

**US-LTER International Committee Report to the LTER Coordinating Committee,  
Spring 2005 meeting  
30 March 2005**

*Prepared by Patrick Bourgeron for the US-LTER International Committee*

**Background**

The US-LTER International Committee (IC) was created in September, 2003. Its mission was refined over the next six months during a series of conference calls among committee members and discussions with NSF officers.

The mission of the IC ([http://intranet.lternet.edu/committees/us\\_ilter/index.html](http://intranet.lternet.edu/committees/us_ilter/index.html)) is:

- To facilitate the development and maintenance of long-term projects and collaborations between US-LTER scientists and ILTER colleagues.
- To facilitate and coordinate the involvement of US-LTER scientists in developing and strengthening regional networks as well as individual country networks.
- To facilitate the participation of US-LTER scientists in the establishment and maintenance of effective data/information infrastructures within the ILTER.
- To create an atmosphere in which participation in the ILTER network is seen as a central component of each US-LTER site's activities.
- To facilitate cooperation between the ILTER and other global science programs.

Four areas of work are conducted by the IC:

- Establishing the structure and modalities of the Committee, including governance, identification of priorities, and specific strategies, etc.
- Broadening the base of US-LTER involvement in the ILTER.
- Implementing specific projects leading to the establishment of new relationships among US and ILTER scientists.
- Implementing specific projects leading to strong regional networks; and working closely with ILTER chair, steering committee, and coordinator to ensure the viability of the international network.

Initially, we are conducting all of the Committee's work as an exploration of the most effective model(s) for long-term involvement of US-LTER scientists in international LTER cross-site research. We anticipate that in an 18-month period we should be able to evaluate what tools and activities most effectively meet the goals of the Committee and the US-LTER network.

From its inception to the August, 2004, US-LTER CC meeting (attended by Steve Hamburg on behalf of the IC), work consisted primarily of writing a proposal to NSF and establishing areas of priorities and work. The IC meeting held during the last ESA meeting was used to define specific goals and products for the next nine months. The report below outlines progress made on those goals and products.

**Report of activities since the last CC meeting**

We conducted business through three conference calls and a number of emails with the concerned committee members and ILTER colleagues. Until December, 2004, John Vande Castle was acting ILTER executive coordinator. John worked closely with the ILTER chair (Hen-Biau King), the US-LTER IC, and its two co-chairs.

**Three ILTER regional meetings were attended:**

- The 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of East Asia and Pacific Regional Network of ILTER held in Beijing, China on September 6-7, 2004. US attendants: Bourgeron and Vande Castle. Products: refine the organization of the regional network, define 2004-2007 workplan, and define priorities. Minutes and presentations online at: [http://www.ilternet.edu/meetings/east\\_asia\\_pacific\\_2004/finalized%20Minutes.html](http://www.ilternet.edu/meetings/east_asia_pacific_2004/finalized%20Minutes.html)
- Development of a Baltic Regional Network. Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania, October 7-13, 2004. Objective: to develop the LTER network in countries of the Baltic Sea (several countries of the region plan to join the ILTER in 2005-2006) and to promote ILTER in adjacent countries (Belarus, Russia). Attended by about 70 scientists and experts from 11 countries. Brian Kloeppe (Coweta) represented the IC and made two presentations (online at [http://intranet.ilternet.edu/committees/us\\_ilter/index.html](http://intranet.ilternet.edu/committees/us_ilter/index.html)).
- Meeting of ELTOSA (Environmental Long-Term Observatories of southern Africa, <http://www.nrf.ac.za/saeon/eltosa>), a network of southern African countries embarking on time-series environmental research and monitoring programmes delivering time-series datasets. Attended by Steve Hamburg on the behalf of the IC. Product: a vision document for ELTOSA and a draft funding strategy

**We followed up on the recommendations of the IC during the Portland meeting and submitted proposals for two ILTER-organized sessions for the joint INTECOL/ESA Montreal meeting.** Both proposals were accepted.

- Title of the session: Conducting Global Multi-Scale Integrated Environmental Management and Research using Site-specific Research: Lessons Learned from the ILTER. Organizer: Hen-Biau King, ILTER Chair. Co-organizer: Bourgeron. Abstracts of individual presentations were submitted. The session explores (1) how different national research networks can best be linked in the ILTER, and (2) the kind of process that can best promote effective collaboration among national networks to support multi-scale integrated ecological analysis and modeling.
- Title of the session: Tropical Cyclone disturbance and forest dynamics at multiple temporal scales Organizer: Teng-Chiu Lin, Fu-shan TERN site Co-organizer: Steven Hamburg. Abstracts of individual presentations were submitted. The session explores how typhoon/hurricane frequency influences forest structure and response. Most of the presentations are based on research from LTER sites and will explore how we can utilize the two order of magnitude differences in disturbance frequency to advance our understanding of role of cyclonic wind events on forest ecosystems

**An ILTER funding discussion meeting was held in December 8, 2004, in Washington, DC.**

The meeting was attended by Hen-Biau King, Terry Bodenhorn, William Chang, Frances Li, Henry Gholz, Clyde Goulden, Michel Gutelman, Steven Hamburg, and John Vande Castle. The initial impetus for discussions of potential ILTER funding was based on a document prepared by Michel Gutelman. The document suggests ILTER to look towards UNDP for support of a subset of ILTER Networks, initially starting with South Africa.

**US-LTER-ALTER-Net collaboration.** ALTER-Net (<http://www.alter-net.info/default.asp>) is the European Long-Term Biodiversity, Ecosystem and Awareness Research Network, the US-LTER sister program. Bourgeron met with Terry Parr, the ALTER-Net coordinator, during the Biodiversity conference held in Paris last January. Bourgeron asked Terry at that time how we (the US international committee and the US LTER at large) could work more closely with the budding European LTER effort. His response was to consider a few ideas including:

- Further high-level NSF engagement with corresponding parts of the EC to promote the idea of a pan-Atlantic LTER infrastructure.
- Direct support to co-ordinate informatics developments through the US SEEK program and ALTER-Net.
- Joint research agenda setting - an attempt to get some real links between ALTER-Net and the US LTER's current initiative to develop "synthesis science" based on their LTER Network. This might include the possibility of inter-continental meta-analysis on the main drivers/pressure for change or the establishment of inter-continental experiments.

Terry's first point is that high level NSF officers (e.g., the director of DEB) should go to Brussels and meet with their counterparts within the EU commission to express support for a closer collaboration between North America and Europe. He believes that this is the level that is now required to further ALTER-Net and similar activities. His second point is that he and his colleagues would like to be part of a Pan-Atlantic effort to develop a joint formal effort in the area of information and knowledge management. There is a forthcoming European RFP on the development of such an infrastructure at the European level, preferably with international partners. His third point is that after attending the planning grant meeting held last fall, he would like to discuss how ALTER-Net could be involved in the planning activities to develop something similar at the Pan-Atlantic level.

**Hiring of a new ILTER executive coordinator.** In the fall of 2004, a job description was written, published in major professional outlets (Nature, Science), and posted on international environmental job websites (e.g., Earthworks). About 140 applications were received. Hamburg, Hen-Biau King, and Bourgeron worked together through the entire process via conference calls. Twenty-five applications were retained from the initial group, ranked using 6 criteria. Eight candidates were identified and references requested. Those candidates were interviewed by telephone. Three were retained and a second telephone interview was conducted. We made an offer to the top candidate, Holly Kauffman, who accepted the position. Over the last few weeks, we have been working on a detailed description of the duties to incorporate in a subcontract through Brown University. Holly holds a master's degree from Harvard (with Bill Clark) and has been involved in climate change negotiations as a Presidential appointee in the US State Department among other things. We will circulate an announcement and a short bio of Holly shortly. The level of the candidates was impressive and made the final choice difficult.

We emphasized organizational, management, negotiations and fundraising skills as the central competences of the coordinator for this 18 months contract.

### **US –Country level LTER Network Coordination**

- In March 2005 a group of seven LTER scientists from HBEF (lead by Myron Mitchell) spent a week in Japan working on helping the Japanese develop their LTER network. The focus was on how to initiate meaningful scientific collaborations between US and Japanese scientists. A draft framework is currently being drafted.
- In January 2005 Steven Hamburg meet in Israel with principal scientists involved with the Israel LTER network to discuss ways to strengthen their network. Steve met with the President of the Israeli Academy of Science as well as the Rothschild Foundation, both of which are exploring how they can help strengthen the Israeli LTER Network. Hamburg is returning in early April to continue these conversations, and lead a formal review of one of the LTER sites.
- In November 2004 Bourgeron was invited by the French Research Ministry to be a key-note speaker during the annual symposium of the environmental research observatories, one if the two French sister programs of the US-LTER. Three formal joint LTER-French projects are continuing.

**Concluding notes.** We are still looking for a more regular mode of communication with the LTER network and the sites in order to provide timely information and transparency of the process. Tasks that the IC is currently pursuing:

- Compiling a list of international projects that we are aware of that are associated with all LTER sites.
- Identifying individuals who can serve as the contact person for researchers and students who might be interested in working with other ILTER networks, including the country/ies for which they are willing to serve as contact, either for US scientists interested in working in that country or for scientists from that country looking for contacts in the US.
- Similarly, we would like to set up liaison groups for each of the regional networks, identifying the regional networks with which the IC committee members are willing to work.