A long-term plot network for BIOdiversity MONitoring of Island ecosystems (BioMonI-Plot)

Governance and Data Property Policy of BioMonI-Plot
Version 1
03/2025
Approved by the BioMonI members on: 12/05/2025

1. Context and objective of BioMonI-Plot

Although island ecosystems contribute disproportionately to global biodiversity and are epicenters of biodiversity change, they are poorly represented in monitoring networks.

Therefore, given the imminent biodiversity crisis, we urgently need:

i) baseline data sets relevant for analyzing large-scale biodiversity trends and for sustaining management decisions and public policies and
ii) replicable and standardized biodiversity inventories for islands to compare biological diversity distribution patterns at a large scale and to assess future changes.

To address these needs, we have created **BioMonI-Plot**, a global cross-ecosystem and cross-island long-term plot network, with a focus on marine islands. BioMonI-Plot was created as part of the Biodiversa+ Project on Biodiversity Monitoring of Island Ecosystems (2024-2027) but will be maintained beyond this period.

We acknowledge that the rules from EVA and sPlot were used as guidelines for BioMonI-Plot's Governance and Data Property Policy.

2. Roles, rights, and responsibilities

BioMonI-Plot consortium:
The BioMonI-Plot consortium comprises BioMonI members who are actively involved in BioMonI-Plot, including those responsible for funding, defining the scientific vision, coordination, data contribution and mobilization, database standardization and management, technical development, outreach (online resources), and networking with complementary initiatives. BioMonI members can join the BioMonI-Plot consortium through a self-nomination process and by contributing to more than one of the tasks previously mentioned. In addition, external members who contribute data (data custodians; see below) or make significant contributions to BioMonI-Plot (e.g., through the previously mentioned activities) may apply to join the consortium. The Steering Committee (see below) is responsible for accepting or declining these applications.

By joining the BioMonI-Plot consortium, members adhere to the principles of good scientific practice outlined in the DFG document "Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice".

Within BioMonI-Plot, the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team will oversee the day-to-day operations of BioMonI-Plot, including addressing technical issues related to data mobilization, management, and standardization, as well as fulfilling data requests. The

coordination team will also serve as a contact point for data contributors and users, and will be advised by the Steering Committee on scientific and technical matters.

Membership can be terminated either by a member's decision to withdraw or by the Steering Committee, with a two-thirds majority, when the Governance and Data Property Policy of BioMonI-Plot has been violated or if the member has been unresponsive for six months.

BioMonI-Plot Steering Committee:
The Steering Committee comprises 7-10 members from the BioMonI consortium (as described above) through a self-nomination process. As the initiative grows, additional members can join the Steering Committee through by-elections. Elections will be held every four years, with the possibility of re-election.

The Steering Committee guides scientific and practical considerations surrounding BioMonI-Plot, including defining and assigning tasks relevant to BioMonI-Plot's objectives. The committee is responsible for reviewing and accepting or declining membership applications based on significant contributions to BioMonI-Plot (as outlined above) and for approving or rejecting paper proposals (see Section 5).

The Steering Committee is also responsible for handling unforeseen issues not currently specified in the Governance and Data Property Policy. When necessary, the committee can propose changes to the Policy, which take effect after approval by the BioMonI-Plot consortium (simple majority).

Data custodians:
Here, a custodian is defined as the data contributor, who is either the data owner or a person authorized by the data owner(s) to consent to data usage (henceforth referred to as a data custodian). In collaborative or institutional initiatives or aggregated databases, the data custodian is authorized to consent to data usage and should resolve authorship rules and ownership rights among contributors before submitting the data to BioMonI-Plot. BioMonI-Plot consortium is not responsible for agreements between data owners and custodians.

With the data, each custodian will provide the metadata, proper citation, and data access level (see Sections 3 and 4). In addition, the custodian will explicitly communicate the preferred next steps in the event of inactivity or unresponsiveness for an extended period, including contact details of a deputy custodian or any associated changes in property rights, such as transitioning from restricted to free-access data. The custodian will also provide information about a new custodian when applicable.

Contributing data to BioMonI-Plot does not preclude data owners and/or custodians from expanding, using, or editing their data. Data custodians are encouraged to submit updated data versions, resulting, for example, from quality checks and resampling.

Once the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team has reviewed metadata and performed basic data quality checks and the custodian has agreed to the Governance Policy, the BioMonI-Plot Steering Committee will decide whether to approve the integration of the data in BioMonI-Plot (following the Coordination's team advice) and the custodian as a member of the BioMonI-Plot consortium (when requested).

When open-access datasets are included on BioMonI-Plot, the main responsible for the dataset will be contacted and will be invited to join the BioMonI-Plot consortium.

Data users:
A data user is an individual interested in utilizing BioMonI-Plot data. In the first stage (until March 2027), data users must be members of the BioMonI-Plot consortium, except for

open-access data (see data access levels). In a second phase, pending approval, data users may be extended beyond the BioMonI-Plot consortium.

To access the data, users must provide a brief explanation of their research idea and describe how they intend to utilize the data (see Section 4 for details). The BioMonI-Plot Steering Committee will evaluate and approve or decline data requests.

The data users agree to use the data solely for the proposed purpose and not to share any data, including free-access data (please see section 5 for further details). They are also encouraged to report any errors they find in the data.

3. Data access levels

When sharing the data with BioMonI-Plot, the custodian assigns a data access level, which can apply to the whole dataset or individual subsets.

Open data is crucial for advancing scientific understanding and informing science-based decisions. While we encourage open access, we also recognize that restrictions may be needed in particular situations.

The data access levels include:

- **Open-access data:** Open-access data for the whole community (e.g., data papers publicly available).
- **Free-access data:** The data are available only for the BioMonI-Plot consortium without requiring further custodian approval.
- **Restricted data:** The data are available for the BioMonI-Plot consortium subject to the custodian's approval.
- **Restricted (with embargo):** The data are available to the BioMonI-Plot consortium subject to the custodian's approval for a specified timeframe. After this period, they become open- or free-access data.

Regardless of the data access level, all sections of the policy apply (including authorship; see Section 6 for details)

4. Procedures of data contribution

All contributed data remains the intellectual property of the data owner and may be withdrawn at any time. Data withdrawn don’t affect previous releases and associated approved outcomes, e.g., publications.

To facilitate the data contribution process, a template with the minimum required metadata and preferred data formatting will be provided, following the Darwin Core standard. In addition, the submission must be accompanied by a confirmation of agreement with the Governance and Data Property Policy of BioMonI-Plot, as well as an agreement to publish the metadata in the BioMonI-Portal (https://www.biomoni-islandplots.eu/), specifying the data access level and preference in case of unresponsive communication. For data with “restricted (with embargo)” status, a specific date for lifting the embargo is required (see last page).

In the initial phase of BioMonI-Plot, data contributions will be handled via email through the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team at biomoni@uni-goettingen.de. In the future, data contributions will be submitted via the BioMonI-Portal (https://www.biomoni-islandplots.eu/).

5. Procedures for data request

Data users will provide a paper proposal, following a standardized template that includes the name(s) and affiliation(s) of the data user(s) (including co-authors, particularly coauthors who will have access to the data, for example, in charge of data analyses, and are not part of the BioMonI-Plot consortium), a description of the envisioned paper including a preliminary title, aim, basic methodology, and data requirements (specifying selection criteria such as geographical and temporal extent, coordinates uncertainty, among others) and explicit statement that the data users agree with the BioMonI-Plot Governance and Data Policy, including the appropriate recognition of data owners and their responsibility to follow the authorship policy (section 6).

A record of the proposed research ideas, including the submission and approval dates, will be maintained. The BioMonI-Plot Steering Committee will evaluate each proposal for potential conflicts of interest. When conflicts of interest emerge, such as overlapping research ideas, this will be communicated to the data users.

After approval, the data users have two years to develop the proposed idea. If an extension is required, the data user must apply for renewal. Otherwise, the right to use the data for the specified paper proposal expires.

The data users agree to use the data solely for the proposed purpose.

Regardless of the data access level (Section 3), data users should appropriately cite the data, and when using multiple datasets, acknowledge the funding sources of BioMonI-Plot.

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Furthermore, data cannot be circulated or shared with applicants not mentioned in the paper proposal or published online, such as supplementary material or data repositories (except for open-access data). Suppose the data user(s) intend to publish the data in any form, e.g., aggregated or subsets. In that case, the approval of the BioMonI-Plot Steering Committee and the specific data custodians is required.

The resulting publications should also be shared with the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team.

In the initial phase of BioMonI-Plot, data releases will be handled via email at biomoni@uni-goettingen.de. In the future, data releases will be handled through the BioMonI Portal (https://www.biomoni-islandplots.eu/).

6. Authorship

After the Steering Committee has approved the paper proposal, the BioMonI-Plot coordination team will share it with the entire BioMonI-Plot consortium, specifying the specific database(s) requested (including open-access databases required simultaneously). Data custodians of restricted data can agree, disagree, or request further clarification before the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team releases the data. Data custodians

of the requested databases can opt in as co-authors, independently of the data access level (Section 3). Other members of the BioMonI-Plot consortium are also invited to express their interest in becoming a co-author of the proposed publication. Yet, in the latest case, the decision of co-authorship falls entirely to the lead author of the proposed publication. Data custodian responses (for data restricted) and the interest in opt-in co-authorship must be communicated to the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team within a month.

The lead author is responsible for circulating at least one first and one pre-submission draft to all co-authors, allowing for mindful scientific contributions. BioMonI-Plot adheres to good practices regarding scientific data and publication. For more information, please read BioMonI's Data and Publication Policy. If disputes regarding co-authorship arise, the BioMonI-Plot Steering Policy will address this.

7. Consent and contact information

(Potential) members of the BioMonI-Plot consortium agree that their personal data (name, affiliation, contact information) is stored in a BioMonI-Plot repository for internal use only. Personal data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

Confirmation of agreement with the Governance and Data Property Policy of BioMonI-Plot

Please fill out the form and submit it, along with the data, to the BioMonI-Plot Coordination team at biomoni@uni-goettingen.de.

Custodian name:

Custodian email:

Do you want to become a member of the BioMonI-Plot consortium? Yes☐ No☐

Deputy custodian name:

Deputy custodian email:

Ownership (when different from the custodian name or project name):

Dataset/database name:

With the following document, I (custodian) agree to follow the Governance and Data Property Policy of BioMonI-Plot and to publish the metadata in the BioMonI-Portal (https://www.biomoni-islandplots.eu/).

The data submitted goes into the following category:

- **Open-access data:** ☐
- **Free-access data:** ☐
- **Restricted data:** ☐
- **Restricted (with embargo):** ☐ .
  Specific date for lifting the embargo:

In case of unresponsive communication by the custodian for six months, I agree to:

☐ contact the deputy custodian

☐ change in policy from restricted to free-access data

☐ other. Specify:

Additional comments:

Signature and date