Frequently Asked Questions about Use of Standardized Spreadsheets for Reporting Bat Survey Data Collected under ESA Section 10(A)(1)(a) Permits

Q1: Why did the Service decide to implement electronic permit reporting for bat data? Will similar spreadsheets be implemented for other federally listed taxa in the future?

A1: Reporting bat survey data using our standardized spreadsheets allows us to efficiently validate and collate data, which will help us conduct more comprehensive and timely data analyses and ultimately allow us to make better-informed decisions. We are starting this new permit reporting approach with bats, but we may take a similar approach with other federally listed taxonomic groups (e.g., freshwater mussels).

Q2: Why is there a different reporting spreadsheet for each region?

A2: Region-specific spreadsheets reduce errors by limiting data entry options to specific regional values and automating some error checking. The spreadsheets look identical, but differ in the options provided in the drop-down menus, which allows for state, county, species name and location coordinate checking. For example, you can add a survey in Minnesota in the Region 3 spreadsheet, but attempting to add a survey in Vermont would result in an error. In the Region 5 spreadsheet, a survey can occur in Vermont, but a Minnesota survey would result in an error. Although each Service region has a different spreadsheet, the format and information required in each is the same.

Q3: How do I know which region's reporting form to use? Does it depend on where the work is conducted or which region issued my permit?

A3: The correct reporting spreadsheet you use is determined by where you are doing your survey. So a survey done in Region 3 should be reported using a Region 3 spreadsheet, even if the survey was done under a permit issued by Region 4. Using the wrong spreadsheet should generate error messages, so it should be quickly apparent if you are using an incorrect sheet. A map of Service regions is available online at www.fws.gov/where

Q4: Is there a goal to have a single range-wide reporting spreadsheet - rather than regional spreadsheets? A range-wide sheet could make reporting easier for surveyors who work in several regions.

A4: At present, each Service region has a different permit reporting spreadsheet (see explanation above). A single spreadsheet would reduce the amount of error checking that could be done during data entry. However, the information required in each of the regional sheets is the same, and the use of each sheet is the same. But in the future we may try to design a single sheet.

Q5: Will this spreadsheet be used as the the annual report that is required by the permit?

A5: No. Annual reports, as described in permit terms and conditions, are still required. Submission of a completed spreadsheet does not mean a surveyor does not have to submit a written annual report -

this is also stated in the spreadsheet instructions. The spreadsheet standardizes the format of some of the data required to be provided in annual reports, but is <u>not</u> a substitute for the full report.

Q6: Why does the spreadsheet not allow surveyors to distinguish net height? Typically field data sheets allow for the investigator to enter whether the net set is a single-high (1x), double-high (2X), or triple-high (3). If you treat all of these as a single net in your data sheet, then you wouldn't be able to use the data to get capture rate per level of unit effort, which is typically by square meter of open net per hour. It might valuable to compare data of single, double, or triple high.

A6: Most bat surveyors will be capturing that information on their data sheets, but flight corridors can vary substantially, so the single, double, and triple may not be appropriate units of effort. We may revisit this question in more depth in the future. This is a pilot version of the spreadsheet and it will be refined in future years.

Q7: If we are not conducting presence/absence surveys, do we need to report the acoustic data by night? On many of our projects, we will collect acoustic data from 30 to 100+ nights. In this case, it may be less time-consuming to report these data by season, rather than on a nightly basis.

A7: We prefer that you report data using the data spreadsheets as designed. This best serves the goal of allowing for compilation of multiple datasets for analysis. Incorporating "seasonal" reporting into the current sheet would create a mismatch of data types that would reduce the effectiveness of the spreadsheet. We also believe there is value to understanding how the composition of bat calls changes throughout a season. This information will be unavailable if data are reported only by season. But we do not wish to unnecessarily burden surveyors that wish to contribute data. **If you are not working under a permit that requires nightly reporting**, we request you at least provide nightly data on listed species. If you would like to submit acoustic data, are not working under a permit that requires nightly reporting, and believe using this spreadsheet will be overly burdensome for reporting, please contact the field office where you will be doing the work to discuss alternative reporting options.

Q8: Will the Service notify federal permit holders when an updated version of the spreadsheet has been posted on the website? If not, then how often should we check the website for new versions of the spreadsheet?

A8: No, we will not be notifying permit holders of mid-season updates. While we do not anticipate changing the spreadsheet frequently, this is a pilot project and we do anticipate that we may find some errors in the sheet (see KNOWN ISSUES below). We will post new versions to the website as we create them, but this is likely to be no more frequent than once a month. We expect most errors will be in the background, and have little impact to most users. For that reason, for the 2016 pilot season, we will accept data in any of the 2016 versions of the spreadsheets. In future years, we expect only one version will be posted per year. If you find a particular bug and report it, we will notify you when a version correcting that bug has been posted.

Q9: Has the Service coordinated its new electronic permit reporting spreadsheet with its State agency counterparts? If so, has there been an effort to reduce redundancy in having to annually report similar or identical bat data to the Service and state agencies?

A9: We have shared our new permit reporting approach with our state counterparts. The Service is seeking ways to reduce redundancies with state partners, although efforts are in an early stage. Provided that the implementation of our new electronic reporting approach proves successful, we are willing to explore potential streamlining opportunities with other permitting agencies.

Q10: Will the Service be sharing bata data that permittees submit with the USGS' North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) and/or its Bat Population Database (BPD) or should federal permittees plan to submit their data independently?

A10: The Service has contacted and had some preliminary discussions with USGS staff regarding these continent-wide databases. An interagency data-sharing arrangement has not yet been put in place, although we do anticipate that data reported under permits will contribute to these databases in the future. In the interim, if you wish to provide data to these databases, we suggest that you do so individually.

KNOWN ISSUES

It is inevitable in an endeavor such as this that issues will be discovered along the way. Below is a table of identified issues and how to resolve them.

Spreadsheet version	Issue	Fix
1	**Capture Data worksheet**: when using the abbreviated data entry section entering "u" or "U" for unknown sex or reproductive status is not working properly.	Use the Drop-down data entry section to enter any observations where "unknown" is needed. Fixed in version 2.
1	**Capture Data worksheet**: Beginning at line 270 species codes entered into the abbreviated data entry section do not automatically populate the "Scientific name" column.	**Option 1:** Use the drop-down data entry section to select the correct scientific name. **Option 2:** If a project captures more than 266 bats, break up the data over multiple spreadsheets. Fixed in version 2.