

# LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## Databases and their management

*'Knowledge is of two kinds; we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it' - Samuel Johnson*

*'When a man's knowledge is not in order, the more of it he has the greater will be his confusion' - Herbert Spencer*

Databases produced, or maintained, by officers of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) are a key source of information for underpinning the Department's mission. In the early stages of their development, databases may embody a significant investment of an officer's time and energy. Although all databases in DEC are corporate, it is recognized that it is unfair to allow "free riders" to use such information for personal advancement.

When approached for information from databases maintained by you, it is essential to obtain in writing from the requester:  
What information is being sought

- How it will be used
- Whether the requester is an officer of DEC, another state agency, a Federal agency, an academic, a consultant, or an interested member of the public
- How the information will be acknowledged
- Whether the output requested is a complete or partial hard copy or electronic copy of the database
- Determine whether a third party could on sell the information.

Then consult your supervisor and/or Program Leader about the sensitivities of the request.

For your convenience, a draft specimen letter is attached.

The position taken by SMT is that the officer in Science Division who has been assigned responsibility for the management of the database has first right of analysis of the data accrued. However, this is not open-ended. SMT does not approve of this as a means of obstructing legitimate access (e.g. for corporate purposes). SMT has decided that if no activity (such as data collection or reporting) has occurred within 3 years, then access should be granted subject to the six questions in the appended specimen letter being assessed satisfactorily.

Corporatisation of research, survey and monitoring databases is required. It needs to be emphasised that historical datasets on out-dated hard discs and/or saved in formats that are no longer used are less retrievable than microfiche data from the 1950s or from handwritten records.

Databases which are not corporatised are unlikely to survive in the long-term. This means that officers who resign or retire (or who are dismissed) put at risk their years of labour in maintaining databases if they have not properly corporatised these databases. It is essential that the issue of data maintenance at the conclusion of a project is adequately addressed.

The ongoing management of each database is to be considered explicitly during the annual appraisal (EPDP) of officers.

The State Records Act 2000 requires explicit strategies ([Records Management Policy No 61](#)) for managing databases.

The following steps in corporatising databases are to be followed:

1. A specific officer is to be nominated as custodian, with responsibility for its management and regular maintenance.
2. A metadata definition is to be completed and updated into WALIS. WALIS is searchable and updateable on the internet using Interragator.
3. At each upgrade of hardware and/or software, it is necessary to assess whether migration to new digital formats is required in order to prevent loss of research data.

Historical paper-based datasets are to be lodged with DEC's library for incorporation in the historical collection. Paper-based datasets should be considered for transfer to the archive collection at the State Records Office. Transfer after 25 yrs is mandatory under the State Records Act, but the records may be borrowed if necessary. Liaison should occur with Corporate Information Section, which is responsible for the transfer of DEC's records to the State Records Office.



**7.1.28 METADATA REQUEST FORM (Appended to guideline No. 16)**

**RF2**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Position:</b>	
<b>Program/Division:</b>	
<b>E-Mail address:</b>	<b>Tel. No.:</b>

<b>Custodian:</b>
<b>Contributor/s:</b>

<b>Title:</b>

**Description**

<b>Search words / Subject:</b>
<b>Abstract (Purpose/Description of contents of dataset):</b>

<b>Geographical location (place name/s) OR IBRA/IMCRA Region (code):</b>			
<b>Indicate if 'All of WA'(Yes): OR provide location coordinates defining the area:</b>			
<b>Latitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>		<b>Latitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>	
<b>Longitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>		<b>Longitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>	
<b>Latitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>		<b>Latitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>	
<b>Longitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>		<b>Longitude (Deg/Min/Sec)</b>	

**Currency and status**

<b>Commencement date (of field work/data collection):</b>	<b>Completion date:</b>
<b>Status of data: (Complete/In progress):</b>	
<b>Maintenance and update frequency:</b>	
<b>Daily      Weekly      Fortnightly      Monthly      Annually      Irregular</b>	

**Access**

<b>Format:</b>
<b>Location / Directory address:</b>
<b>What reports/publications have been produced/Available format types?</b>
<b>Constraints (access/reliability):</b>

**Data Quality**

<b>Original data source/s:</b>
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**Additional Metadata**

<b>Related information:</b>
<b>SPP No.:</b>
<b>Size of the dataset:</b>
<b>Where has the data been backed up/archived?</b>

**CLOSURE OF SCIENCE PROJECT PLANS**  
(to be tabled at Science Management Team Meetings by Program Leader)  
(also available as Appendix to Guideline No. 7)

SPP #: .....

SPP title: .....

Supervising Scientist: .....

**Status:** Completed  
Terminated  
Suspended

**Outputs:** (list key publications and documents)

**SCIENCE:**

***KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER:***

**Data Management:**

(see Science Division Guideline 16 and appendix)

Hard copy records held at .....

Electronic data stored on: .....

Backup copy stored at: .....

Backup copy also provided to Science Applications Program:

Metadata provided (contact GIS Section Data Administrator):

Signed by Program Leader: .....

Date:



**CLOSURE OF SCIENCE PROJECT PLANS**  
(to be tabled at Science Management Team Meetings by Program Leader)  
(also available as Appendix to Guideline No. 16)

SPP #: .....

SPP title: .....

Supervising Scientist: .....

**Status:** Completed  
Terminated  
Suspended

**Outputs:** (list key publications and documents)  
**SCIENCE:**

**KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER:**

**Data Management:**  
(see Science Division Guideline 16 and appendix)

Hard copy records held at .....

Electronic data stored on: .....

Backup copy stored at: .....

Backup copy also provided to Science Applications Program:

Metadata provided (contact GIS Section Data Administrator):

Signed by Program Leader: .....

Date:



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Environment and Conservation**

Your ref:  
Our ref:  
Enquiries:  
[Phone](#)  
[Fax](#)  
[Email](#)

Science Division Guideline 9 – Appendix

## **DRAFT specimen letter re access to data.doc**

NAME

ADDRESS

HERE

Dear

### **YOUR REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO DATA**

Thank you for your recent enquiry/correspondence (ref: ).

Before a decision can be made, I need the following information from you:

1. Which data exactly are being sought?
2. Why do you want to access these data?
3. What use is intended for these data?
4. What is the title and authorship of any proposed paper(s) intended to include use of the data requested?
5. When should this/these paper(s) be (a) submitted and (b) published?
6. If not via a co-authored paper, how is use of the data supplied to be acknowledged?

Please note carefully:

- These data may not be passed on or sold to a third party
- These data will be supplied 'as is'; i.e. data will not be checked further for accuracy or currency of names of taxa
- These data are the property of The State Government of Western Australia and this must be acknowledged explicitly in any report/publication/presentation using the data.

Any disagreements about your responsibilities arising in relation to this reply will need to be settled without delay by consultation with myself and my Program Leader.

Yours sincerely

Your name HERE

Your position here

Date here

cc: Your Program Leader