

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
May 17, 2011; 9am - 5 p.m. EDT; Jekyll Island, GA

1. Meeting called to order at 9am by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Nick Brokaw, Scott Collins, Hugh Ducklow, David Foster, Corinna Gries, Steve Hamilton, John Moore, Emily Stanley, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Ted Gragson, Dave McGuire. Also attending: incoming EB members Emery Boose, Dan Childers, Karen McGlathery; NSF officers Matt Kane (NSF) and Nancy Huntly (item 12); Diane McKnight (item 11).
2. Minutes for 20 April 2011 approved by consent.
3. Updates:
 - a. Macrosystems data management. Five Macrosystems Ecology awards involved LTER sites and engaged LTER personnel in their information management plans. NSF required these projects to make their data accessible through the NIS (see 20 April minutes). Sites involved in data hosting include NTL, ARC, BES, and KNZ. Sites negotiated cost recovery on an individual basis. It was noted that this activity begs the question of whether there should eventually be a centralized data center to serve the needs of projects and programs peripheral to individual site activities e.g. other Macrosystem awards; this issue provides an opportunity to examine the question of a data center further once the 30 Year Review recommendations are available.
 - b. NEON-LNO Meeting. Bob Waide and James Brunt met with NEON staff including Tony Beasley, Bob Tawa and others to discuss coordination of IM activities with respect to common data products and metadata standards. Part of this discussion focused on the request by NSF for NEON and LTER to host data from Macrosystems projects. NEON has not yet adopted a metadata standard, and was not ready to host Macrosystem data. The meeting was a very positive interaction that pointed out areas for significant future collaboration. Waide and Brunt were impressed by the fact that much of the NEON information management approach is still in flux and will require much more work. Discussed (among other issues) was which LTER data might be of most use to future NEON data users. We agreed to continue discussions in the future.
 - c. Earth & Sky. A proposal to NSF Informal Science Education program is being submitted by Earth & Sky Radio to develop short radio spots on LTER science and to feature 8 LTER sites on their home page. The proposal is being submitted as a supplement to the LNO proposal (submission requires an existing award host). This is a follow-on to the activity first discussed at the March 2010 EB meeting in Washington.
 - d. Symbiotic Inc. Biology software developer Symbiotic Inc. remains interested in developing LTER-based modules for their undergraduate environmental science on-line textbook. See June 2010 minutes. Tim Fahey and Alan Covich are coordinating for LTER; climate and hydrology data (ClimDB and HydroDB) will be early features.
 - e. Transformative science narratives. Complete submissions are still needed from CDR, CWT, HFR, KNZ, NWT, and NTL; partial submissions are needed from HBR (2), KBS (1), LUQ (1), MCM (3), and SEV (2). All sites have a complete set of bullets. As received and approved, bullets and narratives are placed on a network web page that will be made available to NSF and others shortly. Submissions will be featured prominently on the network's forthcoming web rebuild. Discussion elicited the suggestion that the current home page could highlight a rotating set instead of the current featured site section, and that we use the phrase "key findings" rather than "transformative science." Still needed are Network highlights; a group will be appointed to flesh these out.

4. LNO Evaluation

a. LNO Survey Results.

Bob Waide reviewed the results of the LNO performance survey of all-LTER, received yesterday. All sites had at least 7 respondents, and 3% indicated no LTER affiliation. Overall participation was low perhaps indicating an all-Lter mailing list inflated with past rather than current or recent Network participants. Most respondents were students (25%), co-PIs (17%), visiting researcher/collaborators (12%), and technical/program personnel (11%); 25 respondents were IM managers.

Of the IM respondents, 60% indicated a high or very high expertise in EML; 64% (17 sites) requested LNO assistance with EML implementation in the past year, and all indicated satisfaction with assistance when provided; all are more confident this year than last in the security of the LNO site and databases (64% highly confident this year).

The reported submission of requests to the LNO request tracking system has decreased slightly (2%), as has satisfaction with the timeliness and usefulness of LNO responses to their problems. There are increases in the reported use of email group lists, video conferencing, the Image Archive, the Data Catalog, and in submission for proposals and participation in meetings and training offered by LNO. There have been decreases in the reported use of LNO-sponsored email addresses (investigator@lternet.edu), the personnel directory, the LTER Bibliography, the Climate Database, and the Remote Sensing Archive. There was no apparent change in the use of the Hydrologic Database or the Document Archive.

The survey also elicited a number of respondent comments that await further summarizing. Overall, the most important issue identified was intra-Network communication.

Waide will prepare a high-level summary to be distributed to all-LTER. This will include a description of changes made in response to survey results, e.g. sunseting activities such as the LNO email server. The new on-line newsletter might be an appropriate outlet for this.

b. LNO 2011-2012 Milestones

As a follow-on from the March EB meeting, Robertson and Waide revised the LNO milestones to fit within the Strategic Implementation Plan objectives and activities. On compilation, it is apparent that the LNO milestones proposed relate directly to a relatively few number of SIP activities – 1 of 9 research activities, 7 of 30 communication activities, 6 of 36 IM activities, 2 of 7 Network Coordination activities, and no education activities; 14 activities were not represented in the SIP but could be added, in addition to a few LNO-internal activities such as preparation of annual reports.

Extensive discussion led to the EB decision to align all LNO activities with the Network SIP. Waide noted that this may require revising LNO's contract with NSF, with its implementation plan that does not specify SIP-related deliverables other than those noted above. Robertson will check with NSF to ask about their willingness to renegotiate along these lines. [follow-on note: Nancy Huntly indicated that NSF can consider changes in a cooperative agreement, if it is in the best interests of the project and the NSF.].

Waide will further revise milestones to encompass more SIP-related activities, for approval at an upcoming EB meeting. Also needed will be revised SIP implementation tables to include the new activities noted above.

c. Budget matters.

Waide reviewed the LNO discretionary budget for network synthesis activities. We expect to have for 2011 ~\$287,000 for Network synthesis support in the following categories: \$150k for 2011

workgroup workshops, \$50k for 2011 workgroup salary requests, \$87k for synthesis initiative workshops.

5. National Advisory Board

Robertson led discussion of the NAB report from their March meeting, to be distributed to the SC and NSF as required by bylaws. A response will be prepared by new EB chair Scott Collins prior to distribution to NSF. Also discussed chair transition, as current chair Carol Brewer expects to step down at end of her current term (this month); Collins will invite another member of the NAB to assume chairpersonship as per bylaws. Also, the SC needs to nominate 2 additional members; as per bylaws, up to 15 members serve 3-year terms once renewable by chair; 50% selected by SC, 50% selected by chair; and the chair serves a 2-year term, once renewable. There are currently 4 open positions on the NAB, so the SC will need to nominate 2 members to be invited by the new NAB chair, who will also nominate and invite two additional members. Robertson will charge the SC at Thursday's business meeting. Discussion elicited the following suggested pools: Advisory boards from federal agencies e.g. DOE Office of Science (BERAC - Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee), NSF AC-ERE (Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education) and AC-GEO; former NSF Assistant Directors. We currently have good representation from USDA. Current and past members are listed at <http://intranet2.lternet.edu/sites/intranet2.lternet.edu/files/National%20Advisory%20Board%20Membership%20March%202011.pdf>.

6. Science Council Business Meeting

The agenda for the upcoming Business Meeting was approved as presented. The site for next year's SC was discussed in light of past meeting history and results will be presented to the SC after potential sites contacted and confirm their interest. Based on chronology, the sites with the longest times since hosting include MCR, JRN, AND, CWT, HFR, and KNZ.

7. IM Training

The Gries et al. proposal for IM training (circulated earlier) was discussed and approved with the expectation that the course proposed will be developed with the aim of increasing IM teaching capacity at each site, i.e. to hold a 1-time in-person course as described in the proposal, which would then migrate to a periodic web-based course to be offered in a workshop format (i.e. not necessarily as a formal for-credit course offering). The EB expressed concerns that a one-off IM training course aimed primarily at graduate students would not be the best use of limited workshop funds in the absence of plans to launch a more regular web-based offering.

8. Committee Reviews

Annual reports from all 12 Network committees were reviewed facilitated by the new template format. Reports appear on the network intranet at <http://intranet2.lternet.edu/documents>. Highlights of the discussion included:

- a. All committees are applauded for adopting objectives and activities embedded in the SIP.
- b. All committees will be asked to meet (primarily by vtc) at least twice annually.
- c. Climate and Waters Committee – consider a new synthesis book activity, perhaps following from the current SC meeting.
- d. Education – the committee should be expanded to include all education efforts (research in addition to schoolyard and children's book series); the EdExec committee should consider a communication activity different from the phone-tree-like system described to inform the full committee – communication via the chairs will likely be more effective.
- e. Communications – appointment of a lead chair is endorsed by the EB.
- f. Graduate Students – reconsider the creation of an LTER graduate student web site as the payoff will likely be low relative to the effort required, a student section of the new Network web site may serve a similar end; likewise the comprehensive list of graduate student products is likely to

be a low payoff activity; a request for funds to meet prior to the 2012 ASM should be made in the next couple of months.

- g. Publications – the committee should be asked to expand efforts to better connect with PIs and promote the development of additional network books, whether or not from Oxford; the current committee should be asked how best to achieve this, e.g. by enlarging the committee and providing a more specific charge than responding to requests for approvals; it was noted that the publications landscape has changed considerably in the past few years and have we changed in step.

9. Synthesis / Legacy Data Initiative

Robertson noted that a call went out to all sites for volunteers to be included in the 3 sites slated for the pilot effort now in planning stages. Positive responses were received from 10 sites: AND, BNZ, BES, CDR, CWT, JRN, KBS, NWT, SEV, and SGS. Following discussion, the EB decided to ask the Synthesis Data Committee for a ranked list of recommended sites for consideration by the EB at our next meeting. The LNO is now in the process of developing draft specifications from the Committee into a statement of work.

10. ASM Planning Committee

The SC will be queried for nominees from their sites and committees to serve on the 2012 ASM Program Committee. Plenary speakers will need to be identified and invited by September 2011 in order to assure participation.

11. Future of the LTER Schoolyard Book Series

Diane McKnight provided a recap of the Schoolyard Book Series workshop hosted by MCM in March. The series has been highly successful with 3 books published (NWT, MCM, CCE/PAL), 1 in press (FCE), 2 in the illustration phase (GCE and MCR), 1 in the editing phase (HBR), and 1 in development (PIE). What differentiates LTER books from others is a schoolyard approach that makes connections between LTER science and local communities in a way that is consistent with developmentally appropriate elementary science education.

The workshop resulted in a number of recommendations to ensure the continued success of the series, including the need to obtain additional funds to support books currently in progress and the need for a network-level coordinator to improve the management of book development and organize web-based educational resources. The EB discussed potential funding options; there is no budget for such a position in the current Network Office contract but position will be discussed as options arise for pursuing other SIP education needs.

12. NSF Report

Nancy Huntly and Matt Kane

- a. NSF Budget. The NSF budget is still not finalized at the program level, but expectation remains that there will be funding for minority participation in RUE/RET/RHASS/ROA activities for the current fiscal year, and there may also be funds available for competitive supplements. Announcements will go to sites as soon as the numbers are finalized.
- b. ILTER. Prior NSF funding commitments to ILTER are being sorted out and will be honored as soon as clarified. NSF appears to be in arrears by several years.
- c. ASM funds. Funding for the 2012 ASM is on the NSF radar. It costs about \$500,000 to hold an ASM and in prior years this cost has been spread over two fiscal years, which would mean a supplement to the LNO budget would be needed yet this fiscal year (within the next few weeks). This will clarify once program budgets are finalized.

- d. NSF is still awaiting the written version of the 30y report, which will hopefully arrive by the end of May to give NSF time to incorporate recommendations into the call for continuation awards, which will go to the 2012 cohort in August.
 - e. In response to further questions: 1) ULTRA remains a high priority for the Foundation, and while the time line has slipped the intent has not. 2) A new Gulf Coast LTER site has not been discussed further at the Foundation [following Todd Crowl's discussion with OMB a year ago]. 3) No definitive decisions have been announced regarding the next program officer for LTER except that Matt Kane will continue in present position for another year. There will likely be more than one PO, with a virtual cluster of people managing LTER led by a permanent lead PO.
13. Upcoming meetings
- a. May 18-19 (Wed, Thur), SC Meeting, Sapelo
May 20 (Fri), 8am – noon, Lead PI meeting, Sapelo
 - b. June – Aug (VTC) - tbd
14. Active ad hoc committees
- a. Science council program committee – John Blair, chair
 - b. Lead PI meeting program committee – Nick Brokaw and David Foster, co-chairs
 - c. Synthesis data committee – Peter Groffman, chair
 - d. Spatial data committee – Andrew Fountain, chair
15. Meeting adjourned 5:00 p.m.