LTER International Committee Minutes, April 5, 2012

Attending: Kristin Vanderbilt, Chris Madden, Kate Lajtha, Bob Waide, Jim Tang, Rinku Roy-Chowdhury, Sieg Snapp, Chuck Redman

The group discussed the reason for international participation. What is the mission of the committee? Kristin stated that the mission is to facilitate new international interactions between US and international scientists. Chuck suggested that it is to get the US LTER to think more globally. That is, we want to get the LTER to address internationally recognized challenges and should consider best practices for engaging internationally to make our LTER programs/science better. How can the LTER relate to the global challenges? How can we be players in addressing them? We agreed that, for ASM, we support both goals.

Are we trying to encourage new interactions or support existing ones, also? We agreed that we want to do both at the ASM. Otherwise, we risk losing the interest of scientists already engaged. Existing connections have connections, too, so we will reach new people that way.

Kate pointed out that people come to ASM to get ideas for syntheses, and that’s how we should be thinking when we determine which working groups to organize.

Kristin asked for suggestions for working groups for ASM. Two options are possible: working groups related to an IC-sponsored plenary, and subject-oriented working groups.

1. The group could sponsor a plenary speaker, and then have a working group related to that speaker. Plenary speakers suggested include:

* Johann Ronzer – lead author on “Safe Operating Space for Humanity” paper.
  + Chuck suggested then having a working group about “Global Challenges that LTER Addresses”, which explores how LTER phenomena provide insights in to planetary limits. This discussion would be of interest to both international and US scientists, and may suggest ways in which int’l connections would be valuable. This is timely because of the recent London meeting called “Planet Under Pressure.”
* Terry Chapin is a co-author on the above-mentioned paper. He could be a co-speaker, or lead the working group. If a co-speaker, Ronzer could describe the issue, and Terry could discuss how his LTER is addressing this.
* Johan Six – soil scientist with interest in long-term studies in Africa and elsewhere. Dr. Six’s name came up when Sieg Snapp reported on her attendance at an FAO-sponsored meeting in Kenya about supporting long-term agricultural studies in Africa, including sites in Malawi and Kenya. The African scientists want help in regularizing their methods, and want more awareness of their work in the international community. A working group related to this topic could follow the plenary.

1. Subject-oriented working groups. In this scenario, members of the IC will coordinate with other scientists in the LTER on a working group. International Scientists will be contacted to gauge their interest, and will be nominated to participate. Suggested subjects are:
2. Phenology: The IC has a symposium at INTECOL 2013 on this topic, and this working group could be related to that effort. We could frame it as “an international perspective on phenology,” although Kate warned that framing it as “international” might scare off US scientists. We could explore phenology at different scales with the idea of writing a paper.
3. Mexico-US Cross-Border Issues: This working group would include scientists involved in the Ecohydrology research effort that includes several members of the committee.
4. Model Integration: FCE is working on model integration for the LTER, involving two dozen models. Sites in Mexico are working on this topic, also.
5. Synthesis/Meta-analysis/Overview paper: Select a target topic with the idea of conducting a meta-analysis with an international angle.
6. Global approaches to Science: Bob suggested connecting working group to the themes of the meeting and stir things up a bit – perhaps compare and contrast research approaches in different parts of the world.
7. Perennializing crops?

There was discussion about how to choose the international scientists to attend the meeting. The committee has $30K. Kate suggested that we email the all-LTER list and ask for nominations. She agreed to draft an email on that topic.