person responsible for owning the tags and receivers affiliated with the project.

Regional Data Node means a regional repository of animal telemetry data based on the OTN database structure.

Restricted Data means the data which Tagging and Array Collaborators have submitted to the ACT Database on the condition that access to that data is restricted in accordance with Section 5 of this agreement.

Tag Owners means those parties who own or manage tags that are deployed and with metadata that are uploaded to a project in the ACT Database. This is equivalent to a Principal Investigator in other OTN-compatible networks.

Tag Collaborators means those parties who are involved in tag deployment and provision of tag metadata. This could be any of a number of roles in the OTN-compatible networks, but is not a decision-making entity for a Project.

Unrestricted Data means all publicly available ACT Network Data.

3. Data Collection

- a) Tag Owners must also participate in the ACT Database as an Array Collaborator or Owner. Much of the effort in conducting acoustic telemetry projects is spent on the maintenance and downloading of receivers in the field, an activity requiring substantial cost and time of personnel.
- b) Array Owners must do one of the following:
 - I. Participate in the ACT Database as an Array Owner for the principal purpose of deploying an array to support tagging projects or opportunistically using acoustic receivers as part of other research interests (such as using acoustic receivers as the acoustic release mechanism for other equipment). No tag detection data can be used except for generating summary information in accordance with section 7.
 - II. Participate in the ACT Database as a Tag Owner to use detection data from tags they own in accordance with Section 7, or
 - III. Obtain data from Tag Owners whose data they wish to use in one of three ways:
 - i. Obtain the tag detection data directly from the Tag Owner,
 - ii. Work with the Tag Owner, who can add them to projects in the ACT Data Portal as a Researcher, thus providing access to all project data, or
 - iii. Establish a written Data Use Agreement with the Tag Owner and provide a copy of the agreement to the ACT Network Data Manager, who can then provide data in accordance with the terms of the agreement.
- c) If a Tag Owner is unable to deploy receivers, the Tag Owner must contact Array Owners in the proposed study area (with assistance from the ACT Data Manager if needed) and agree upon a mutually beneficial arrangement. For example, Tag Owners may devote time or personnel to help download receivers for the Array Owner.
- d) Dual participation as a Tag and Array Owner or Collaborator, or arrangements between Tag and Array Owners, benefits the ACT Network by maximizing the value of investments in acoustic telemetry research, minimizes duplication of effort, and lessens potential conflicts that may arise in areas of shared interest.

4. Data Submission

- a) Array and Tag Owners and Collaborators will provide project metadata via the ACT Data Portal at the initiation of the project, by creating a project page and filling out all required data. All project metadata should be updated to reflect changes as personnel or project scope evolves.
- b) Array and Tag Owners should upload equipment specifications received from equipment vendor following purchase to the ACT Data Portal when possible. Having a record of manufacturer specifications helps the Data Manager reduce data entry errors.

- c) Array and Tag Owners and Collaborators will upload their data to their designated project page via the ACT Data Portal . Projects are initially private by default, and multiple privacy levels are available as detailed in Section 5.
- d) Array and Tag Owners and Collaborators will inform the Data Manager of any errors, inaccuracies or necessary updates with respect to data that have been uploaded to the ACT Data Portal as soon as possible after becoming aware of such issues.
- e) On retrieval and downloading of a receiver, Array Owners and Collaborators will provide required operational metadata using the formatted templates provided by the ACT Data Manager or downloaded from the ACT Data Portal along with raw instrument files (i.e. VDAT, VRL, etc.).
- f) Upon deployment of a tag, Tag Owners and Collaborators will provide required tag metadata using the formatted templates provided by the ACT Data Manager or downloaded from the ACT Data Portal.

5. Restricted Data Submission

- a) Array and Tag Owners are entitled to require access to the data and metadata which they upload to ACT Data Portal initially be restricted to only individuals who are approved by project principal investigators in their sole discretion (hereinafter referred to as Restricted Data). Array and Tag Owners are responsible for ensuring that the data access level selected meets any data policies associated with their projects.
 - I. Level of project sharing permission per user:
 - i. Project Detail: only able to edit project details
 - ii. Data Submission: only able to submit data to project
 - iii. Data Exports: able to submit/download restricted data
- b) Tag Owners are entitled to specify that the Restricted Data will not become Unrestricted Data until a desired date, but preferably within four years of the project end date, or last tag expires, whichever is longest.
- c) Tag Owners who wish to have the restricted access period extended for a period longer than what was agreed to, may request an extension from the Data Manager. Extension decisions will be made by majority vote of the ACT Network Steering Group.
- d) Array and Tag Owners are entitled to specify partial or modified release of Restricted Data to become Unrestricted Data. Note that this applies to official release of datasets under 5b and 5c above. Investigators have the option to make projects public on the MATOS Data Portal, but the current version of the website does not have the capability of partial release.
- e) Data access within ACT Data Portal: Determines which users have the ability to see receiver metadata in the mapping tool.
 - I. All Public: anyone (ACT Data Portal account not needed)
 - II. Only Researchers: Visible to all Researcher accounts
 - III. Only Investigators: Visible to all Investigator accounts

6. Access to ACT Network Data

The following are the processes for accessing ACT Network Data:

a) Public Data

- I. Access to unrestricted ACT Network receiver deployment metadata is through the Data Portal, with data mirrored to OTN's global data portals, OTN-affiliated database nodes (e.g. FACT Network, OTN), and affiliated discovery efforts such as the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative Planning Map (<https://rwsc.org/map/>). Unrestricted receiver metadata are publicly available at full resolution.
- II. Tag Owners have the option to make their projects' tag metadata and detection data publicly available in the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS). Tag detection locations from Array Owners will be provided at full resolution for unrestricted receivers and a resolution of 2 decimal places latitude and longitude for restricted receivers.

b) Restricted Data

- I. Those who wish to access Restricted ACT Network Data, other than what is provided to them directly by a Tag Owner, will be asked to become an ACT Database User and provide registration information including, but not limited to full name, affiliation, electronic mail address and intended purpose for accessing the Restricted Data. Unless a special exemption is made, access to data will only be granted by the Tag Owner.
- II. Those who wish to access records from the ACT Network Database regarding Restricted individual receiver locations (coordinates) and/or the 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 by the individual Array Owner(s).
- III. Registered users will be required to agree to the terms and conditions of the ACT User Agreement prior to receiving a confidential username and password by which they can access the ACT Data Portal.
- IV. Any registered user who wishes to access Restricted Data and is not named on the project page submitted by the project owner, must obtain the consent of the ACT Database User who submitted the Restricted Data. Written consent shall be provided directly from the ACT node user to the Data Manager in a manner satisfactory to the ACT Network. Once consent has been received from the user who submitted the Restricted Data, access shall be provided on the terms set by the granting user.
- V. All persons accessing Restricted Data will include attribution to the ACT Network in the acknowledgements section of all publications and appropriate citations for all publications and citable datasets which use ACT Network data. To track the scientific contributions of the ACT Network, authors of publications with ACT Network attributes are encouraged to forward copies to the Data Manager.

7. Use of ACT Network Data

- a) All individuals who access ACT Network data shall provide attribution to all Data Providers and the ACT Network if data are used in a publication, product, or commercial application.

- b) Telemetry data, including tag metadata and detection data, by default are considered owned by the ACT Database User who owns the tag. At the time they are designated as Unrestricted (public) Data, these data will be released publicly under a Creative Commons license, defaulting to CC-BY. The ACT Database User who owns the tag is responsible for ensuring that project data access settings are consistent with any data policies or other restrictions related to their project (e.g., data policies set by the funding agency, institution, etc.).
- c) ACT Database Users must abstain from publishing any data on tags they did not deploy, unless the tag owner provides consent or the data used are public data (e.g. published to OBIS).
- d) If an ACT Database User cannot state certain conclusions but for the detection data provided by another user, both parties must agree on a suitable level of attribution, including but not limited to, co-authorship and acknowledgement.
- e) ACT Database Users are entitled to produce non-published reports including grant updates, on all data collected by their receivers, including tags they did not deploy. Non-published reports may only include basic information on tags which they did not deploy, such as the number and species detected with basic summary data such as the number of detections. Non-published reports must follow proper tag owner attribution as stated in 7a above.
- f) ACT Network Data may be used in informational material for the ACT Network (www.theactnetwork.com), ACT Data Portal or OTN (<https://oceantrackingnetwork.org/>) websites or social media accounts. Consent of the ACT Database User is required for use of all information except:
 - I. Receiver location at full spatial resolution for unrestricted receivers and 2 decimal places latitude and longitude for restricted receivers,
 - II. Number, species of animals tagged,
 - III. Project information including description and a primary point of contact.
- g) All individuals who access ACT Network Data agree and acknowledge that neither the ACT Network, including the Coordinator and Data Manager, MARACOOS, NERACOOS, nor the Data Provider, is liable for any inaccuracies in ACT Network Data.
- h) All users of ACT Network Data are responsible for investigating and understanding the limitations of the data.
- i) All registered users of ACT Database are required to report all problems with respect to ACT Network Data to the Data Manager.

8. Data Exchange Among Regional Data Nodes

- a) Projects (including tag and receiver metadata) of the ACT node will be mirrored with Regional Data Nodes for the purposes of tag matching. Projects not within the ACT node (i.e. projects in other regional nodes) will be mirrored with ACT for the purposes of tag matching.
- b) Mirrored projects are not the property of the node with which they are mirrored and are subject only to the rules of data submission and access of the Parent Node.
- c) If detection data from an ACT Database User are matched to tags owned by members of other nodes, the detection data will be shared with the project in the appropriate Regional Data Node.
- d) If detection data from a project in a different Regional Data Node are matched to ACT Database User tags, the detection data will be shared with the appropriate project in the ACT Database.
- e) Use of detection data will follow the rules set forth by the node of which the Tag Owner is a member.

9. Data Exchange Outside Regional Data Nodes

ACT Database Users may disperse their data to a researcher outside of the ACT Network: however, each ACT Database User will also direct outside researchers seeking access to ACT Network Data to the Data Manager.

10. References

Bangley, C. W., Whoriskey, F. G., Young, J. M., & Ogburn, M. B. (2020). Networked animal telemetry in the northwest Atlantic and Caribbean waters. *Marine and Coastal Fisheries*, 12(5), 339-347.