ILTER Committee Meeting, March 6, 2014. Attending: Kristin Vanderbilt, Bill McDowell, Jim Tang, Chris Madden, Chuck Redman, Sieg Snappe, Patrick Bourgeron, Tiffany Troxler

1. Summary of ILTER annual business meeting:  Kristin

38 member networks, 20 represented at meeting. Canada and Mozambique were declared inactive, after five years with no signs of participation for five years. However, there was a change in the bylaws such that LTER research groups in countries without a national ILTER can become “affiliated Sites”. Such groups should consist of no more than three research sites.

Malaysia applied for membership. Dr. Abdul Rahman gave a presentation and ILTER voted that Malaysia should become a member. Norway and Andorra will present their ILTER applications in 2014.

Report from Public Policy SubCommittee: Ben Li, graduate student in Finland, presented preliminary findings of the “ Assessment and Monitoring of the published Outputs of the ILTER.” He had some small money from the ILTER to do this work, and he mined lots of different sources and there are an astonishing number of publications from LTER entities, but they are not branded as ILTER.

Other projects conducted under the auspices of this committee are one in Portugal exploring ILTER’s interaction with business, and a market survey for environmental services in South Africa.

Science subcommittee: Hide Shibata talked about ILTER and GLP relationship. He will be leading a project to develop an international database of nitrogen biogeochemistry for global meta-analysis.

Presentation about the 2014 Annual Meeting, which will be held at Senda Darwin Biological Station in Chile. There will also be an Americas All Scientists Meeting prior to the annual ILTER meeting.

1. Summary of 20th Anniversary ILTER Science Meeting in Seoul, October 2013:  Visioning for the Next ten years

SEV had a supplement from INT programs at NSF to support some scientists to attend who could help guide the conversation about the vision for ILTER for the next 10 years. Symposium was two days long.

First Day included talks by Chuck Redman and Alan Covich that offered us a lot of food for thought about research directions for ILTER. Reps from South Africa, Austria, and Chile also gave presentations during the 20th Anniversary symposium, as did Brian Wee from NEON. Bill Chang from NSF was present for the whole meeting, and Tiffany from our Committee also participated in the Science meeting.

Second Day was where whole group engaged in visioning. We broke in to working groups, guided by Patrick, chair of the ILTER Science Committee. Each group was tasked with developing some ideas for what ILTER could do in next 10 years in each topic area.

Working Group results: How might our committee support the ILTER vision for the next 10 years? Patrick is preparing a summary report of the working group outcomes.

1. Tiffany’s report:  Applications/Land Management:

This group identified a vision related to principles that enhance resilience and support ecosystem services. Partnerships could include PECS. This group generated a list of interested parties and their contact information.

1. Patrick’s report:  Research and Monitoring:

Group was led by Mark Green Group recommended a focus on “wicked problems”, particularly Uncertainty. They noted need to strong information management component to support synthesis of large heterogeneous datasets. Partners could include NEON. They plan to approach new synthesis center in Maryland to organize workshops. Chuck recalled that this group also discussed what the ILTER brings to the table that is unique. Different languages, inter-country differences in perspective, and different cultural approaches to a problem could be interesting.

iii.           Kristin’s Report:  Education and Outreach

Education and Outreach: Art Schwarzschild and Tim Clancy from Australia led. The group discussed the status of outreach and education: US LTER only LTER with formalized system for Outreach and Education, but the others there indicated that there sites do this in an informal way through interactions with local schools, local government, parks, etc. A barrier to doing ILTER Education and Outreach is the lack of a coherent funding mechanism. Also, there needs to be an ILTER working group on education initiatives. One was established during the business meeting a few days later.

One suggestion for how to engage our US students with ILTER students would be to have a Sister Site program. Sister sites might be in the same ecosystem type (coastal sites, for instance). K-12 students could learn about similar processes in different places. Could have pen pals to report on migratory birds, phenology…. (like migratory birds, for instance). Undergraduate students could use data from sister sites and do comparison analyses, have remote lectures by professors at their sister sites, something like this.

Another idea that multiple school groups could engage with would be a Big Data project. Students could learn about, for example, nitrogen dynamics. They could use the Nitrogen Footprint Calculator to understand their own impact on the nitrogen cycle. And they could also collect monitoring data on nitrogen and feed it in to an ILTER database. Could do some comparisons between sites on nitrogen impacts. Could develop a curriculum that would include a pre-test of how much students knew, and find out how their knowledge of nitrogen changed after completing the module. Schoolyard programs writ large.

Another idea proposed was an Ecoinformatics Institute. Students need to learn to manage data, but also need to know how to work with heterogeneous datasets and large datasets. We cooked up an idea to have a workshop for graduate students that would focus on these two things: data management and data analytics, where the students would learn to script in order to analyze and manipulate data, and how to integrate data from varied sources. Bill Chang supports this idea and Kristin will pursue funding.

Some ideas could get folded in to a PIRE proposal.

1. Action items based on science meeting and annual meeting:

a.            RCN proposal idea:  Tiffany report: RCN could be used to achieve a product-oriented network. Focus could be on policy-relevant science. ILTER could provide the long-term data for the study. The participants in the Land/Management working group at Annual Meeting wondered how to initiate a synthesis, and Tiffany offered the Ecohydrology example, where a qualitative assessment of available data was developed. Working Group participants were enthusiastic. This could infuse energy in to ILTER Network. Bill reminded us that the key will be to identify exciting questions. And the Shibata N manuscript identified a big challenge for ILTER, which is what added value do we bring to the table as ILTER?

Patrick suggested that an inventory be done of existing RCNs to learn how to frame our proposal. Kristin, Tiffany, and Chris will assist.

Tiffany will follow up with Johan, Martin, and Jacques from the group to assess their interest in partnerships.

Rinku, Jim, and Hideaki will meet at GLP meeting in Berlin to discuss RCN/PIRE

The Resilience Alliance Meeting will be an opportunity for Patrick and Chuck to meet. It is in May.

b. Ecoinformatics Institute: Kristin will follow up with Bill Chang regarding funding for the Institute.

4) PIRE proposal opportunity:

Saran sent a suggestion to me that our committee could develop a PIRE proposal. PIRE stands for Partnerships for International Research and Education. Bonnie Thompson is the program officer who spoke to Saran about this opportunity, and she is the program officer for the Scandinavian countries. Solicitation for PIRE proposal will be coming out in June of this year. Saran said that it will support any area of research. Seems like a good opportunity.

The primary goal of PIRE is “to support high quality projects in which advances in research and education could not occur without international collaboration.”

Chuck applied for one of these, and Sieg has been on a review panel. Each university can only submit 2 proposals, and so there will be competition at the university level. We should encourage several PIs to submit at different universities.

Chuck recalls that there would was a specific partner with whom students would be exchanged. This may have changed. There is PIRE proposal now that supports FIRE research on four continents.

Kristin, Tiffany, Patrick, Chris, and Sieg will do an inventory of PIRE projects and report back to the group.

5) Canada LTER Report: Is there support for an LTER Network there that could be part of ILTER?

Tiffany attended a Forest Modeling Workshop in Canada. The Canadian Forest Service host, Werner Kurz, said that the government has shut down government-funded research. Have even dismantled some flux towers. This could be a latent flux tower infrastructure with which to develop collaboration. There is an organization called Commission for Environmental Cooperation which could be a mechanism for engaging with Canada and Mexico. We will try to include Canada in any of our initiatives.

5)            ILTER Special Issue of Ecosphere update

Several members of this committee are involved in writing papers for the special issue. It has been approved by Deb Peters. We need to send her a timeline for submitting papers, and then get to work.

5)            Committee membership discussion and selection of new co-chair

Bill’s position at NSF will end in January 2015, and he is interested in staying on as co-chair after that. Members are happy with Kristin. We decided to put this on the agenda for the next meeting to talk about member terms and who should be the co-chair.