

NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND RENEWABLES

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY TECHNICAL REPORT SERIES

Guidelines and Procedures

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Objective

The ***Biodiversity Conservation and Forestry Technical Report Series*** (TRS) was established by the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry (now Natural Resources and Renewables) as a means for disseminating peer-reviewed scientific research findings, along with associated conclusions and recommendations, and technical information on subjects pertaining to biodiversity conservation and forest management in Nova Scotia.

This document sets out the scope and mandate of the TRS, and establishes **guidelines and procedures** for:

- the preparation and publication of documents released through the TRS;
- roles and responsibilities of the TRS Coordinating Committee; and,
- the required approval process for publication of documents through the TRS.

These *Guidelines and Procedures* are intended for TRS technical publications addressing biodiversity conservation and forest management undertaken by NRR staff. Other provincial government departments and agencies are encouraged to use this series for publishing technical documents addressing these subject matters.

Policy Context

Research and knowledge sharing were recognized as one of the overarching goals of the *Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020*. The Natural Resources Strategy (NRS) proposed several actions to realize this goal, including:

- development of new standards for organizing data;
- sharing information about natural resources;
- enhanced public access to government information and research findings; and,
- increased government-led education to improve natural resource management.

More recently, in *An Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* (Lahey, 2018), it was recommended that the department “... *work transparently and collaboratively with interested*

parties, including representatives from the academic community, in making improvements to reporting on forests and forestry...” (Recommendation 6). The TRS was conceived as a mechanism for addressing all these actions and recommendations. Reports published through the TRS will serve a fundamental role in informing NRR staff, stakeholders, and the public about biodiversity conservation and forest management in Nova Scotia.

Procedural Objectives

Procedural objectives for the TRS, and the TRS Coordinating Committee, have been adopted with modifications from the *Publication Approval Policy* (2002) as prepared by the Geoscience and Mines Branch (formerly part of the Department of Natural Resources). These objectives include:

1. Ensuring compliance with existing government and department policies.
2. Outlining a well-defined editorial, review, and management approval process.
3. Documenting procedures to ensure author and government accountability.
4. Outlining a standard set of guidelines for authors, managers, and TRS coordinators.
5. Defining formatting and writing conventions for authors and report disseminators.

Biodiversity Conservation and Forestry Technical Report Series Coordinating Committee

A TRS Coordinating Committee will be appointed to oversee all aspects of the TRS mandate. The Committee’s primary duties are to:

- review documents submitted for publication to ensure relevance to the scope and mandate of the TRS;
- work with authors to ensure documents meet TRS standards (i.e., quality of research and writing);
- appoint external peer reviewers to evaluate documents submitted for publication;
- ensure peer review comments are addressed by the author(s) to the satisfaction of the Committee; and,
- ensure the approval process has been followed.

The TRS is coordinated and administered by a Committee primarily composed of NRR staff. Committee members will be appointed by the Executive Director of NRR’s Renewable Resources Branch or delegate. The Committee chair, or co-chairs, will be selected by Committee members; the chair may be rotated annually among Committee members. Where a single chair is selected, representation should alternate between the Forestry and Wildlife divisions.

The Committee will have a maximum of five members, with at least two members from NRR’s Renewable Resources Branch including at least one member from both Forestry and Wildlife Divisions. A representative from the Regional Services Branch is suggested for the Committee, but not compulsory. No more than one external (non-NRR) individual may serve on the Committee.

Membership should be reflective of the Committee's primary focus of encouraging the publication and dissemination of technical knowledge that supports government's commitment to biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management, and informing and engaging NRR staff, stakeholders, and the public.

Purpose and Outcomes

The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables has administrative responsibility for provincial Crown land in Nova Scotia. In addition, NRR has extensive legislative, regulatory, and policy authority for biodiversity and forest management which apply to both Crown and private lands. As such, the TRS is NRR's primary medium for documenting and distributing written summaries of technical information pertaining to biodiversity and forest management.

Following on the success of past reporting series on wildlife conservation (e.g., *CoNServation*), wildlife technical information (e.g., *Natural Resource Technical Notes*), and forestry (e.g., the *Forest Research Reports*), available on the NRR website, the TRS covers a broad range of topics and activities related to biodiversity and forest management.

The *Biodiversity Conservation and Forestry Technical Report Series* will have several positive outcomes. The series will:

- provide a reporting mechanism to summarize, track, and archive government biodiversity and forest management research, planning, and program activities;
- offer a public record of government technical contributions and demonstrate government's commitment to information exchange;
- serve as the department's primary vehicle for promoting awareness of key biodiversity and forest management technical issues, science, and recommended practices;
- promote new partnerships and effective consultancies;
- improve government communications efficiency and effectiveness by providing a medium to address frequently asked questions and important technical explanations;
- facilitate the distribution of technical content for educational purposes;
- help government meet internal objectives and address transactional priorities;
- document conclusions emerging from projects and program initiatives focused on biodiversity and forest management;
- provide a mechanism for assessing project relevance for various applications;
- report on biodiversity and forest research activities, and demonstrate project, author, and program successes;
- serve as a defined endpoint and incentive to complete projects, finalize results, and document research findings in a timely manner; and,
- help ensure appropriate intellectual credit and recognition for authors and project teams. In this respect, the TRS is an important marker for new employees, and for staff seeking new opportunities.

Audiences

The TRS is aimed primarily at technical readers with an interest in the fields of biodiversity conservation and forest management. Biologists, foresters, planners, technicians, researchers, academia, policy advisors, decision-makers, and post-secondary students are among the intended audiences. The TRS is also available to the public.

Types of Technical Report Series Reports

The TRS includes five types of reports:

1. Research Reports

A detailed scientific report which documents primary research methods, findings, and conclusions. A Research Report may also consist of a third-party scientific review of published research findings or technical information.

2. Technical Notes

A brief written summary on a new technique(s), narrow research topic, or small research project.

3. Information Bulletins

A short overview of technical information, scientific evidence, guidelines, or procedures; for example, background information and explanatory material on emerging biodiversity and forestry issues or topics.

4. Report of Activities

A summary of project, program, department, branch, or division activities. May include project progress reports, summaries (final or interim) of activities, or program updates.

5. Reference Guides

A detailed guide or manual for application of scientific techniques or management practices. This guide may include text, photographs, maps, and/or summary tables, serving as a reference for field, office, and/or laboratory use.

For further clarity, the title of Research Reports, Technical Notes, Information Bulletins, Report of Activities, and Reference Guides may indicate whether they pertain exclusively or primarily to forestry or biodiversity subject matters (e.g., Forest Research Report; Biodiversity Technical Note).

Authors

Primary authors will typically be NRR staff, but academic researchers, staff from other government departments, students, and non-academic researchers/technicians engaged as partners by NRR on specific projects can also be primary or secondary authors.

Requirements for Publication

1. Technical Report Series Mandate

The TRS provides a venue for the dissemination of scientific and technical research, along with associated findings, conclusions, and recommendations, on subjects pertaining primarily to biodiversity conservation and forest management.

The TRS Coordinating Committee will determine if a document submitted for publication is consistent with the TRS mandate.

2. Review Process

When submitting any document for publication through the TRS, the author(s) must demonstrate that it has been reviewed by the Manager / Supervisor / Team Lead of the report author(s). The author's (or authors') Manager, Supervisor, and/or Team Leads have three (3) weeks to review each document and get their comments to the author(s). Prior to this, it is suggested that authors seek a colleague to review their manuscript for clarity and grammar.

All documents submitted for consideration as a TRS Research Report, Technical Note, or Reference Guide must undergo peer review. Information Bulletins and Reports of Activities do not require peer review.

If a Research Report, Technical Note, or Reference Guide is selected by the TRS Coordinating Committee as a candidate for the series, the Committee will appoint at least two reviewers; ideally, at least one of the reviewers will be external to NRR. Peer review is not anonymous, and the Committee, at its discretion, may request authors to suggest suitable reviewers. Reviewers are given a maximum of four (4) weeks to conduct their review. If a reviewer has not completed the review within the prescribed timeframe, the Coordinating Committee may select another reviewer.

Responsibility for revising a document based on peer review lies with the author(s). Where the author(s) disagree with changes proposed through peer review, inquiries can be made with the TRS Coordinating Committee. The Committee may:

- accept the document without incorporating all, or some, of the reviewer's recommended changes;
- require the changes to be made as a condition of publishing through the TRS; or
- engage one or more additional reviewers to obtain further input.

The Coordinating Committee will track reviewers employed for each TRS document using a spreadsheet produced for this purpose.

3. Technical Writing Standard and Document Format

Reports must conform to an editorial standard consistent with provincial government conventions for technical writing. Documents submitted will follow formatting, citation, and other pertinent guidelines outlined by the TRS Coordinating Committee. An abstract will only be required for research reports.

A dedicated editor does not exist for the *Biodiversity Conservation and Forestry Technical Report Series*. Editing for content and clarity is the responsibility of the author(s) and their Manager or Supervisor. The TRS Coordinating Committee may request that authors revise their submissions to improve spelling, grammar, and/or clarity.

Approval Process

Reports submitted for inclusion in the TRS must be approved by the TRS Coordinating Committee. All submitted reports will be evaluated based on several criteria, including relevance to the TRS mandate, practical or scholarly application, outcome of peer review, and adherence to technical writing conventions.

Key approvals and timelines required to publish a document through the TRS are as follows:

- 1. Approval** of the author's (or authors') Manager or Supervisor to submit a document for publication: **3 weeks**.
- 2.** The TRS Coordinating Committee **approves** the document as a candidate for publication and assigns reviewers: **2 weeks**.
- 3.** Recommendation to Publish by TRS Coordinating Committee:
 - a. Research Report, Technical Note, or Reference Guide: Following a peer review (**4 weeks**), incorporation of required revisions (recommended: **4 weeks**), and confirmation the document achieves technical writing standards (**2 weeks**), the TRS Coordinating Committee prepares a **recommendation to publish** which is submitted to the relevant NRR Director. The choice of Director will be based on the nature of the subject matter and the author's reporting relationship
 - b. Information Bulletin or Report of Activities: The TRS Coordinating Committee prepares a **recommendation to publish** which is submitted to the relevant NRR Director. The choice of Director will be based on the nature of the subject matter and the author's reporting relationship: **2 weeks**.
- 4.** The relevant Director reviews the document primarily to ensure consistency with existing legislation, regulation, and policy. If satisfied, the Director **recommends** publication to the relevant NRR Executive Director. **2 weeks**.

5. The relevant NRR Executive Director, or their delegate, may review the document primarily to ensure consistency with existing legislation, regulation, and policy. The relevant Executive Director grants **final approval** to publish the document and authorizes the Coordinating Committee to publish through the TRS: **2 weeks**.

Distribution and Depository

TRS publications are given unique tracking numbers issued by the Coordinating Committee and NRR library staff. All reports will be stored electronically on a shared server and in the NRR library. TRS documents will be listed on, and available from, the NRR website, distributed digitally via the NRR library, or may be obtained by contacting the report authors and their colleagues. Except in special circumstances, paper copies will not be issued.