



The Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services Policy and Procedures for Partner Use of CO-OPS Observing System Station Assets 18 January 2017

Purpose and Scope

This policy defines the requirements and circumstances under which the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) will grant permission for any Federal, state, local, academic, or private institutions to locate instrumentation within a CO-OPS station or use the station facility/infrastructure to make measurements. These requirements have been established in order to preserve the integrity of the CO-OPS measurements when multiple agencies are utilizing the same space, to coordinate co-location of sensors and data acquisition systems in CO-OPS gauging stations, and to protect the security and aesthetic appearance of the space, both interior and exterior.

Background

CO-OPS manages, operates, and maintains a reliable and robust network of water level, currents, meteorological, and oceanographic measurement stations. The dependability and health of CO-OPS systems stems in part from the level of: testing performed on each sensor/instrument prior to operational deployment; system standardization; stringent maintenance requirements; and the level of quality control monitoring of systems and data. Observing system facilities (aka tide houses or gauging stations) range from a simple aluminum instrument enclosure to a 10 foot by 10 foot building that houses the data collection platform, sensors, and peripheral equipment for power, communication, and data transmission. At most facilities there is an adjacent tower or pole to which sensor(s), solar panel(s), and satellite antenna(s) are secured, as well as, protective well(s), cabling, or tubing for water level or related sensors extending into the water.

The locations of CO-OPS stations and platforms in coastal and near-shore, often environmentally sensitive areas represent attractive partnering opportunities for other federal and state agencies, academia, and non-government organizations interested in collecting various types of environmental data. CO-OPS receives numerous requests from partners seeking permission to use CO-OPS platforms and equipment. Partnering requests range from placing a stand-alone sensor on CO-OPS platform/structure, to integrating a non-standard¹ sensor into CO-OPS data collection and telemetry systems. Although these requests generally pose no- or minimal potential to interfere with CO-OPS operations, the number of recent inquiries necessitated establishing a standard policy to manage these requests.

Policy Description

CO-OPS strives to maximize partnering opportunities wherever possible in order to deliver useful and reliable information to the public. This goal of maximum collaboration must be balanced with the need to minimize risk to CO-OPS station assets, therefore permission to use CO-OPS station assets will be granted/denied based on an evaluation of impact to CO-OPS observing system mission requirements. Where practical, CO-OPS will require a formal agreement outlining duties and responsibilities of the parties involved, including reimbursement or in-kind services deemed appropriate for any technical assistance or other services provided. Absent an agreement, CO-OPS will work with partners and provide

¹ Non-standard Sensor or Instrumentation refers to any sensor or sensor model not currently part of the CO-OPS operational inventory of sensors or equipment.

assistance on a basis not to interfere with CO-OPS’ operational priorities, with duties and responsibilities of each party outlined in an informal Letter of Intent (see Appendix A for sample).

Requests from all partners, federal and state agencies, academic institutions and programs, or NGOs where the proposed data will be shared with CO-OPS or the general public for use in real-time systems, modeling, or other applications will be evaluated based on: (1) the level of system integration/platform interference requested by the Partner, (2) the type of instrumentation/equipment to be installed, (3) the type of data recorded, and (4) cost to CO-OPS, both in actual expenditures and staffing resources (Table 1).

In general, non-integrated and minimally interfering requests will be approved with an acceptable partnering plan. Likewise, requests requiring major CO-OPS station integration of non-standard equipment/data must also include an identified high priority/emergent requirement as outlined below. All requests must include an estimate of foreseeable costs to both the partner and CO-OPS, and a summary of consultation conducted with CO-OPS Field Operations and Program Management personnel.

Table 1 –Partner use of CO-OPS station assets: evaluation and approval criteria

Level of System Integration/Platform Integration	Type of Instrumentation & Data ²		
	CO-OPS' Standard Instrumentation	Non-Standard Instrumentation/ Standard Data	Non-Standard Instrumentation/Non Standard Data ³
Non-Interfering/Stand-alone (with Government Partner)	P1	P1	P1
Non-Interfering/Stand-alone (with Private Entity)	P2	P2	P2
Requires minimal CO-OPS station Integration (power sharing, tower sharing, etc.)	P3	P4	P5
Requires major CO-OPS station Integration (DCP, power, telemetry, etc.)	P6	P7	P8

Partnership Type	Approval Requirements
P1	Approval with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the CO-OPS Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Program Management Team (PMT). Absent a formal, written agreement, a Letter of Intent is required.
P2	Approval with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT and PMT. A formal, written agreement is required.
P3	Approval with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT and Engineering and Development Branch (EDB). Absent a formal, written agreement, a Letter of Intent is required.

² Where necessary, CO-OPS will consult with / seek permission from Host property owners to modify existing stations and allow access for requesting Partner personnel.

³ Non-Standard Data refers to any data not formatted in NOS/CO-OPS’ encoding scheme. Details available at http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/pub.html#standards_communications

P4	Approval with Ocean System Test and Evaluation Program (OSTEP), Engineering and Development Branch (EDB) and Information Services Division (ISD) review and endorsement, plus with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT. A formal, written agreement is recommended in all cases, but only required where foreseeable length of activity exceeds 90 days. Absent a formal, written agreement, a Letter of Intent is required.
P5	Approval with OSTEP, EDB, and ISD review and endorsement, plus with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT. A formal, written agreement is required.
P6	Approval with OSTEP, EDB, and ISD review and endorsement, plus with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT. A formal, written agreement and funding is required.
P7	Approval only with identified high-priority or emergent requirement and by direction of the CO-OPS Director or higher authority. Requires OSTEP, EDB and ISD review and endorsement, plus with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT. A formal, written agreement and funding is required.
P8	Approval only with identified emergent requirement and by direction of the CO-OPS Director or higher authority. Requires OSTEP and ISD review and endorsement, plus with Station Integration Plan reviewed and accepted by the ELT and PMT. A formal agreement and funding is required.


Most of the observing systems are located on the property of other government agencies or on private property. Requirements for station placement on these properties are covered by a range of permits, letters of permission, or occupancy and use agreements- although some locations predate formal written arrangements. In addition to evaluating requests based on the above criteria, CO-OPS also carefully reviews all requests to ensure that nothing proposed will violate CO-OPS' existing terms, or agreements, or arrangements. Where appropriate and as required, CO-OPS will consult with the property owner. The requesting party assumes all risk and liability for their equipment and personnel, including vandalism, damage, breakage, loss, or destruction of property caused by their employees, contractors, or associates.

Procedures for Requesting Permission

CO-OPS observing system stations are operated and maintained by the Field Operations Division. The requesting party shall send a letter of request to the contacts cited in Appendix A. The request letter should describe the project and benefits of co-location in an existing CO-OPS observing system facility. Approval will be given in the form of a Letter of Agreement detailing how the conditions listed in Appendix B will be addressed or waived, as appropriate.

Requester should be advised that most CO-OPS station locations have extremely limited space for additional equipment. In addition, certain conditions or restrictions may exist at particular locations that preclude CO-OPS from granting permissive use to third parties. Requesters should also note that individuals must have a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) to access stations at located within most port facilities. Other locations may require the use of hard hats, steel-toed shoes, or other safety gear. In some cases, on-site safety training is required for access to pier, dock, or other facilities. Military bases and Federal properties may require vehicle and personnel searches, check in, or escorts, may restrict or forbid photography, and may prohibit working at certain times due to security concerns. It is the requesting party's responsibility to obtain the necessary credentials, arrange for access, and adhere to any restrictions or prohibitions.

Appendix A Sample Letter of Intent

	<p>NOAA National Ocean Service Center for Operational Oceanographic products and Services</p>
<p>PARTNERING LETTER OF INTENT <Date></p>	
<p><Title / Name of Proposed Partner></p>	
<p><Address 1></p>	
<p>Reference (A): <i><Partner's Submitted Partnering Plan></i></p>	
<p>Dear <i><Partner></i>:</p>	
<p>This letter confirms CO-OPS' and <i><Partner's></i> mutual intentions with respect to the partnering plan as outlined in Reference (A), <i><Ref A Title></i>. This document, in and of itself, does not represent an enforceable legal contract.</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms: The principle terms of the proposed partnering will be substantially as set forth in Reference (A) with the following exceptions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. None. (or list of exceptions / deviations from partnering plan) 2. <i><Partner></i> assumes all risk and liability for <i><Partner></i> equipment and personnel, including vandalism, damage, breakage, loss, or destruction of property caused by <i><Partner></i> employees, contractors, or associates. 3. <i><Partner></i> is advised to work closely with the CO-OPS representatives in executing the Partnering Plan under the terms as listed in Section 1 above. 	
<p>CO-OPS Observing System Manager N/COOPS, Room 6409 1305 East-West Highway Silver Spring, MD 20906 Email: Tel:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>No Binding Obligation.</u> THIS LETTER OF INTENT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE OR CREATE, AND SHALL NOT BE DEEMED TO CONSTITUTE OR CREATE, ANY LEGALLY BINDING OR ENFORCEABLE OBLIGATION ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. 	
<hr/> <p>Richard Edwing, Director Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services</p>	

Appendix B CO-OPS Contact Information

Write or email:

CO-OPS Observing System Manager
N/COOPS, Room 6409
1305 East-West Highway Silver
Spring, MD 20906
Email: robert.loesch@noaa.gov
Tel: 240-533-0495

Appendix C Conditions Governing the Use of All CO-OPS Observing Station Assets

Unless explicitly waived, exempt, or modified by written agreement, the following conditions shall govern the use of CO-OPS observing station assets:

1. The use of the facility shall not interfere with CO-OPS prime use of the facility.
2. The requesting party is responsible for all environmental, historic, or other required permits.
3. The requesting party shall not move nor alter the Federal instrumentation in any manner or for any reason.
4. Sensors shall be installed independent of CO-OPS sensors and equipment.
5. Power shall be independent of existing batteries or power supplies.
6. Communications shall be independent of existing communication devices.
7. Existing sensors, solar panels, or antennas shall not be blocked or reoriented by the addition of anything.
8. The facility shall not be used to for the storage of supplies, goods, or materials.
9. Electrical circuits shall not be overloaded and extension cords shall not be used in a daisy chained manner. Electrical requirements shall be identified in the Station Integration Plan.
10. The requesting party is responsible for increased utility costs, if not specifically waived.
11. No signs, decals, stickers, or posters shall be placed on any exterior or interior wall, door, or window without prior approval.
12. An emergency contact and phone number and a backup shall be clearly marked on the non-Federal equipment.
13. No modifications to the facility shall be made without prior approval.
14. Approved access holes in the floor, roof, or walls shall be sealed in a workmanship manner to not detract from the appearance of the enclosure or building and to prevent water or vermin intrusion.
15. Inside wiring and cabling shall be cut to length or neatly routed and coiled.

16. Outside wiring and cabling shall be enclosed in conduit.
17. The requesting party shall bear the cost of all installation, maintenance, removal, and restoration of the space to its original condition.
18. All work shall be in accordance with applicable Federal / State / Local standards (e.g., NOAA Safety / OSHA / State Building Codes).
19. All waste or trash shall be promptly removed.
20. The requesting party shall obtain and pay for any required lane closures, law enforcement expenses, and/or special transportation or conveyance needs to ensure the safety of their employees or contractors.
21. The requesting party shall maintain strict control of station keys / lock combinations and limit access to employees / associates of the requesting party
22. The requesting party assumes all risk and liability for equipment and personnel while on station, including vandalism, damage, breakage, loss, or destruction of Federal equipment caused by their employees, contractors, or associates.
23. Requests for space must include a layout, drawing or sketch, and include the manner in which the equipment will be mounted and where the sensors will be located and mounted. The routing of all wiring and cables shall be shown and include the manner of attachment.
24. Consideration of the proposed material selection, compatibility with existing materials, and propensity for bio-fouling will be based on the duration of the project (temporary, long term, or permanent). Engineering drawings may be required for CO-OPS engineering review board approval.
25. In order to ensure station systems have not been disturbed, the requesting party shall notify the CO-OPS Continuous Operational Real-time Monitoring System (CORMS) at 301-713-2540:
 - a. Prior to beginning on-site work, and
 - b. After completing on-site work (prior to leaving the station).
26. CO-OPS reserves the right to be on site during any installation or maintenance activity.

Appendix D CO-OPS Station Modification Request Form

CO-OPS Station Modification Request Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Station Name: _____

Station ID #: _____

DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST:

Attach the following as applicable

- Plot Plan with proposed modification(s) to approximate scale with dimensions.
- Complete description (photos/drawings) as to construction design, materials (types & sizes), and color/finish.
- Floor Plan, Elevation, Section Drawing.
- Electrical loading / charge plan

Requesting Party Authorized Signature **Date**

Printed Name

To be submitted with the requesting Partner's *Station Integration Plan*