**MMPRNT Project Policy on authorship**

**Motivation:** This document is meant to provide guiding principles for research projects that are likely to lead to a research manuscript. Manuscript authorship is a primary metric for assessing productivity and merit in academia, as well as a validation of the time/energy dedicated by researchers. Thus it is not surprising that conflicts can arise surrounding authorship. This document is intended to clearly define the responsibilities and expectations for authorship, and should be agreed-upon by all project participants.

**1) Criteria for inclusion as an author on a paper for all project participants**

Substantial contribution to project conception and design

OR

Partake in significant portion of data collection (field or lab)

OR

Partake in data processing, analysis and interpretation

AND

Drafting text, figures, or framework for all or part of the manuscript

OR

Critically revising the manuscript for important intellectual content

AND

Final approval of, and accountability for, the submitted manuscript

Author order

* *Lead author* responsibilities: specifics will be defined by the group (see below), but should include: project leadership (coordination of tasks, timelines), primary manuscript writer; and usually include: design or initiation of the project, data synthesis and interpretation. In the case of co-leads, a coin will be flipped to decide which is listed first.
* *Last author* (if not alphabetical) responsibilities: oversee project as senior mentor, vouch for data integrity. This will often be the primary advisor of lead author.
* Due to their role in developing questions, securing funding, and managing the project as a whole, all lead PIs (Tiemann, Friesen, Evans) will be co-authors on papers in which the author or work in the publication is primarily funded by MMPRNT, or research is derived from ideas in the proposal. If the PIs have not been involved at all, ideas are only topically related to the project themes, or the research used only a small amount of MMPRNT funding, or criteria are otherwise blurry, authorship for all PIs is NOT automatic, and will be discussed by PIs and project lead on a case by case basis.
* In the case of equal contribution for middle authors, authors will be listed alphabetically, but requests for a more random approach (e.g. draw straws) will be respected.
* All manuscripts generated from this project will contain a paragraph detailing author contributions. Contributions can also be noted on the project website and, when appropriate, individuals’ CVs.

Other considerations

* To earn authorship, responsibilities should be completed in a timely manner. Significant delay on tasks may warrant a reassessment of inclusion as an author. Specifically, MS feedback or contributed analysis should be addressed within 3 months of the request. In addition, if a participant leaves an institution prior to publishing their manuscript, they will have ~1 year to submit their work before a co-author can raise the concerns to the group and potentially take over manuscript writing and submitting.
* Non-author personnel contributing to any of the above criteria will be acknowledged in the Acknowledgements sections of presentations and manuscripts. Note that following the above criteria, data providers are not assumed to be co-authors, but should always be acknowledged.

**2) Process for determining authorship**

* At the start of a project, or as early as the participants in a project become clear, the participants should discuss project roles (e.g. who is lead) among one another or PIs, if unclear.
* As projects become a clear “unit”, the PIs will talk to the primary contributors and add a (proposed) paper title and author list to a Draft Publication list. This list will be maintained on the project website to maximize communication and transparency and will be reviewed at each project meeting.
* At each project meeting (min biannually), participants in each project should meet to: a) discuss updates, progress on tasks, and next steps and b) check to make sure authorship inclusion and order is still representative.
* If many participants have contributed to the project at the early stages (e.g. intellectually, through time collecting data or developing methods, or carrying out activities in box 1 under criteria), before data analysis and writing begins, all contributors are free to “opt-in” and gain authorship, contingent that they can (have the appropriate skills) and will (commit time) meet the above criteria.1

**References and log:**

* Evans revised Oct 2016 – revised and approved by group Oct 28 2016
* Authorship citeria adapted from: Strange K (2008) Authorship: why not just toss a coin? American Journal of Physiology-Cell Physiology 295:C567-C575
* Authorship order criteria informed by *Nature*’s authorship policy: <http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/authorship.html>
* See also: Weltzin et al., *PNAS,* 2006, Cheruvelil et al, *Frontiers in Ecology*, 2014, Duke and Porter, *BioScience*, 2013.

1 The decision to opt-in should not be taken lightly; authorship is still contingent on meeting the authorship criteria. Participants should consider whether the project aligns with primary interests, whether they have the skills to contribute, and discuss the decision with their PI or lead. Students and postdocs should remember that no number of second author papers equals a first author paper, and to manage time to insure completion of lead projects!