Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
May 15, 2012; 8:30a.m. – 4:30 p.m. PDT
Andrews Experimental Forest

Meeting called to order at 8:30AM PDT by Chair Scott Collins; Members attending:
Dan Childers, John Blair, Emery Boose, Nick Brokaw, Gene Kelly, Phil Robertson,
Karen McGlathery, Steve Hamilton, Hugh Ducklow, Bob Waide, David Foster, Emily
Stanley
Also attending: Evelyn Gaiser, Saran Twombly, Matt Kane

1. Approval of the minutes from 9 April 2012 EB meeting – Collins
Approved

2. Approval of Agenda for SC and SC Business Meetings – Collins
Approved

3. LNO – Collins, Waide
        a.   Evaluation of the LNO
There have been many changes and challenges for the LNO in 2011-2012:
Truncation of ARRA funding, 30-year review, new Chair, New Program Director at
NSF, and an upcoming Mid-term review by NSF.

Accomplishments to date:
Synthesis support: Preparation for the upcoming All Scientists Meeting (ASM) and
two Science Council meetings (at GCE and AND); multiple synthesis working groups
have been supported including 3 postdocs; support for LTER Science thematic
groups based on the Decadal Plan; further development of the NIS. In thinking about
the future, what additional things could be done with LNO support? More support
for grad student participation in working groups, more support for IMs and cross-
site coordination to increase the number of data sets for ingestion into PASTA. The
EB can help to promote past accomplishments and goals by building a good list of
outcomes and future goals. Communications is likely to become a key need for the
Network given the effort involved in promoting the BioScience issue and the
positive press that this effort generated.

Cyber support: The new LTER Network website will be cleaner and have buttons for
specific interest groups. Much easier to navigate than the current website. A
challenge remains to provide a "database" of LTER experts in self-identified
research areas. Can this be done though partnerships with other societies, etc, that
already have such databases? CI activities thus far include a revised internet web
page, preparation of North Inlet data for ingestion in NIS, access to a TB of off-site
storage by each site, streaming of the annual minisymposium, maintaining
databases, supported IM Committee meetings along with support for product
oriented working groups, and IM site compensation for network-wide IM efforts
(e.g., quality engine that checks EML). Finally, significant progress was made in NIS
development.

Core services: The LNO provided core services for EB and SC meetings and synthesis workshops, maintained records of meetings, acquired additional Landsat-5 data for the LTER archive and obtained supplemental funds for the ASM.

Development and Outreach: The LNO is working hard to help the Network implement the goals listed in the LTER SIP. Other activities include the LTER e-newsletter, LTER website, organizing congressional visits in collaboration with AIBS, developing external relations with key constituencies including NEON, DataOne, California Digital Library, EarthSky, NPN, NCEAS, Genomics Standards Consortium, and the Water Science Software Inst. The LNO provided logistical and funding support for 5 training workshops in 2012.

b.   LNO reallocation of ARRA funding

The plan is to spend out the ARRA funds one year sooner than planned in response to White House directive. Some personnel funds are currently being held as a contingency fund to respond to recommendations from the upcoming LNO Site Visit. Depending on recommendations and priorities, these funds could be used to hire a Director of Communications or a Director of Education. Or funds could be used to hire more people for PASTA development. Or these funds could provide needed FTEs for the data legacy project sites. Yet another possibility is to use these funds to support EML mentors to help sites lacking expertise, or to hire a consulting firm to help the DIEMS sites or to fund a metabase developer via GCE to extend their system to other sites. Finally, some ARRA funds could be used to improve our existing data portal (MetaCat).

c.   Requests for new funds by committees and working groups

-      Education Committee – education coordinator
We were joined by Education Executive Committee co-chairs Beth Simmons and Steven McGee via Skype and committee member Kari O'Connell in person for this discussion which centered on the composition of the Education Committee and broadening its representation. One suggestion was to convert the current Education Exec Committee into the Education Committee and to broaden membership beyond schoolyard LTER by including undergrad, grad, informal, citizen science, etc. The EB also encouraged the Education Committee to establish an all-site schoolyard LTER committee to seek cross-site fertilization among sites. The SLTER group would be represented on the Education Committee. Education Committee goals have been added to the LTER SIP. The discussion of including a non-voting Ed Comm rep on the EB was favorable. This was believed to be a logical extension of what LTER is all about. This was followed by a discussion about the Director of Education Position and whether or not that could happen prior to the next LNO renewal, and where that person would be located.

-       Communications Committee – communications coordinator

The Communications Committee developed a plan and job description for a full time communication director who could keep track of activities and promote LTER to media outlets and decision makers. The BioScience media push was a very positive experience and demonstrated the value of communications and outreach. As with the Education Director, the EB discussed where such a person be based. Also, the EB discussed whether or not this could a part-time person who would work in collaboration with other institutional connections (e.g., AIBS, NSF OLPA). The Communication Committee anticipated that this would be a high-level person that is operational and strategic. A background in journalism would expected. One of the challenges that we face is that our message is quite diverse relative to an entity like NEON, but that challenge could work to our advantage. The EB recommends that the Network explore contractual options for starters to judge costs and to determine if such an arrangement can increase our media presence. This topic will be built into the discussion among LPIs in planning for the next version of the LNO. In the mean time, we should try to muster funds to push a media blitz on some other LTER Network accomplishments (e.g., schoolyard LTER).

-       Information Management Committee request for support for IM Co-chairs

IM Exec co-chairs requested compensation for their efforts, which have been estimated at 20% of their time. The EB believed that this was a good idea to keep this group active and to allow PIs to be more supportive of the time commitment required for this effort. It is not clear if the IMExec workload will decrease when the NIS comes on-line, but if so this compensation could be provided on a temporary basis. The amount of compensation should reflect commitment of time above what would normally be expected gratis by site IMs to further Network goals (5%?).

d.   Prioritization of proposed Network databases (Veg-DB, StreamChemDB, FluxDB, ShrubDB, Water QualDB, CoastalNPP)

Concern has been expressed that the current proliferation in specialized databases will lead to silos that do not benefit the NIS. Will these stand-alone databases compete with efforts to get data ready for NIS? These questions need to be addressed by IMC and NISAC and priorities should be set for developing these databases as needed.

e.   Data accessibility – coordinating the various efforts

IMExec has done a very simple index of existing data and metadata. We are going to use this as the baseline from which we will improve data availability metrics. Large differences among sites exist regarding data availability and some sites need more help than others. This is where supplement funds, IM support and LNO ARRA money could be allocated to bring sites along quickly. The goal will be to get all core data into PASTA by the time the NIS comes on-line. EB will emphasize the need to follow through on this. A detailed data table created by IMExec for each site will be

distributed to EB and the sites to facilitate the development of their supplement proposals for 2012.

f. Plans for engaging the LTER community in planning for the new LNO proposal.

Phil Robertson and Emery Boose will co-chair the effort to get broad input from sites regarding the goals and activities of the LNO for the next renewal competition. In order to eliminate any perceived or real conflicts of interest, current LNO staff, Bob Waide and Scott Collins will recuse themselves from this brainstorming process.

4. 2012 Supplements – Collins

These are competitive supplements. NSF does not have enough funds to give $150K to each site. Collaborative supplements are encouraged. The purpose is to get over the hump with issues raised by 30-year review, site visits, etc. Place priority on proposals where sites list all their problems and say how they will fix them. Sites can collaborate and share funds. What are the other priorities for supplement funding? Equipment? Cross-site competitions? Can the LTER Network develop a plan for supplemental funds to be disbursed over the next 6 years? What could be done? Supplement funds must be used to continue or enhance what is proposed, not to start something new. This needs to be a recurring topic for the EB meeting each December and the information should then be conveyed to NSF.

5. ILTER Progress and developments – Vanderbilt, McDowell

Clear opportunities exist to expand US scientist participation in international cross-site, synthesis work and proposal development. OISE at NSF is currently undergoing a reorganization so few clear opportunities exist right now. SAVI is a new opportunity from NSF for virtual international institutes. Funding mechanisms remain a challenge to international research. Can we use ILTER as a support framework for International Coordinated Distributed Experiments, like NutNet and hopefully IRE (International Rainfall Experiment). Kristin Vanderbilt and Bill McDowell presented a thorough update of ILTER activities and status. The powerpoint from this presentation is included with these minutes. *Distribute PPT with minutes* Some thought it might be time for the US to offer to host a future ILTER Annual Meeting.

6. NSF Updates – Twombly, Kane

Plan to solicit input regarding the Network Office, which will be re-competed in 2 years. Look at models for Network Office. What would the sites like LNO to do, what would not get done in the absence of an LNO? What rumors are you hearing?

Something to think about: Twombly and Kane posed the question, "Have the LTER sites been constrained by the imposition of behaving as a network?"

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30PM so that the EB could convene a brief Executive Session.