

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
September 8, 2008; 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm EDT; by Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at 2 p.m. by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Ted Gragson, Peter Groffman, Corinna Gries, Sarah Hobbie , Berry Lyons, Dave McGuire, Steve Pennings, Dan Reed, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Sally Holbrook.
2. Minutes for July 24, 2008, meeting approved by consent.
3. Updates
 - a. ULTRA is still under active discussion at NSF. Robertson, Waide, Hobbie, and others summarized what they know from recent conversations with NSF and USFS contacts. An rfp appears to be under development.
 - b. The LTER Minisymposium date for 2009 has been set for Thursday, Feb 26, 2009. The organizing committee is comprised of Peter Groffman, Deb Peters, and another FEE connectivity author of their nomination.
 - c. The social science workshop to be sponsored and organized by SBE to explore using LTER sites to test social science theory is now tentatively scheduled for winter, 2009 according to Tom Baerwald (SBE), who is working with Chuck Redmond (CAP) to organize.
 - d. The AC/ERE green book (to promote the next major environmental initiative at the Foundation) is expected to be in draft in October, and in final form as early as December. Reports are that ISSE continues to influence.

4. Network Office (LNO) Site Review

Bob Waide provided a recap of NSF's site review of the LNO the previous week. Seven external reviewers and 5 NSF program officers (Henry Gholz, Todd Crawl, Tom Baerwald, Roberta Marinelli, and Joann Roskoski) participated in the 3-day review. Phil Robertson attended to provide a Network perspective. The review included tours of LNO facilities, meetings with top UNM administrators, and overview and targeted presentations focused particularly on questions identified from the written ad hoc and panel reviews received beforehand. The verbal report-out was very positive; a written report will be forthcoming in October.

Action: Following receipt of the report the EB will meet (by VTC) to advise the LNO as needed.

5. NSF Concerns about Site-Level Data Availability

As discussed briefly at prior EB meeting, NSF has expressed informal concerns that the availability and accessibility of LTER site-level data appears to be oversold; this is beginning to be reflected in panel discussions and site reviews, and an informal sampling of 4 LTER web sites led to the following observations: a) rarely are datasets registered to lead PIs (raising questions of qa/qc ownership); b) it is difficult to locate core and signature data sets for the site; and c) data sets and documentation are rarely up to date (except for climate data). They emphasized that they are referring to actual data, not metadata, which appear to be in excellent shape. Program officers have asked the Network for a response in time to inform the 2009 round of site reviews, which means this fall.

Follow-on conversations with Gholz and Crawl have revealed that part of the issue may be related to presentation; i.e. that data catalogs are rarely organized by core area or consistent variate categories, and that search terms are narrow so searches can lead to the impression that key data are missing. However, a survey of sites undertaken by Steve Pennings and conducted by a graduate student found that: 1) one-third to one-half the sites have no primary productivity data available, and 2) half the sites offer no capability to search their data. Thus, issues go further than presentation.

Action: Following considerable discussion, the EB charged a subcommittee comprised of Corinna Gries (chair), Ted Gragson, Peter Groffman, and Dan Reed to explore the potential for a best practices document that will consider issues related to search terminologies, names associated with data sets, and tables of contents organized by topical areas (using as starting points those in MetaCat and EcoTrends). The committee will report at the next EB meeting.

6. Remote Sensing Archive Review

As discussed at the May EB meeting, our 2008 Network Survey revealed that the Remote Sensing Archive maintained at the LNO may be underutilized, and at the May EB meeting the potential for a review of archive activities was discussed. Robertson suggested that an ad hoc review committee be appointed to do so.

Action: Dave McGuire moved to create an ad hoc Remote Sensing Advisory Committee to advise the EB on current site needs for the LNO remote sensing archive and the best path forward. The committee is proposed to be chaired by Andrew Fountain (MCM) and to include Mark Williams (NWT), Morgan Grove (BES), Dave Verbyla (BNZ), and John Vandecastle (LNO, ex officio). Berry Lyons seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

7. Education Committee and Strategic Plan Implementation

Robertson noted that we don't presently have a group charged with developing an implementation plan for the Decadal Plan's Strategic Plan for Education. Following discussion a consensus emerged to charge the Network's Education Committee to do so. Robertson and Waide will discuss the best way to do this

8. 2009 Network Office Review Survey

Bob Waide described the next steps for the LNO survey revision, which includes engaging a professional survey designer to create a web-based version that can efficiently accommodate different types of respondents. The survey is expected to be provided to all LTER scientists and staff, and it will be valuable to have sections targeted to specific groups (e.g. students, PIs, IMs, educators, workshop organizers). The survey is required by bylaws every other year, and should logically be administered prior to the EB's annual review of the LNO. This means a draft will need to be ready by January 2009. Waide will circulate current survey questions to the EB and look for a survey designer

9. Upcoming Meetings

- a. October 14 Tuesday 2-4pm EDT
- b. November 11 Tuesday 12-2pm EDT
- c. December 11 Thursday 12-2pm EDT
- d. January 22, 2009 Thursday noon-2pm EDT
- e. February 24-26, 2009 Washington DC (Minisymposium Thursday Feb 26)
- f. March, April meetings tba
- g. May 12-14, 2009 EB/SC Meeting San Diego

10. Meeting adjourned 4:00 p.m.

10. Issues outstanding (for future meeting):

- a. Committee reports 2008-09
- b. Education Strategic Plan – implementation strategy
- c. NAB recommendations – progress