

Protocol Review #2

September 28, 2006

The Site Description Sheet

The Site Description Sheet is a very important tool for you to share your intimate knowledge of the site. The information you provide on the Site Description Sheet will greatly help us identify trends in the data so it is critically important that all information is correctly completed. While most of the information may seem obvious and straightforward, it is important that everybody adheres to the same convention when filling out the Site Description Sheet. Therefore, we have provided a review of the basic components of the Site Description Sheet and how to fill in each field.

Basic Information

Site Name: If you are the first team to survey a location you can name the site anything you like (although we do request that you use the most commonly used name of the site). Otherwise, you must use the name that was formally given to the site. If you are unsure, please contact Reef Check Headquarters to determine if you are the first team to survey a site.

County: Record the county where your site is located. This will help us sort the data spatially

City/Island: Please record the name of the nearest major city or town. If you are located on an island, please record the island name.

Latitude/Longitude: Record the coordinates in degrees, minutes, and decimals (10th minutes). Remember, latitude is measured as north and south, and longitude is measured as east and west. All surveys in California should be north latitude and west longitude, at least for the next couple million years.

Date: For each survey spanning more than 1 day to complete, record the date you started the first transect and the date the final transect was completed. Each survey should be completed within a six week time span from the first to the last transect.

Weather: Indicate the general weather conditions that prevailed over the sampling period. If the surveys were conducted over multiple days, record the weather condition that was most representative of average conditions.

Temperature: Temperature is an important component of any survey. Please record the temperature (Celsius) on the surface and in the water during each survey. A conversion calculator is provided in the Excel data entry sheets to convert from Fahrenheit to Celsius. If the surveys were conducted over multiple days, use a representative water temperature for the survey period (e.g., an average).

Distance from shore: Record the approximate distance of the center of your site from shore in meters (remember there is a conversion calculator in the data entry form).

Average Depth of Site: Record the average depth of your site (in meters). We understand that depth can be extremely variable (we have the detailed data on the fish data entry sheets), but please do your best to estimate the depth that accurately characterizes the reef you are surveying.

Site Exposure: When analyzing data, it is important for us to ensure we are comparing reefs of similar types to each other. As you can imagine, highly exposed reefs are likely to exhibit different physical and biological characteristics than fully sheltered reefs. Record whether the site you are surveying is always sheltered, sometimes sheltered, or exposed. An example of a reef that is sometimes sheltered would be one that is only exposed to swells and/or storms a certain time of year (*i.e.*, exposed to winter swells out of the north, but sheltered from summer swells out of the south).

Storms: Recent storms provides additional insight into recent physical disturbances that may have affected your survey site. Recent is defined as within the previous week, and is a storm that was accompanied by significant wind, waves/swell, and/or rain.

Transects completed

Ideally, all transects should be completed for each survey and all errors corrected by repeated surveys. If for some reason, however, that your team is unable to complete all the required transects or there are errors in the data that could not be collected, than they should be noted here. A common example of this might be the lack of sufficient urchins to complete the urchin sizing protocol during your survey.

Impacts

Please estimate the overall anthropogenic (human-caused) impact at your site based on the descriptions below. This is the part where you get to impart your LOCAL knowledge of your site. Use your historical knowledge of the site to answer the questions as best you can for the peak season of the site. If, for example, a site is loaded with lobster traps (but only during lobster season) you would record your site as high commercial fishing and could include a note in the comments section.

Commercial Fishing (fish caught to sell during peak season)

Unknown

None

Low — Less than once per week

Med — More than once per week, but less than daily

High — Daily fishing

Recreational Fishing (fish caught for personal consumption or for recreation- peak season)

Unknown

None

Low — Less than once per week

Med — More than once per week, but less than daily

High — Daily fishing

Diving/Snorkeling (peak season daily average within 100m of transect area)

Unknown

None

Low — 1-5 individuals per day

Med — 6-20 individuals per day

High — More than 20 individuals per day

Sewage Pollution (OUTFALL OR BOAT)

Unknown

None

Low — Irregular or rare discharge

Med — Source of discharge > 100m but < 500m from site
High — Source of discharge < 100m from any transect on site

Non-point Source Pollution

Unknown

None

Low — Source > 0.5 km

Med — Source between 0.1 and 0.5 km

High — Source less than 100 m

Other Pollution: List any other types of pollution that may be affecting your site (*i.e.*, thermal/heat pollution from a nearby powerplant).

Other Comments: Please note any comments you might have regarding other impacts or specific descriptions of the impacts you listed.

Protection

As discussed in previous chapters, evaluation of the effectiveness of management strategies is a primary goal of Reef Check California. Given that MPAs are a widely used tool to protect and conserve marine resources, it is very important to correctly record the status of the survey site. If you are unsure of the status of your site, please contact us headquarters and we can help you.

Type of Protection

Reserve -- all take is prohibited

Park -- may allow recreational take

Conservation area -- may allow limited recreational and commercial take.

Other -- areas such as Casino Point on Catalina. Although there is no official protected status, the recreational diving community strongly discourages take within the park boundaries creating a de facto reserve. Be sure to include comments any time "other" is selected.

Level of Poaching

Unknown

None

Low — rarely if ever

Med — sometimes observed or known to occur

High — often observed or known to occur

Which activities are banned?

Check yes or no to denote which activities are banned. A Reserve, for example, might have all activities banned (yes) except for anchoring and diving (no).

Team Information

Please record the name of the team member who submitted the data (usually the team leader), the name of the team member who checked the data, and list the names and of all team members. Team members should be indicated by their full first and last names. It is extremely important that team member names are recorded and entered consistently and correctly. If not, the names will not match the names of certified divers in our database when we check the data, and the submission will be flagged for review.

As always, we are here to help. Please send any questions to us at california@reefcheck.org