

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR FIELDWORK

Pollution and Diseases — International Scientific Journal

<https://pollution-diseases.org>

Fieldwork is essential for documenting pollution events, environmental changes, disease outbreaks, and ecological dynamics. Because field research often involves vulnerable ecosystems, endangered species, sensitive communities, and localized environmental hazards, *Pollution and Diseases* requires authors to follow strict ethical standards.

These guidelines ensure that fieldwork is conducted safely, responsibly, and in compliance with legal and cultural norms.

1. General Principles

All fieldwork submitted to the journal must adhere to the following principles:

- **Integrity:** data must be collected honestly and transparently.
- **Respect:** for ecosystems, species, communities, and cultural contexts.
- **Safety:** of researchers, local populations, and wildlife.
- **Compliance:** with local, national, and international laws.
- **Minimization of Harm:** research activities should avoid unnecessary disturbance or damage.
- **Documentation:** authors must provide accurate records of methods, locations, and permits.
- **Accountability:** researchers are responsible for ethical practice at all stages.

2. Legal and Institutional Permissions

Authors must obtain and document all necessary permissions:

2.1. Fieldwork Permits

Required when accessing:

- protected areas,
- national parks,
- conservation zones,
- restricted ecological or archaeological sites.

2.2. Collection Permits

Needed for:

- biological samples,
- soil, water, or sediment samples,
- specimens from endangered or protected species (when legally allowed).

2.3. Ethical Approvals

When working with humans, authors must follow:

- institutional review boards (IRB/ethics committees),
- community-based or tribal research approvals (if applicable).

2.4. International Agreements

Fieldwork involving biological materials must comply with:

- **Nagoya Protocol** (access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources),
- **CITES** regulations for protected species,
- local laws governing bio-specimen transport.

Authors must retain documentation and provide proof upon request.

3. Minimizing Ecological and Environmental Impact

Field activities must be designed to minimize harm.

Researchers must:

- use non-destructive sampling methods when possible;
- avoid disturbance to nesting, breeding, or migration;
- follow IUCN and national guidelines for wildlife interactions;
- limit the use of intrusive equipment;

- restore sites after sampling (when relevant);
- avoid contaminating environments with chemicals, fuels, or waste.

Prohibited practices include:

- collecting endangered species without explicit legal authorization,
- disturbing fragile habitats unnecessarily,
- damaging vegetation, geological formations, or cultural heritage sites,
- introducing non-native materials or organisms into the field site.

4. Engagement with Local Communities

When fieldwork involves human communities, particularly Indigenous or marginalized groups:

- researchers must obtain informed consent;
- communities must be informed of research objectives;
- benefits should be shared when appropriate;
- culturally sensitive areas must be respected;
- researchers must avoid exploiting local knowledge without attribution.

Authors should consider using **Participatory Research Methods** where appropriate.

5. Researcher Safety and Hazard Management

Field research often involves risks. Authors must describe measures taken to ensure safety.

5.1. Risk Assessment

Researchers should evaluate:

- extreme weather conditions,
- chemical or toxic exposure,
- wildlife hazards,
- contaminated environments,
- physical dangers (terrain, water, machinery),
- presence of infectious diseases.

5.2. Safety Protocols

Field teams must have:

- emergency plans,
- communication systems,
- personal protective equipment (PPE),
- safe handling procedures for hazardous samples.

5.3. Medical and Environmental Precautions

Authors must follow:

- vaccination guidelines,
- environmental hygiene standards,
- decontamination procedures for polluted sites.

6. Accuracy and Transparency in Data Collection

Authors must ensure:

- precise recording of sampling locations (GPS coordinates optional if sensitive),
- metadata accompanying all datasets,
- proper calibration of instruments,
- avoiding selective or biased sampling,
- complete documentation of protocols and deviations.

Data fabrication or selective reporting is considered misconduct.

7. Handling of Sensitive Geospatial Information

Some field data may reveal locations that could:

- endanger protected species,
- threaten sacred or culturally sensitive sites,
- expose politically or economically vulnerable communities.

Options include:

- masking exact coordinates,
- reducing spatial resolution,
- sharing data upon reasonable request rather than public release.

Authors must explain these decisions in the Data Availability Statement.

8. Ethical Handling of Human Remains, Cultural Artifacts, or Contested Sites

Fieldwork involving:

- archaeological materials,
- burial sites,
- historical remains,
- culturally sensitive artifacts,

requires:

- legal authorization,
- community consent where applicable,
- transparent ethical review.

Unauthorized work in such locations is prohibited.

9. Transport, Storage, and Disposal of Samples

9.1. Biological and Environmental Samples

Must be handled according to:

- biosafety level requirements (if applicable),
- contamination prevention standards,
- labeling and tracking systems.

9.2. Hazardous Materials

Polluted samples (e.g., toxic sediments, contaminated water) must be disposed of following environmental regulations.

10. Authorship and Documentation

Authors must accurately acknowledge:

- field assistants,
- local guides or community members,
- institutions that granted access,
- funding sources.

Field notes, photographs, and logs must be kept as part of the research archive.

11. Reporting Ethical Compliance

All fieldwork-based manuscripts must include:

- a statement of ethical compliance,
- a list of permits and approvals,
- explanation of any sensitive data restrictions,
- confirmation of adherence to these guidelines.

Failure to meet ethical standards may result in rejection or retraction.

12. Violations and Misconduct

Violations of these guidelines will be investigated using **COPE flowcharts**.

Consequences may include:

- request for clarification or correction,
- rejection of the manuscript,
- retraction after publication,
- reporting to institutions or funders,
- temporary or permanent submission ban.

Conclusion

The Ethical Guidelines for Fieldwork ensure that research published in *Pollution and Diseases* respects ecosystems, communities, and scientific integrity. By following these principles, authors contribute to responsible and sustainable research practices essential for studying pollution and disease in real-world environments.