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Coordinating Committee Meeting, Trout Lake, Wisconsin, September 1985

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MINUTES FROM MEETING OF THE LTER COORDINATING COMMITTEE
HELD AT TROUTLAKE, WISCONSIN ON SEPTEMBER 16-17, 1985

1. Feedback from NSF on the first round of LTER renewals (from Callahan and Wm. Patrick).

Panel consisted of Bledsoe, Neiman, Cates, Patrick, VanCleve, and Robert Cook (Cornell). Site reviews were held at Niwot, Konza and North Inlet (more are planned for round 2; indeed, all sites can expect visits during the next grant period). All sites provided an addendum. Themes from review process:

- A. LTER good thing but approach, etc. highly variable among projects.
- B. Panel was complimentary about choice of 5 original core areas (in RFP). Determined that all projects would address these 5 points in their progress reports. Organize around them. Addenda required summarizing progress by points.

Bill Patrick's comments (mainly for benefit of Round 2): Ecology division in NSF nervous about program; necks are out. Panel impressed with programs and progress. Address those initial 5 core areas (objectives). Programs variable in level of data collection and of experimentation. Mix of both was best, i.e., work on both ecosystem function and experimentation. Surprised at how well program had done in first five years. Late starters were probably penalized over established sites but may be in better position to shine in future. More bang for bucks.

Question about capturing events (episodes), which was part of original RFP. Response was that panel felt it was important to do but did not know what that meant in terms of balance.

Patrick advised that reviews were longer and more critical than was probably typical of normal NSF review process. NSF asked panelists to be very critical, lay it on line. Verbatim reviews will be sent following proposal actions.

Question about panel priority on synthesis in activity of projects, i.e., how does it rate relative to collecting data and experiments? Proposals did not get good marks on synthesis. Patrick surprised that there is a problem for ecosystem scientists to do. Shortcoming of programs. Would favor assigning resources to getting it done.

PRESENTATIONS ON SYNTHESIS ACTIVITIES WILL BE A FUTURE PART OF OUR LTER COORDINATION MEETING, i.e., presentations on the approaches that are being taken. Two or three per meeting. Pomeroy-Wiegert book on saltmarsh is viewed as good model.

2. Feedback from sites on renewal process.

Niwot viewed it as very positive process. Have much better program as a result. Number of projects and PIs reduced in the proposal. Concern over inclusion of lakes; reduced scope of lakes. Also concern over conceptual

tie of terrestrial and aquatic. Criticized for lack of belowground studies; will design a program using workshop approach.

North Inlet also viewed as positive experience; it encouraged collaboration. Criticized for failure to do manipulative research and to address the five core topics. Group has a problem determining what constitutes a disturbance for the site.

Konza viewed review as valuable experience which strengthened program. Criticized for lack of work on primary productivity; solved this by spelling it out for aboveground but had to modify program to deal with belowground. Lack of work on belowground processes, in general. Added in major way. Criticized for lack of integration among major activities; presentations left impression of isolated individuals. Major linkage is now developing with agricultural groups that will strengthen program.

Northern Lakes was asked to address issues of synthesis, progress in 5 core areas. Reviewers wanted more work on land x water interactions. Wanted more anion/cation work and work on macrophytes. Passed on macrophytes for time being. Are stream inputs an important aspect of biogeochemical cycling in NL systems? Group has judged no, but will estimate. Magnuson has strong feelings that to work only around the five core areas might be very stifling. Not good mechanisms for unifying themes. Also, synthesis in mathematical model context is viewed as a bad idea. Synthesis needs to be more opportunistic. Conceptual level, not necessarily holistic, not model constrained.

Major discussion ensued at the five core topic areas as unifying or focusing devices in which Patrick, Callahan, Magnuson, Woodmansee and Franklin were prominent. The emphasis on the five core topics was viewed as a surprise by all Round 1 sites but also not viewed as that much of a problem since they are so broad.

Short discussion also ensued of the advisory bodies that each site has constituted. Callahan felt at least some sites have not been making proper/adequate use of these groups, i.e., dodging through various stratagems including infrequent meetings (less than annual). It does seem that greater use of this potentially valuable source of criticism and advice could be made.

3. Status of approved activities.

Sediment workshop is being held at this time. They were able to obtain the keynoter that they wanted. Not all sites are participating.

The research projects of Fitzgerald and Berish are progressing well. Berish got off to a very rapid start.

Greenland gave an encouraging report on the meteorological group's activities. He has completed a draft of the "standards" document and it is being reviewed by his committee for eventual issuance in loose leaf form to allow updating. A basic document on meteorological conditions at the LTER sites is in preparation and will probably be published at

University of Colorado with, perhaps, an open literature summary. Next activities of group are not determined at this time. These were discussed in the context of the upcoming Data Manager's session at Las Cruces and results of that effort may help define future directions of meteor group.

Franklin reported that he has not proceeded on a small meeting with other individuals interested in long-term research to consider needs for collaboration, affiliation, etc. He will do so in next 6 months.

Stream workshop (primarily on detritus) will be held 17-18 October at Coweeta. This effort is led by Webster.

4. Discussion of May brain-storming session.

The results of this session were discussed during parts of both days of the meeting. One product of that meeting is the manuscript on geomorphic/ecosystem interactions generated by Swanson. Tim Kratz made a short presentation. All sites should have received a copy of the manuscript and Swanson urgently requires input from interested individuals and sites. Prompt responses are requested and seem a very reasonable request on something that is rolling. Swanson intends to revise and possibly get together with a small group for final touches sometime this fall. Niwot, N. Lakes, Pawnee, and Coweeta are among the sites that have direct interest/relevance.

Comments on the value of the May brainstorming session and possibility of further similar activities were solicited from each of the sites. Negative comments had to do mainly with the issue of completion or "closure" with regards to ideas and with the fact that progress can only really come through the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals or small groups. Closure issue is critical and Franklin felt that senior individuals at sites have to make personal commitments to carrying out as well as generating the ideas.

Other comments: enough ideas are out on the table, don't need to generate more at the moment; concept papers like Swanson's are a good product, very adequate accomplishment; session good in allowing talks at conceptual level -- weren't restricted to topic; presence of Hautaloma was valuable; people have to be motivated by excitement, in end must have commitment by one or several individuals; senior investigators cannot delegate all of the responsibility for the intersite activities, buck really stops with us. Patten commented that the integration potential is already available in system themes, needs to be developed in central way in programs (e.g., indirect effects theme at Okeefeenokee); sessions are necessary step in evolution of process.

Consensus: Good feeling about what was done in May, concern about carrying ideas forward to completion, satisfaction with conceptual papers as products. Quite a bit of forward progress, commitment, on most of the topics. Priority listing has no real meaning.

5. Proposed activities under current grant.

Only proposal pending was Haines and after short discussion decision was made not to support it at this time and stage of development.

6. Future of LTER Coordinating Committee.

Continuation of the group was discussed including leadership and problems associated with development of a new grant proposal. It appears that Whitford will not be in position to assume the chairmanship; this problem will be explored before the next meeting. The need to generate concrete outputs from this grant was discussed if we are to compete successfully for another grant.

It appears currently that we will have to develop a new grant proposal in late summer/fall 1986 in order to obtain funding early in 1987. This would be after all 11 sites have been through the renewal process.

7. Data Management Workshop.

The content of the January 1986 data management workshop in Las Cruces was discussed. A document provided by Conley was provided the group. Major question seemed to be issue of whether an LTER Coordinating Committee meeting would be held at the same time as was originally planned; it will not be. Participation will include a data management and a scientist type from each site and the program will focus upon climatological data. PIs are invited and encouraged to attend.

8. Information items from NSF.

Upcoming workshop/training session of remote sensing was discussed. All sites should have letter from Sweringer in hand. This workshop will be held at the University of New Mexico in November of 1986. Developed by NSF in cooperation with NASA and UNM Technical Applications Center. Will use existing LTER groups to form a first class on utilization of remotely sensed data and, reciprocally, to provide feedback on value and limitations of that data. Participants will leave with data sets pertinent to the LTER sites. There will be no out-of-pocket costs, just the time of two people, who should include a lead scientist and a data management type.

NSF's Biological Research Resources Program (Dr. James Edwards) has prepared and sent out a flier requesting proposals for support of terrestrial and freshwater field research facilities. Requests will be considered for up to \$100,000/year, with the possibility of submitting proposals (and receiving awards) for each of the five years. The requests should be for major renovations and pieces of equipment.

Liz Blood provided some information on the attitude of the Marine Facilities Panel of which she has been a part (there will be a similar special panel established to handle the terrestrial and freshwater). She indicated that their panel developed the following attitudes:

- First cut was made on who is doing good quality research.
- Play up uniqueness of site, personnel and their leadership role.
- Ask for instruments that really fit needs of station.
- 2 or 3 major items is better than shopping list of many small items (often viewed as stuff university should provide).
- Vehicles and boats should be provided by university (may be an exception in some circumstances but burden of proof is on proposee).
- Show a lot of university support.
- RENOVATIONS OR ADDITIONS, not new construction. Will buy off on building 3 walls but not four. Add onto existing, make improvements.
- Document on major piece of equipment how it is going to contribute.
- Include accurate publication and current grant list (don't pad).
- Do not appear arrogant!
- Demonstrate how previous awards advanced program. Build over years, bearing in mind that the potential exists for multiple grants, 50-100 K/yr for each year of competition. If you have had grants from BRR start right away demonstrating what has been accomplished with previous support.
- Computers are okay, but not one for each desk! Equipment has to be AT the field station (creativity may be possible on this score, but be aware that it is an issue with equipment purchases). Document what is at field site already.
- To be eligible, must be level 3 ecological facility, year around with a resident staff. Some sites may have problems with distance from campus; talk with program director.
- Make TO DO about use of site by outside investigators.
- Panels will evaluate each item in the grant request in the context of specific research efforts. Will do item x item comparison. SCRUTINY!

9. IGBP.

Woodmansee reported on progress of International Geosphere/Biosphere Program (Global Change Program). The LTER sites are in a good position to be involved. Are being cited as examples of the locales the program should be done in two reports. There are a series of workshops to refine/define tractable questions. Issues involving biogenic x atmospheric gasses interactions seem likely as do estuarine and coastal issues.

10. Approach to intersite collaboration in the Round 1 proposals.

Each of the six Round 1 sites commented on their approach to the intersite issue in the renewal proposals for the benefit of the Round 2 sites. Wide divergence in terms of specificity.

11. Next all-scientist meeting.

The next all scientist meeting will be held early in the next LTER grant period. Tentative concept is spring of 1987. A subcommittee of Tilman, Woodmansee and Blood (chairperson) was set up to develop alternative plans for location and structure of the session.

Comment was made that we need a better mix of people from beyond LTER sites. Also, keynoters should include some of us LTERs. Keynotes can be used to bring/force closure on some of the ideas for intersite that we have been generating. Publication of keynotes as a volume is possible.

12. Next briefing for NSF and other federal agencies in DC.

Callahan advised that it is time to think about the next briefing session in DC. One plan would be a session in late spring of 1986 after all sites have turned in their renewal proposals. Tom will begin exploring possible dates. This is a major item on the agenda for the next LTER-CC meeting.

13. Next LTER Coordinating Committee meeting.

Plan is for meeting on April 29-30 at Cedar Creek (Minneapolis). Session will commence at 8:00 a.m. on the 29th and be completed by early afternoon on the 30th. Agenda items include next briefing session, next all-scientist meeting, next committee chairman and grant proposal, and report on data management workshop.

COMMITTEE'S THANKS AND ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO NORTHERN LAKES PERSONNEL FOR HOSTING THIS MEETING.