



Significant Open Access Reports (SOAR)

1. Preamble

As a scientific research foundation, WERF has a fundamental interest in ensuring that research findings are readily available to those who need it. Subscriber access to objective research improves services, promotes public health and protects the environment. In some situations involving issues of wide societal significance, subscribers benefit by having WERF research freely available to policymakers, regulators, the media, and the public.

The internet has transformed the communications of science and scholarly research. There is a steady growth in open access publishing and archiving which provide free digital access to the latest scientific knowledge. Recognizing that, in some circumstances, our obligations to our subscribers may include informing the public debate, WERF supports unrestricted access to research outputs on select topics undergoing pivotal societal dialogue. We therefore establish the designation of "Significant Open Access Reports" to enable that dialogue.

2. Policy Objective

The objective of the SOAR policy is to improve access to WERF-managed research outputs on projects that can add objective science to the debate on issues of wide societal significance.

3. Guiding Principles

Following WERF's vision and its commitment to using good science to support innovative technology and effective operations, these principles guide the provision of free public access to research outputs:

- maintaining WERF's high standards and quality of research with a strong commitment to transparency, integrity and ethics
- facilitating interaction between practitioners, educators, researchers, decision makers, and the public to promote environmentally and technologically sound options
- advancing the knowledge and effectiveness of practitioners and researchers in the field of water quality improvement
- promoting and facilitating partnerships among industry, government, and institutions to address water quality issues of common concern
- engaging subscribers, the water quality community, funding agencies, non-traditional stakeholders (media, local/state/federal government, advocacy groups), volunteers, and others, by effectively communicating research findings

4. Application

SOAR applies to selected reports on topics of wide societal significance that have received funding in whole or in part from WERF.

WERF may designate selected reports as “Significant Open Access Reports” and may provide those research products free online. The request for designation can originate from any subscriber, staff director, board committee or council. Any one of the following can grant approval:

- A majority of the members of the Communications Advisory Committee
- A majority of the members of the Research Council
- A majority of the Board of Directors
- The WERF Executive Director

Once WERF designates the report as open access, a pdf version of the report will be available, free of charge, on the WERF website.

For now, WERF will limit this policy to selected peer-reviewed final reports and executive summaries.

5. Monitoring and Adherence

By accepting WERF funds, grant recipients acknowledge that they have accepted the terms and conditions of the grant or award as set out in the WERF's policies and guidelines. In the event of an alleged breach of WERF funding policy, WERF may take steps to deal with the allegation.

6. Policy Review

WERF will review and update this policy as needed.

Approved the Board of Directors, December 16, 2008.

Effective July 1, 2009.