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Coordinating Committee Meeting, Fairbanks, Alaska, August, 2004

Long Term Ecological Research Network

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Minutes of the Fall 2004 CC Meeting
Fairbanks and Toolik Lake, August 16-22, 2004

Thursday August 19

Henry Gholz – Report from NSF (via videoconference from Washington)

Introduced Science Assistant Michelle Kelleher; working on broader impacts brochure with Thomas McOwiti

Also introduced Kel Wieder – Ecosystems Program Officer; will help Henry with LTER. Feel free to contact Kel if Henry isn't available.

This is the fourth of a series of meetings Henry is conducting with LTER Committees. He has had videoconferences with the IM committee and the International Committee and has just arranged to meet with Education Committee.

Has five items to discuss:
- Open BIO Assistant Director position – LTER should work to uncover appropriate candidates and encourage to apply
- Glad to see Coordinating Committee (CC) addressing LTER Network Office (LNO) Strategic Plan, which is a critical thing that needs to be done by fall. The LNO Strategic Plan should be in place by time planning grant starts, so that the network planning activity can address the altered role of LNO in a newly-designed LTER.
- Six site visits plus LNO in 2005; two sites already scheduled (Coweeta for June 28-30 and North Temperate Lakes for week of May 23). PIs whose sites are up for review need to contact Henry and so do volunteers for possible reviewers.

Speaking of reviews: it is clearly time to get serious about reviewing information management as part of the renewal process. The Information Management (IM) committee is preparing a document on guidelines for review of IM activities. Reviewers for sites will increasingly be drawn form outside LTER community. Therefore, there is a need for need better standards and metrics. Please support your individual IM and the committee

Concerns include Ecological Metadata Language (EML) adoption; only 42% have gotten there; this has been going on for over 18 months. Better progress needs to be made, and sites, IM committees, and LNO need to be involved. Web sites were discussed at last renewal. Eight sites reviewed were so variable, so different, that they were hard to assess across sites. Comments from reviewers reflected this problem. Participation in Clim and HydroDB were also scrutinized by reviewers. Data access (not just what's there, but ease of access) continues to be an issue that must be addressed. First, 05 site reviews will be in May and renewal panel in Spring of 06. The input from IM committee will be vetted by CC and is as much for the Network as for NSF. Will be utilized starting with 05 site reviews.

- Follow-up to Niwot Ridge children's book; good conversation with McKnight and McOwiti; McKnight has negotiated another book with Roberts-Rinehart. There is the possibility of developing a set of books from the three polar sites for international polar year. Very exciting development, and NSF and LTER get a lot of mileage out of these kinds of activities.
- Planning grant - award letter in process and should arrive within 2 weeks. There was broad support across NSF for the planning grant. This is an unprecedented opportunity to redefine future of our science and our own program. Henry read an excerpt from internal analysis:
- The LTER Network is underutilized by everybody, and therefore has not reached full potential. This is the first concrete example of entire program trying to adopt NSF's own recommendations for integrating education and research.
- Opportunity to leverage funds is enormous. By redesigning core glue program we increase the potential even more.
- The planning grant has global implications. Also a big planning time for ILTER, which will watch closely what's going on with U.S. LTER.
- Planning grant represents an opportunity to gather and coalesce ideas of US ecological community

Five areas of concern about planning grant:
- No explicit plan for increasing participation of underrepresented groups

- Not a lot of innovative thinking evident in proposal. One reviewer thought that this was a fatal flaw. Need to incorporate more integrative thinking from the ground up
- Potential links and synergisms but also potential distractions from National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON), the Consortium for the Advancement of Hydrological Sciences, Inc (CUAHSI), and the Collaborative Large-Scale Engineering Analysis Network for Environmental Research (CLEANER)
- Broad participation from outside and inside LTER is critical, and need to address breadth of interest in NSF
- No guarantee of additional funding; proposals will be reviewed and considered by all appropriate programs at NSF; will be considered for new funding if request was of a size or nature that didn't fit within existing programs (e.g., Cyberinfrastructure)
- Should be clear synergisms with NEON (especially in IM), but LTER budget is on same magnitude as NEON budget. Therefore, NSF will view outcomes of planning process in serious way
- 05 budget – LTER has done pretty well over last couple of years; request for substantial increase in LTER in BIO budget, but this may fall victim to bad timing; increase includes increments for renewed sites; funding to bring up KNZ, SGS, AND; absorption of Education and Human Resources (EHR) contribution to urban sites; funding future does not look good; Henry would like us to consider what would get sacrificed if LTER were cut; increments, low sites, supplements, or whatever.

Question: (Gosz) – What should we do about annual reports?

Answer (Gholz): Continue to send in, but Henry will not sign off on them until there is some collective decision about how to handle possible cuts. Final decision may have to wait until after election.

Question: (Gosz) – How do you want comments from us?

Answer: (Gholz) – I'd like collective response, but feel free to contact me individually if you want.

Comment: (Gosz) – We spoke to Arden Bement (Acting Director of NSF) last night and got the general idea that he was well-informed and positive about both LTER and NEON. We gave him handouts and copy of BioScience.

Comment: (Shaver) – right now Bement is on way to Toolik Lake with a group from University of Alaska.

NISAC report

Gosz introduced Don Henshaw, who reported on the activities of the Network Information System Advisory Committee (NISAC). Gosz pointed that Henry's comments on data accessibility at Portland were more pointed regarding the need to improve all facets of data access.

Don gave an overview of the activities and recommendations of the NISAC. These included 1) strategies for Network Information System (NIS) development, 2) current technology issues, and 3) protocol for selection of new NIS modules.

The process for selection of new NIS modules was presented in depth and included a recommended motion from NISAC: to adopt the process as recommended by NISAC whereby new modules are added and maintained in the Network Information System. Jim Gosz noted that the Executive Committee had discussed the motion and recommends it to the CC.

Comment: (Chapin): We should encourage data bases that facilitate site science.

Comment: (Hobbie): We need a Blue Book like module with site information

Comment: (Benson): Site DB fulfills this need.

Comment: (Shaver): This is a good idea, but does this address the problem that Henry raised?

Robertson and Grimm moved and seconded that we approve the NISAC recommended motion regarding selection of new modules for the NIS. Motion passed 20-0.

Jim Gosz introduced the next topic, which were the efforts by the information managers at the Portland meeting. Peter McCartney made a presentation of recommendations from the IM Committee about 1) reaffirming the importance of publishing datasets online as per Network data release policy, 2) standardizing interfaces through which data are accessed across the network, and 3) standardizing data use requirements across the network. Peter also discussed ongoing IM activities, including 1) Metadata Best Practices guide, 2) common LTER data catalogue and standard query interface, and 3) Information Management Evaluation Guide. Discussion followed.

Comment: (Shaver) - Disagrees that information managers should be responsible for determining criteria. Thinks that others should be involved as well as data managers.

Comment: (Briggs) - We have previously developed policy regarding this.

Comment: (Ellison) - There is a difference between the look and feel and actual presence of data.

Comment: (Ritchie) - Should be expectation that things should be ongoing.

Comment: (Gosz) - Commitment needs to be there for information management

Question: (Gragson) - Does a draft document exist? Can the sites coming up for review get a look at this document now?

Comment: (Grimm) - This is a good idea, but would like to see this as a fairly concise document. Would Henry want to put this in the award letter to sites?

Comment: (Kloeppel): Sites up for review need the information soon.

Comment: (Briggs) - Sites up for review could be test sites for new system.

Comment: (Shaver) - The data use requirements point is the most important of these issues.

Comment: (Ellison) - Support and amplify what Gus said. ESA has been discussing this before 1994. The issue with ESA is getting the search engine up first.

Comment: (Hayden and Ducklow) - Need to look at the OCE guidelines, which are more stringent than DEB guidelines.

Comment: (Ellison) – Please make sure that these recommendations are finalized in a timely manner so the sites up for visits in 2005 know what to expect.

Comment: (Waide) – Goes beyond accessibility to actually encouraging people to use our data.

Grimm moved and Hopkinson seconded: that the NISAC revise the LTER Network data access policy statement so that it is consistent across the network and across different directorates that are funding LTER and so that it incorporates data use guidelines for the network. Passed 23-0.

Gosz: NISAC should do this ASAP

LNO Strategic Plan

Jim Gosz described the process for competing and submitting the LNO Strategic Plan, emphasizing the need for the LNO to submit a final document by December 1.

Bob Waide discussed the timeline for the preparation of Draft 8 of the LNO Strategic Plan. He handed out a summary

of the major points of the plan for discussion, as well as a description of the duties of LNO personnel. He mentioned the points where feedback from the Executive Committee, the Coordinating Committee, and the National Advisory Board had been solicited, and described changes in the documents over time as a result of this feedback. He noted that metrics and an implementation plan would be developed for each action in the Strategic Plan. He described the structure of the plan, and focused on the four issues and strategies to address them.

Waide described the procedure for submitting requests for assistance to the LNO, and discussed the appropriate mechanism for getting direct assistance. Requests can be sent to office_support@lternet.edu (for administrative help) and tech_support@lternet.edu (for technical help). He presented an alternative approach by contacting people in the LNO directly.

As an example of an implementation plan for an action, he discussed the LNO plan for prioritizing activities and presented the flow chart that will be used for processing requests sent to the above addresses.

Comment: (Shaver) – Hasn't read draft 8 report, but what is missing from handout is a description of the relationships between the LNO and the Executive and Coordinating Committees.

Response: (Waide) – responded to the comment by referring to the appropriate figures in draft 8.

Question: (Shaver) What are the strategies to define relationships mentioned here then?

Response: (Waide) – Relationships will continue to be defined as the LTER network changes.

Comment: (McGlathery) – Thinks it's time to move on and complete this document. There is a well-defined mechanism by which new priorities will be set in association with Executive and Coordinating Committee.

Comment: How would LNO go about implementing mechanism for requesting assistance?

Response: (Waide) – LNO staff need to use judgments about requests that come and seek clarification or advice when necessary.

Comment: (Shaver) – I think this is way too vague. Not a plan, just a way of delaying making decision about how parts of network relate to each other. This document does not resolve different perceptions of the relationship between the LNO and the other components of the Network.

Response: (Waide) – That is true, but that relationship is defined in other documents including the bylaws, and will be further defined in the Network strategic plan.

Comment: (Shaver) – One of the most important problems in the Network is the lack of clear communication about who is responsible for what, and what the major strategies should address in improving this communication.

Comment: (Gosz) – Part of the problem is that the Network has not yet finalized its strategic plan. We need the Network to start using the Network Office rather than complaining that it's not serving us.

Comment: (Childers) – Exec is comfortable with the substance of the document, and that we think that it is time to move on. This does not preclude sites or individuals making comments or suggestions between now and the time submission.

Comment: (Grimm) – the Network needs to get moving in its own strategic plan, which will clearly entail changes in the LNO plan.

Comment: (Shaver) – Time to move on because a serious effort has been made and failed to achieve its goals. Don't want to see the approval of this document as the approval of a specific set of plans. Process is

not over yet.

Comment: (Waide) – Document can't be very specific with regard to certain aspects because information is lacking.

Grimm moved and McGlathery seconded a motion to accept Draft 8 of the LNO Strategic Plan as a completed living document for submission to NSF with the reasonable incorporation of comments received by September 1, 2004. Motion passed 19-4.

Comment: (Shaver) – Does approval mean that there is a specific set of actions that will be carried forward?

Planning grant

Gosz discussed the organization of the planning grant activities and the staffing elements. Gosz presented the members of the STFAC proposed by the Executive Committee. He also discussed the responsibilities of the Science Task Force Advisory Committee and the meeting schedule. There were several requests for clarification. The group then spent time suggesting and discussing additional names for the STFAC and their suitability.

There was further discussion of the composition for the group of 100 and the timing of the first meeting. Sites need to discuss these issues and respond to requests for information and comments. STF needs names from site by September 1.

LNO will be list serve for science task force (stf@lternet.edu). The proposal will also be posted on the LTER web page.

Bruce Hayden discussed the relationship between the LTER planning process and NEON planning briefly.

Comment: (Collins) – Want to emphasize how important this exercise. If we don't do a good job of this, we can seriously hurt the future of LTER.

Comment: (Gosz) – One reviewer said that we needed to address governance models in tandem with the science themes.

Logistics for Toolik Lake

John Hobbie introduced staff and discussed logistics for Toolik trip.

NEON

Bruce Hayden described the process leading to the NEON planning grant. NSF expects that NEON and LTER have to coordinate programs through their respective planning efforts. The proposed start date proposed is September 1. Work has to start then whether or not grant has been awarded because of the fixed end date.

One of the major goals of the planning activity is to develop a cost plan for the infrastructure award. The first steps are to plan and design NEON. In addition, the planning process must develop an interim project office, initially at AIBS. There will be a follow on award for final planning and implementation, which will be somewhere else. Consortium must be built, starting with an interim community and building from there. NEON regional groups will be a critical element in determining how consortium is structured. Other networks need to be involved to provide for common standards, protocols, procedures. Research institutions and Federal agencies as well as other entities will be involved. The final national coordinating consortium will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the infrastructure phase. The consortium will be an incorporated non-profit (NEON Inc.).

Interim community must generate integrated science and education plan. Eight groups (six from NRC research areas plus hydroecology and emerging issues). Four of these overlap with LTER planning efforts. Science and education

plan will lead to reference design based on questions to be addressed. A separate information technology reference design is needed. All of this leads to a preliminary project execution plan.

Observatories will have to have common mission, a common footprint, common standards and protocols, common rules of operation. Expect that observatories will be nominated by various regions. Size of footprint is a science question. Consortium will be responsible for choosing among science proposals. There will a congress of the regional groups that meets in October near Portland organized by Franklin and Mac Mahon. There is a Project Science training group on big projects in Aspen in October 4-7. There will be a separate entity for graduate students.

> Question: (Williams) – Do you envision a regional set up where each region would address all eight themes?

> Answer: We don't think we can afford eight. NSF expects to see NEON built as a layer cake. Each region would address chosen themes.

> Question: (Bohannon) – Is the education plan for K-graduate, K-12?

> Answer: Includes all levels of education.

> Question: Have regional planning groups been formed?

> Answer: They have self organized, but that doesn't mean that all spaces are taken up.

> Question: Is there an overlap between NEON and the Ocean Research Interactive Observatory Networks (ORION)?

> Answer: There will be an explicit effort to coordinate with all of these large projects like CLEANER, CUAHSI, etc.

> Question: (Grimm) – What do you expect from LTER CC?

> Answer: Probably will want to set up a set of meetings with LTER leadership. In addition, will call for nominations for participants from all relevant groups.

Mark Williams then gave a brief overview of the process by which CUAHSI was formed and the implications for LTER and NEON. His major point was that these large projects represent a new way of doing science, and we need to adjust our attitudes to accommodate these new initiatives. The challenge of NEON is to encourage community participation while preserving a strong linear model.

Planning Grant (part 2)

Gosz solicited names by September 1 for group of 100 for the meeting of November 9-12. He requested nominations for LTER and non-LTER participants from sites. There is particular interest in nominations for participants from the LTER CC, CUAHSI, Organization for Biological Field Stations (OBFS), NEON, CLEANER and other relevant groups including Federal agencies. In addition, he solicited suggestions for leaders for the four science theme working groups described in the proposal, who will be selected by the Science Task Force. The proposal will be made available on the LTER public web site.

> Comment: Students should be considered for nominations.

> Answer: Tiffany is charged with getting names from grad student community.

> Question: (Grimm) – What are nominees to group of 100 committing to?

> Answer: Only participation in the November meeting, although some people from this meeting will continue to participate in the planning process.

Comment: (Ortega) - The diversity of the Science Task Force Advisory Committee (STFAC) and other groups being formed for the planning grant should be increased by contacting ESA, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and other organizations for possible names of underrepresented minorities.

Comment: (Gosz) – Collins will contact the Strategies for Ecology Education, Development, and Sustainability (SEEDS) and Ecological Society of America (ESA) diversity committee to help balance diversity in participants. Will send structure of meeting of 100 as soon as possible.

Question: (Grimm) – How many people can sites nominate for group of 100?

Answer: Nominate as many as you want, but there will have to be a selection process.

Question: Will there be international participation?

Answer: Yes, both through sites and ILTER.

Next LTER mini-symposium

Hugh Ducklow gave an overview of preparations for the next mini-symposium in Washington. Ducklow, Dan Reed, and Chuck Hopkinson are coordinating the meeting and are looking for a date between beginning and mid-March 2005.
Theme: Long-term research in the marine environment

- relatively short talks
- application/mission focus
- good speakers; include student; have presentation on education
- weave theme of cooperative science throughout
- secure room and NSF people early on
- need a general calendar for big meetings

The future: no open ocean LTER sites

Question (Hobbie) – Will there be an effort to include broad disciplines including engineering?

Answer: That could be done. Palmer has just gotten an ORION project and could be asked to participate.

Comment: (Collins) – Instruct present to try to connect their site science to the broader theme of network science to emphasize the planning process.

Comment: (Ortega) – Need to get the room at NSF as soon as possible.

Comment: (Waide) – Also need to get the director and AD lined up, which often can't be done until shortly before.

Future CC Meetings

Waide discussed the schedule for future CC meetings. Dan Childers discussed the proposed venue for the spring meeting at the Sheraton Resort at Key Largo. The constraints on the venue are that we would have to share rooms and try to get airfares around $400.

Question: (Waide) – Can you think of any serious conflicts in April?

Answer: LTER grad student meeting during the second week. Easter does not occur in April. Passover is April 23.

Comment: (Childers) – There is a price difference between weekend and weekdays. When is this meeting supposed to be? How does this interact with air fare?

Answer: (Waide) – We'll have to look at the costs of weekday vs. weekend meetings. The next meeting is supposed to be a weekend meeting.

The consensus was to look for dates between April 3-17.

Comment: (Childers) – Should investigate use of Ft. Lauderdale airport, but we will have to arrange for transportation.

Fall 2005 meeting at Virginia Coast – McGlathery will discuss dates with VCR group and let us know.

Cedar Creek should also start to think about dates.

Graduate student report

Chelsea Crenshaw (SEV) is the new co-chair replacing Rob D'Aoust.

At the last meeting, Grad Student Committee requested participation in standing committees, and has had a good response from committee chairs. Tiffany will send out solicitation to grad students shortly.

Proposal to DEB and others was funded for 2005 meeting of graduate students to foster a culture of collaboration among graduate students and to support synthesis science within LTER. In addition the meeting will familiarize students within existing data and research within the network, facilitate graduate student interactions, enhance scientific training, and stimulate graduate student engagement in synthesis science. Products will include an on-line publication, publications of research abstracts, a report, and two proposals for follow up work (a publication and a collaborative research project. The meeting will be April 13-17 at Andrews. NSF will fund one student per site. The Graduate Student committee asks sites to support meeting by funding a second student. Cost will be less than $1000 total. Sites will send lists of students and commitments to fund one student by November 15 to Tiffany and Chelsea.

Publications

Phil Robertson asked for more suggestions for synthesis volumes for the Oxford series.

There is strong interest at NSF in expanding children's book produced at Niwot Ridge into network series. There will be a query coming to lead PIs to see who might be interested. Publisher is of NWT is Roberts-Rinehart, but we should consider other options if we expand to a series.

International

Steve Hamburg reported that international committee continuing to get organized. Committee is trying to build database on interested people and list of programs and contacts. They are working to have presence at the International Association for Ecology (INTECOL) meeting and to re-invigorate regional ILTER groups.

Education

Robert Bohanon reported that three proposals submitted or in preparation to NSF. One proposal uses research vignettes to connect with teachers and students (professional development (2) and instructional materials development project. Education Committee meeting begins next week at Andrews and will work on plans for functioning after Sonia Ortega returns to NSF. They will also address policies and procedures for populating committee, planned and new proposals, and methods of working with planning grant. The meeting will finish the handbook on education practices in LTER for beta testing at sites.

Social Science

Ted Gragson reported that the committee is trying to improve the coherence of the social science components of LTER programs. Gragson, Redman, and Grove prepared a proposal to Tom Baerwald for a meeting to complement planning grant activity. There will be a communication to sites shortly for participation.

Comment: (Waide) – Suggest we need to be aware of and review of possible social science studies that use LTER as the study subject.

Comment: (Collins) – Group from Oregon funded to look at home science influences science and management. They will be contacting sites to seek collaborators.

Comment: (Waide) – They have publications on the LTER Network from previous work.

Comment: (Grimm) – Is there any way to move Gragson workshop forward to fit in better with planning process?

Answer: (Gragson) – Doubt that we will have funding before spring.

Comment: (Waide) – How do we handle requests from outside groups to study LTER?

Response: (Gosz) – Bounce to Exec and then CC.

Comment (Thomas) – Begin to develop communication scheme early in planning process rather than as an afterthought. This applies to committees as well.

Survey from disturbance workshop

Deb Peters handed out disturbance questionnaire. One response is expected from each site.

New sites

Mark Ohman made a presentation on the new California Current Ecosystem site. This presentation as well as other presentations and reports are available on the LTER intranet page.

Committee reports

[Climate Committee](#)

[Education Committee](#)

[International Committee](#)

[IM Committee](#)

[Social Science Committee](#)

[Technology Committee](#)

Powerpoint presentations

[California Current Ecosystem presentation](#)

[NISAC presentation](#)

[IM presentation](#)