



Socio-Ecological Observatory for Studying African Woodlands (SEOSAW)

Data sharing agreement

Version 2.0 01 May 2018

Version 2.1 04 May 2020. Minor edits and update to SEOSAW citation.

Version 2.2 20 August 2024 Edits by Penny Mograbi & John Godlee

- *adding de Lima et al. 2022 principles to the introduction*
- *clarifying wording between SEOSAW partners, data originators and data users.*
- *adding that non-data originator SEOSAW partners are included in research at the data users' discretion.*
- *stating that the PI listed is the contact point for all co-I's for each data set and is responsible for including co-I's invitations and opportunities to participate in data user's research*
- *adding that data users need to submit the final draft of their publication, including a list of the datasets used, for final checks on data sharing agreements to SEOSAW before journal submission.*
- *a statement that data shouldn't be copied or transferred. Data sharing for the purposes of publication in scientific journals needs to be approved by the data owners and the SEOSAW office.*
- *exclusive use of the data per research question will be held for 2 years*
- *updates to citations and acknowledgements*

Introduction

The SEOSAW project aims to establish an online data sharing platform for African woodland plot data, building on the established platform for forest plot data (e.g. www.ForestPlots.net). The project involves collaboration between partners from across Africa and the rest of the world, who will make their woodland plot data available through the online platform.

Forest and woodland data are immensely valuable with many possible applications and a variety of stakeholders interested in using these data. To ensure that data originators maintain control over their data, and receive appropriate recognition for their data collection and research efforts that are

fair and equitable¹ (de Lima et al. 2022), the SEOSAW project has developed a data sharing and authorship agreement that protects the rights of data originators, and encourages collaboration.

Members of the SEOSAW partnership contributed to the development of the SEOSAW agreement at the first SEOSAW project meeting in March 2017 and this has undergone periodic revision by the SEOSAW Scientific Steering Committee². A code of conduct for SEOSAW partners is provided below.

SEOSAW Partners Code of Conduct

This code of conduct aims to ensure cooperation, collaboration and trust among SEOSAW partners³, and allow the scientific potential of the SEOSAW project to be realised.

Data Access

Contribution of a dataset to the SEOSAW platform⁴, or transfer of data between SEOSAW partners, does not constitute a transfer of intellectual property rights. Data originators are, however, *required* to agree to the following terms for granting data access prior to allowing their datasets to be added to the SEOSAW platform:

- To make complete datasets and meta-data that meet minimum data quality requirements⁵ available for upload to the SEOSAW platform
- To allow all SEOSAW partners and the public to view basic meta-data, including plot locations, on the SEOSAW platform
- To make full datasets available for use through the SEOSAW platform to SEOSAW partners that fulfil the conditions for **Data Use** described in this Code of Conduct.

¹ de Lima, R.A.F., Phillips, O.L., Duque, A. *et al.* Making forest data fair and open. *Nat Ecol Evol* **6**, 656–658 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-022-01738-7>

² The SEOSAW Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) is a group of 10-15 members led by 2 co-chairs who oversee the scope of SEOSAW's activities. SSC members are nominated by the SEOSAW partners.

³ 'SEOSAW partners include all participants in the SEOSAW project, including partners who contribute data 'data originators' and partners that aim to make use of the data for scientific purposes 'data users'.

⁴ The 'SEOSAW platform' is an internet accessible system database (<https://bitbucket.org/miombo/seosaw/src/master/>) designed to enable data sharing among SEOSAW partners.

⁵ The SEOSAW manuals (<https://seosaw.github.io/manuals>) provide guidance on the collection and management of data that meets these standards.

- To declare whether suitable datasets are classified as open access⁶ or available on agreement⁷
- To list the Principal Investigator/s⁸ for the data, who will be the point of contact with SEOSAW and whose responsibility it is to ensure that co-Investigator/s are included in data access agreements, including being invited and provided the opportunity to participate in scientific research and authorship, as per the **Data Use** conditions described in this Code of Conduct.

Data Use

Prior to gaining access to the SEOSAW database for scientific research⁹, all data users¹⁰ are *required* to agree to the following terms for data use:

- Data users must inform all SEOSAW partners of any plans to make use of data accessed through the SEOSAW platform for scientific research¹¹.
- Data users may not disclose or share any SEOSAW data with other parties, including artificial intelligence platforms (e.g. ChatGPT, ColabAI).
- All shared data must be securely stored and should never be copied or transferred without authorisation of the data owners and the SEOSAW co-chairs.
- Data users must invite and provide opportunity for all data originators¹² of data used in the scientific research, and at the discretion of the data user any other SEOSAW partners, to collaborate in the scientific research. Contributions to the scientific research include: i) Granting access to datasets on the SEOSAW platform, if the proposed research does not jeopardise the data originator's own research plans; ii) the formulation of research questions; iii) assisting with data analysis; or iv) paper writing;
- Data users must acknowledge the contribution of all data originators of data used in the scientific research and other contributing SEOSAW partners to all scientific research

⁶ 'Open access data' is made available to the general public in its full form without the need for an agreement between the data user and the data originator, on condition that the data user cite the data source and the SEOSAW project in publications arising from use of the data.

⁷ 'Data available on agreement' is made available to data users in its full form after agreement between the data user and the data originator, following the terms in the Data Use section of this Code of Conduct.

⁸ A Principal Investigator is the individual responsible for the preparation, conduct, and administration of the scientific research project.

⁹ 'Scientific research' is defined as any activity seeking to use the SEOSAW database as a resource to reach conclusions about a topic of interest.

¹⁰ 'Data users' are defined as SEOSAW partners who make use of the data for scientific research.

¹¹ This can be done via the SEOSAW website's contact page: <https://seosaw.github.io/contact.html>

¹² 'Data originators' are defined as SEOSAW partners who contribute data to the SEOSAW platform.

carried out using data accessed through the SEOSAW platform, in line with the conditions for **Citation and Co-authorship** described in this Code of Conduct.

- Data users must submit the final draft of their research, including a list of the datasets used, for final checks on data sharing agreements to SEOSAW before final submission.
- Publishing in journal articles often needs to meet open access requirements for data sharing. This needs to be carefully considered and no data should be shared without the permission of the data owners and SSC.

Exclusive use of the data for each scientific research question will be held for 2 years, after which other data users can apply to use the data for a similar research question.

Citation and Co-authorship

All data users are *required* to follow these steps for all scientific reports and articles produced using data accessed through the SEOSAW platform:

- Cite the original source of all datasets accessed through the SEOSAW platform that are used in the analysis.
- Offer co-authorship to all SEOSAW partners whose datasets make a material contribution to the analysis.
- Offer co-authorship to all SEOSAW partners who make a meaningful contribution to formulation of research questions, data analysis, or paper writing.
- Specify the contributions of all co-authors in the report or article¹³.
- Cite the SEOSAW platform in the report or article using the agreed citation¹⁴.
- Inform SEOSAW of any reports and articles which arise from use of the SEOSAW data.

Support

To realise the scientific potential of the SEOSAW platform, ongoing support is needed for the management and development of the resource. All SEOSAW partners, and particularly leaders of integrative and comparative studies making use of data accessed through the SEOSAW platform are therefore *encouraged* to:

- Contribute new data to the SEOSAW platform.
- Provide funding for the maintenance and/or expansion of the network
- Contribute to the cost of database management and/or SEOSAW office.
- Fund and/or contribute to capacity building of the network.
- Fund and/or supervise research students from African countries.

¹³ Using for example the guidelines described in: Tschamtkke, T., Hochberg, M. E., Rand, T. A., Resh, V. H. & Krauss, J. Author sequence and credit for contributions in multiauthored publications. PLoS Biol. 5, 0013–0014 (2007).

¹⁴ Currently, the correct citation is: The SEOSAW partnership. A network to understand the changing socio-ecology of the southern African woodlands (SEOSAW): Challenges, benefits, and methods. Plants, People, Planet. 3(3), 249-267 (2021). DOI: 10.1002/ppp3.10168. Acknowledgement needs to be given to the NERC grant as follows: “Coordination of The Socio-Ecological Observatory for Studying African Woodlands (SEOSAW; <https://seosaw.github.io>) is supported by grant no. NE/P008755/1 from the UK NERC”.

Annex 1

Data sharing agreements reviewed when compiling this document

- ForestPlots.net code of conduct <http://www.forestplots.net/en/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct> [accessed 16/02/17]*
- Ethical Code, Data Sharing & Publication Policy for RAINFOR Participants http://www.rainfor.org/upload/ManualsEnglish/RAINFOR_Policy_ENG_June09.pdf [accessed 16/02/17]
- Data Sharing & Publication Policy for Large-Scale Biosphere-Atmosphere (LBA) Participants http://lbaeco-archive.ornl.gov/lbaeco/data/data_poldoc.htm [accessed 16/02/17]
- The Latin American and Caribbean Dry Tropical Forest Network (DRYFLOR) MoU – Data sharing and publications. 17 Sep 2013.
- PREDICTS – Authorship and dissemination of data <http://www.predicts.org.uk/pages/contribute.html> [accessed 16/02/17]
- Intellectual Property Guidelines for the TRY (Plant Trait Database) Initiative https://www.try-db.org/TryWeb/TRY_Intellectual_Property_Guidelines.pdf [accessed 16/02/17]

* The ForestPlots.net code of conduct is also adopted by the African Tropical Rainforest Observation Network (AfriTRON)