

## NAO 216-113

# Procedural Handbook for NAO 216-113: NOAA State of the Science Fact Sheets

### SECTION 1: Definitions

- .01 **State of the Science Fact Sheet** - The “State of the Science” fact sheet is a two-page overview of NOAA research in a topic area of interest to the general public (in this case, the segment of the population engaged or interested in environmental topics, and who may or may not have a scientific background), which indicates diversity (if any) of NOAA viewpoints, and points to NOAA resources for additional information. Specifically, each SoS Fact Sheet will:
  - a. Describe the general research area;
  - b. Explain the implications of the research (i.e. - why it is relevant to society);
  - c. Indicate the diversity, if any, of NOAA viewpoints;
  - d. Identify key research questions, including the areas of uncertainty and research findings to date;
  - e. Describe NOAA resources and capabilities; and
  - f. As necessary, contain links to NOAA resources for more detailed information.
  
- .02 **NOAA Research Council** – an internal body composed of senior scientific personnel from every line office and goal team in the agency that provides corporate oversight to ensure that NOAA’s research activities are of the highest quality, meet long-range societal needs, take advantage of emerging scientific and technological opportunities, and shape a forward-looking research agenda.
  
- .03 **Sponsor** – an individual member of the NOAA Research Council who brings a SoS Fact Sheet topic to the Council for consideration and tracks progress for the Council.
  
- .04 **Writing Team** – a team of NOAA employees responsible for producing a SoS Fact Sheet. The writing team may extend across Line Offices, but the sponsor should ensure they can secure the services of the required staff before submitting their proposal to the Council. All writing teams shall include the following components to ensure effective development:
  - a. *Audience Expert* - generally an employee of a NOAA communications or education and outreach office who is expert in communicating with the public as defined in section 1.01;
  - b. *Subject Matter Expert(s)* – scientists who are expert in the subject and who provide the scientific information to be included in each fact sheet; and
  - c. *Medium Expert* – designers who have expertise in layout, graphics, design, interface design, and/or data visualizations.
  
- .05 **Line Office** –NOAA’s six organizational offices: NESDIS, NMFS, NOS, NWS, OAR, and PPI.
  
- .06 **Goal Team** –NOAA’s Mission Goal Teams: Ecosystems, Climate, Weather and Water, Commerce and Transportation, and Mission Support.

- .07 **Program** – within each Mission Goal, NOAA’s Program Offices (e.g. Aquaculture, Air Quality, etc.).
- .08 **NOAA Office of Communications** – NOAA’s Corporate Communications Office in Washington, DC and staff.
- .09 **NOAA Office of Education** - NOAA’s Corporate Office of Education and staff.
- .010 **NOAA Executive Review Process** – includes NOAA Executive Panel (NEP) and NOAA Executive Council (NEC) review and approval.
- .011 **Department of Commerce Executive Review Team** – includes the Department of Commerce (DOC) General Counsel and Secretary of Commerce review and approval.

## **SECTION 2: Phases of Development**

- .01 Initiation and Topic Approval (~ 2 weeks)
- .02 First Draft Writing ( < 2 months)
- .03 First Draft Review and Comment Period (~ 3 weeks)
- .04 Final Draft Writing ( < 2 months)
- .05 Final Draft Approval (2 weeks)
- .06 Executive Clearance (if needed, TBD)
- .07 Dissemination (~ 1 week)
- .08 Review (~ every 2 years, or more often as needed; see section 4.08c)

## **SECTION 3: Roles and Responsibilities**

- .01 All involved parties will perform their responsibilities in a timely manner to ensure NOAA is providing accurate and complete scientific information to the public as promptly as possible.
- .02 **Sponsor**
  - a. Approaches appropriate staff to ensure availability for writing team actions.
  - b. Introduces new SoS Fact Sheet topics to the Council for consideration.
  - c. Oversees development of the SoS Fact Sheet and coordinates with the writing team.
  - d. Provides background information on project team composition and major activities to the Council Executive Secretariat for posting to the Council intranet.

- e. Recruits a writing team and provides the team lead (Subject Matter Expert) with the procedural handbook and design template.
- f. Updates the Research Council Executive Secretariat monthly on development status.
- g. Requests Research Council approve and disseminate draft SoS Fact Sheet for agency review.
- h. Briefs the Research Council on the final draft and provides a recommendation for basic clearance (Research Council only) or executive level clearance (NEP/NEC).
- i. May request future updates or revisions to a published SoS Fact Sheet based on a change in circumstances.

**.03 Writing Team**

- a. Creates a draft SoS Fact Sheet using written, graphic, and photographic materials in a timely manner, not to exceed two months.
- b. Modifies draft product based on feedback from Council and NOAA review.
- c. Answers technical questions as needed during the review and approval process.

**.04 NOAA Research Council**

- a. May initiate new topics internally, if deemed appropriate.
- b. Receives at the request of a sponsoring member, new requests for SoS Fact Sheet topics for development.
- c. Coordinates with the NOAA Communications Office to vet new topics and ensure no duplication with other NOAA products.
- d. Approves or disapproves new SoS Fact Sheet topics based on relevancy to current NOAA research, level of NOAA investment in the topic, and degree of perceived public interest.
- e. Monitors development of SoS Fact Sheet through briefings and updates from the sponsoring member to ensure there are no delays in releasing scientific data to the public.
- f. Maintains a spreadsheet of writing team members for each fact sheet to facilitate future reviews.
- g. Distributes first draft SoS Fact Sheets for broad agency review and comment.
- h. Rules on need for NOAA Executive Decision review for a SoS Fact Sheet.
- i. Facilitates and tracks Executive Decision review, where appropriate, by transmitting documents in a timely fashion and utilizing accepted NOAA and DoC decision support tracking mechanisms to ensure rapid clearance.
- j. Acts on any recommendations by NOAA and DOC Executive Review.
- k. Transmits final SoS Fact Sheet to NOAA's Office of Communications for posting to the NOAA Website.

**.05 NOAA Office of Communications**

- a. Coordinates with the Research Council to ensure new topics do not substantively duplicate existing NOAA public materials.
- b. Coordinates with writing team members, if necessary, on any questions of style or audience.
- c. Posts final documents to the NOAA Website.

**.06 NOAA Education Council**

- a. Coordinates with writing team, as needed, to ensure audience needs are being met
- b. Provides input during first draft review period.

**.07 NOAA Executive Panel and NOAA Executive Council**

- a. Reviews SoS Fact Sheet documents forwarded by the Research Council to ensure all NOAA views are accurately and completely represented.
- b. Rules on need for DOC Executive Review for SoS Fact Sheet.
- c. Approves or requests modifications to SoS Fact Sheet and passes back to the Research Council for action.

**SECTION 4: Development and Approval Process**

**.01 Initiation and Topic Approval**

- a. Any NOAA employee, office, or program may initiate a request to develop a SoS Fact Sheet by contacting a member of the NOAA Research Council and requesting they act as a sponsor for the document.
- b. The Research Council sponsor will introduce new topics by email to the Council Chair, with courtesy copies to the Vice Chair, and Council Executive Secretariat.
- c. The Council Executive Secretariat will consult with NOAA Communications to ensure there is no substantive duplication with existing fact sheets.
- d. If the NOAA Communications office finds there is already an existing fact sheet on the proposed topic, the scope of the new request will either need to be modified to avoid substantive duplication or withdrawn. Once cleared by the NOAA Communications office, the topic will be introduced at the next available Council meeting.
- e. Once reviewed by the NOAA Communications office, the topic will be introduced at the next available Council meeting. The Council will be given two weeks to deliver concurrence or non-concurrence.
- f. The Council Executive Secretariat will communicate the decision to the Council sponsor.

**.02 First Draft Writing**

- a. Upon approval of the topic, the sponsor will identify a writing team of NOAA staff consisting of subject matter, medium, and audience experts to develop the fact sheet. Alternately, the sponsor may appoint a proxy project manager to assemble the group and report progress.
- b. The writing team will work together to produce a first draft document based on the approved SoS Fact Sheet template (see Section 5: Appendix below).
- c. The writing team's responsibility is to ensure the document is scientifically accurate and accounts for any minority views within NOAA on the topic.
- d. Writing Team Lead and the Sponsor will determine jointly the draft document is ready for Council review.
- e. The complete first draft should have been vetted by the sponsor through the relevant NOAA Line Office(s) and Line Office communications staff before reaching the Council for review and comments.
- f. First draft writing will not take longer than two months to complete.

**.03 First Draft Review and Comment Period**

- a. The sponsor will provide the clean first draft text in the template to the Council Executive Secretariat for review and clearance.

- b. The Executive Secretariat will initiate the first draft review through the NOAA Research Council, NOAA Education Council, Line Offices, and Goals.
- c. At the completion of the review, the Council Executive Secretariat will compile the results into a single document to present back to the Council sponsor.
- d. The Executive Secretariat, in consultation with the Council Chair and Vice Chair, may schedule a council discussion of the SoS Fact Sheet at a Council meeting.
- e. The total time for the first draft comment period will last no longer than three weeks.

**.04 Final Draft Writing**

- a. To produce the final draft, the writing team will respond to each comment in writing indicating, with track changes/comments embedded in the final draft, how comments are addressed in the final document or stating why requested changes were not made.
- b. The writing team will revise text, images, and graphics as necessary in the SoS Fact Sheet template.
- c. Once all changes have been made and the writing team is satisfied, the document is ready for final approval.
- d. Final draft writing will take no longer than two months to complete.

**.05 Final Draft Approval**

- a. The sponsor again provides the clean final draft, along with the disposition of comments, to the Council Executive Secretariat.
- b. The Executive Secretariat will distribute the documents to the Council for a two-week virtual review, concurrence, and a yes/no vote on executive clearance.
- c. This final review will not be a full scientific review, but instead an opportunity to ensure all comments were addressed appropriately and the document is ready for publication.
- d. If the Council concurs with executive clearance, the document passes into the executive clearance process.
- e. If the Council concurs without executive clearance, the document is ready for publication and dissemination.
- f. Where executive clearance is not anticipated to be necessary, the Council Chair, serving in the interest of the NOAA Administrator, shall ensure that this determination is appropriate and sound.
- g. If the Council does not concur, the document reverts back to Final Draft Writing (6.04).
- h. This phase will last no longer than two weeks.

**.06 Executive Clearance**

- a. The Council Executive Secretariat will enter the SoS Fact Sheet and any supporting documentation into the NOAA Executive Decision Support tracking system (or similar) within one week of the Council decision.
- b. The Council Executive Secretariat will monitor the status of the executive clearance process and provide additional information as needed.
- c. The Council Executive Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, will execute the decision of the NOAA executive bodies, including initiating and overseeing a formal review at the Department level.

**.07 Dissemination**

- a. Once the SoS Fact receives either Research Council or Executive clearance, it will be transmitted formally by the Chair of the NOAA Research Council to the Director of the NOAA Office of Communications.
- b. The transmittal notice will indicate the document has been cleared and will be posted to the NOAA.gov Web site.

**.08 Review**

- a. In January of every year, the Research Council will initiate the review of SoS Fact Sheet documents which are more than two years old.
- b. The review process will begin with the selection of a Council sponsor and will follow the same process outlined above.
- c. If extenuating circumstances are present in the scientific field, such as a rapid pace of change in scientific evidence and findings, the Research Council shall seek to identify such cases, and if warranted, modify the timeline for review.

**SECTION 5: Appendix**

**.01 Document Design and Layout**

- a. The authorized template is available from the Research Council Executive Secretariat or through the Council Intranet under Council Documents at:  
<https://inet.oar.noaa.gov/NC/NOAARC/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
- b. SoS Fact sheets will begin with a summary paragraph in italics followed by discrete, individual sections. Each section should begin with a **bold** section header.
- c. The document should not exceed two pages.

**.02 Versioning**

- a. The release month and year must be included in the document footer to facilitate updates.

**.03 Additional Information and Citations**

- a. Lists of additional references and citations should be kept to a minimum to allow more data to be presented in the two-page format.
- b. Citations and references can be included in a separate Web page and referenced in a single link from the SoS fact sheet.

**.04 Charts, Graphics, and Images**

- a. All charts, graphs, and images must include a title and/or an explanatory subtitle so readers understand the chart or image without reading the full text of the SoS.
- b. Ranges on graphs must be clearly marked and legible.
- c. Charts, graphs, and images must be properly credited.
- d. Non-NOAA imagery may only be used with written approval from the image owner.