

# Integrated Tracking of Aquatic Animals in the Gulf (iTAG) Telemetry Network

## iTAG database User Agreement and Data Policy Version 2

This iTAG user agreement and data policy is based on the FACT User Agreement Version 1.1 and MATOS agreement 1.2 and responses to an iTAG member survey in spring 2025. Contact iTAG Network Coordinator Sue Lowerre-Barbieri ([slowerrebarbieri@ufl.edu](mailto:slowerrebarbieri@ufl.edu)) or one of the iTAG Network Data Managers: Hannah Gottesman ([Hannah.Gottesman@ufl.edu](mailto:Hannah.Gottesman@ufl.edu)) or Claudia Friess ([elasmophile@ufl.edu](mailto:elasmophile@ufl.edu)) if you have questions or comments regarding this agreement.

### Contents

1. Background.....	2
2. Member Expectations and Ethical Conduct.....	2
b. Ethical Collaboration and Data Sharing .....	2
c. Intellectual and Infrastructure Stewardship .....	3
3. Definitions and Acronyms .....	3
4. Data Collection .....	4
5. Data Submission .....	5
6. Restricted Data Submission .....	5
7. Access to iTAG Node Data .....	6
a. Unrestricted Data .....	6
b. Restricted Data .....	6
8. Use of iTAG Network Data .....	7
9. Data Exchange Between Regional Data Nodes.....	8
10. Data Exchange Outside Regional Data Nodes .....	8
11. References.....	8

# 1. Background

The iTAG Network is a grassroots collaboration of researchers and partners to help improve our understanding of the movement of aquatic animals in the Gulf. iTAG began in 2014 when scientists, vendors, and ocean observing representatives identified the following needs: (1) the capacity to exchange detection data across arrays; (2) consequent meetings to increase networking and knowledge; and (3) integrative telemetry research projects to demonstrate the benefit to management of understanding movement. The iTAG mission is to build a **community** focused on understanding the importance of movement to management and conservation of aquatic animals. To meet this mission, iTAG developed a data exchange system, a map of receiver arrays, and built infrastructure and demonstrated proof of concept in the first ten years. With the rapid growth of telemetry and iTAG, the network is developing a funding-dependent database in partnership with the University of Florida (UF), Gulf of America Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS) and the Ocean Tracking Network (OTN).

## 2. Member Expectations and Ethical Conduct

As a collaborative, community-driven research initiative, the iTAG Network is committed to maintaining a respectful, inclusive, and ethically responsible environment for all members. As part of the iTAG Network and participating in its data node, users agree to uphold the following principles:

### a. Ethical Collaboration and Data Sharing

iTAG is founded on principles of transparency, reciprocity, and scientific integrity. Members are expected to:

- Engage in good-faith collaboration with array and tag owners whose data they access through the network.
- Seek mutual consent and clearly define authorship or acknowledgment expectations when using shared detections for research products (e.g., proposals, presentations, publications).
- Ensure that shared data are cited and acknowledged according to network guidelines and agreements with data providers.

## b. Intellectual and Infrastructure Stewardship

Contributions to the network—whether through data uploads, infrastructure support, or service—are essential to the sustainability of the data node. Members who benefit from shared detections are strongly encouraged to support the network through:

- Participating in network governance, field support, outreach, or meeting sponsorship when possible.
- Respecting the intellectual investment and infrastructure provided by others and engaging with the network in a way that promotes long-term community benefit.

## 3. Definitions and Acronyms

**iTAG Network** Integrative Tracking of Aquatic Animals in the Gulf Telemetry Network

**iTAG Node Data** means the Unrestricted Data and the Restricted Data stored in the iTAG Database, but does not infer ownership.

**iTAG Network Steering Group** means a representative body comprised of iTAG users working to manage and advance the mission of iTAG.

**iTAG Database Node** means the instruments and systems that store and make accessible the information lodged with the iTAG Network.

**iTAG Portal** means the Plone data portal that enables users to upload data for processing into the database.

**iTAG Users** means those individuals who have agreed to this iTAG User Agreement and Data Policy with a registered account on the web portal ([itagscience.com](http://itagscience.com)).

**ACT** Atlantic Cooperative Telemetry Network **Array Collaborators** and **Array Owners** means those parties who deploy, maintain, and retrieve data from receivers.

**ATN** Animal Telemetry Network of the United States

**Data Manager** employee hired by the iTAG Network to oversee iTAG data pushes and iTAG Network Data.

**Data Use Agreement** means the agreement entered into between members of the iTAG Network and iTAG which sets out the process through which iTAG Data may be accessed.

**Database and iTAG Node** means the instruments and systems that store and make accessible the information lodged with the iTAG Network.

**FACT** Florida Atlantic Coast Telemetry Network

**OTN** Ocean Tracking Network

**Principal Investigator (PI)** of an iTAG project means the individual who holds ultimate authority over the project's data within the iTAG node. The PI determines who has access to the data prior to it becoming publicly available (unrestricted) and may grant early access to other parties upon request. While the PI may delegate responsibilities such as data management or project page maintenance on the iTAG website, they remain accountable for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of these activities.

**Project** is any research project or study with a number of affiliated Tracking Collaborators or Array Collaborators

**Regional Data node** means a repository of region-specific data formed on an ad-hoc basis by OTN collaborators.

**Restricted Data** means the data which Tracking and Array Collaborators have submitted to the iTAG Database on the condition that access to that data is restricted in accordance with Section 6 of this policy.

**Tracking Collaborators and Tag Owners** means those parties who oversee the tagging of marine life and provision of the data.

**Unrestricted Data** means all iTAG Data that is not Restricted Data.

## 4. Data Collection

- a) The foundation of a telemetry network is that members participate in both tagging of animals (tag owners/Tracking Collaborators) and deployment of receivers (Array Collaborators). This is critical because much of the effort in acoustic telemetry research is sustained by the maintenance, deployment, and retrieval of receivers—activities that require substantial investment of time, expertise, and funding. Requests for an exception to this rule, if another form of node contribution is made, should be sent to the data manager and will be reviewed by the steering committee.
  - i) In recognition that detections—particularly of highly migratory species—may occur far from tagging locations and without prior coordination, Tracking Collaborators are expected to acknowledge the critical role that receiver infrastructure plays in supporting telemetry research and engage in good-faith reciprocity, such as:

- Acknowledging Array Collaborators in publications, presentations, and data products;
  - Offering co-authorship when detections materially inform research outputs;
  - Invite array owners to participate in shared data syntheses or collaborative analyses.
  - Contributing to the iTAG Network through data sharing, field assistance, infrastructure support, or meeting participation.
- ii) Investigators that are proposing large scale studies based on data from existing arrays are expected to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with key array owners, establishing collaboration expectations prior to submitting a proposal or deploying tags

## 5. Data Submission

- a) Array and Tracking Collaborators are responsible for ensuring that data are uploaded in accordance with predefined iTAG standards and are submitted in a timely fashion, but at least twice a year.
- b) Array and Tracking Collaborators will upload their data to private folders via the iTAG Portal ([plone](#)).
- c) Array and Tracking Collaborators will inform the Data Manager of any errors, inaccuracies or necessary updates with respect to data that have been uploaded to the iTAG node as soon as possible after becoming aware of such issues.
- d) Array and Tracking Collaborators will provide project metadata at the initiation of all projects.
- e) On retrieval and downloading of a receiver, Array Collaborators will provide operational array deployment and retrieval metadata along with intact vrl files.
- f) On deployment of a tag, Tracking Collaborators will provide tag metadata.

## 6. Restricted Data Submission

- a) Array and Tracking Collaborators are entitled to require access to the data which they upload to the iTAG node initially be restricted to only individuals who are approved by project principle investigators in their sole discretion (hereinafter referred to as Restricted Data).
- b) Tracking Collaborators 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) Tracking Collaborators 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.
- d) Array and Tracking Collaborators are entitled to specify partial or modified release of Restricted Data to become Unrestricted Data.

## 7. Access to iTAG Node Data

The following are the processes for accessing iTAG data:

### a. Unrestricted Data

- i) Unrestricted access to the iTAG node data is through the [Ocean Tracking Network portal](#), [ERDAPP](#), and [Geoserver](#).

### b. Restricted Data

- i) Those who wish to access iTAG node data other than what is provided through the sources listed in Section 7.a) will be asked to become an iTAG member 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 for the Tag Owner.
- ii) Those who wish to access records from the iTAG Database regarding individual receiver locations (coordinates) and 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 tag release metadata, detection data may still be released with the permission of the Array Owner(s).
- iii) Registered users will be required to agree to terms and conditions of use relating to the iTAG Portal prior to receiving a confidential username and password by which they can access the iTAG Portal.
- iv) Any registered user who wishes to access Restricted Data and is not named on the project metadata forms submitted by the project principle investigators, must obtain the consent of the iTAG member who submitted the Restricted Data. Consent shall be provided directly from the iTAG member to the Data Manager in a manner satisfactory to the iTAG network. Once consent has been received from the iTAG member who submitted the Restricted Data, access shall be provided on the terms set by the granting iTAG member.
- v) All persons accessing Restricted Data will include a pre-formed attribution to the iTAG Network in Acknowledgements in all publications and appropriate citations for

all publications which use iTAG node data. Publications with iTAG attributions shall be forwarded to the Data Manager.

## 8. Use of iTAG Network Data

- a. All individuals who access iTAG node data shall provide attribution to all Data Providers and the iTAG Network if iTAG node 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 iTAG member who deployed the tag.
- c. iTAG members must abstain from publishing any data on tags they did not deploy, unless the tag owner provides consent.
- d. If an iTAG member cannot state certain conclusions but for the detection data provided by another iTAG member, both parties must agree on a suitable level of attribution, including but not limited to, co-authorship and acknowledgement mentions.
- e. iTAG members 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 8.a above.
- f. iTAG member data may be used in informational material for the iTAG website. Consent of the iTAG member is required for use of all information except:
  - i) General receiver location (for map making),
  - ii) Number, types and species of animals tagged,
  - iii) Project information including description and a point of contact.
  - iv) All individuals who access iTAG node Data agree and acknowledge that neither the iTAG Network nor the Data Provider is liable for any inaccuracies in the iTAG node data.
  - v) All users of iTAG node Data are responsible for investigating and understanding the limitations of the iTAG node data.
  - vi) All registered users of the iTAG node data are required to report all problems with respect to the iTAG node data to the Data Manager.

## 9. Data Exchange Between Regional Data Nodes

- a. Project folders (tag and array) of iTAG members will be mirrored to *Regional Data Nodes* for the purposes of tag matching. Project folders of non-iTAG members will be mirrored to the iTAG node for the purposes of tag matching.
- b. Mirrored folders are not the property of the node to which they are mirrored and are not under the rules of data submission and access of the mirrored node.
- c. If detection data from an iTAG member are matched to non-iTAG member tags, the detection data will be copied to the non-iTAG folder in the appropriate Regional Data Node.
- d. If detection data from a non-iTAG member are matched to iTAG member tags, the detection data will be copied to the appropriate folder within the iTAG node.
- e. Use of detection data will follow the rules set forth by the node to which the tag owner is a member.

## 10. Data Exchange Outside Regional Data Nodes

- a. iTAG members may disperse their data to a researcher outside of the iTAG Network, however, each iTAG member will also direct outside researchers seeking access to iTAG Network data to the Data Manager.
- b. The Data Manager will attempt to resolve unmatched tags twice a year by providing the full tag identifier, date and general location of detection, and contact information of the array owner to ACT, FACT, and Innovasea.

## 11. References

[The Ocean Tracking Network \(OTN\) Data Policy](#)