MINUTES

LONG-TERM ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM
Spring 1998 Coordinating Committee Meeting

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
April 23-24, 1998

CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Jim Gosz called the meeting to order at the Central Plains Experimental Range on Thursday, April 23, 1998, at 8:50 a.m.

PRESENT

Christine French (NSF), Mark Hunter (CWT), Charles Driscoll (HBR), Susan Stafford (AND), William Lauenroth (SGS), Christy Tyler (VCR), Phil Coleman (NWT), Doug Farnham (ARC), Charles Hopkinson (Plum Island), Peter Groffman (BAL), Donna Francis (HFR), John Yarie (BNZ), Doug Goodin (KNZ), Chris Wasser (SGS), Bob Parmenter (SEV), John Vande Castle (NET), Bruce Hayden (NSF), Nancy Grimm (CAP), J eff Zimmerman (LUQ), Louise Williams (NWO), Laura Huenneke (JRN), Patricia Sprott (NWO), Robert Waide (NWO), Ray Smith (PAL), John Porter (VCR), Gus Shaver (NSF), Phil Robertson (KBS), Dave Coleman (CWT), Art McKee (AND), Tim Kratz (NTL), Scott Collins (NSF), John Briggs (KNZ), Alan Knapp (KNZ), Tim Seastedt (NWT), Johannes Knopps (CDR), Mark Harmon (AND), Berry Lyons (MCM), John Magnuson (NTL)

HOST: Indy Burke (SGS)
GUESTS: John Kimble, National Soil Science Center, Lincoln, NE; John Dennis, John Dennis Productions, Atlanta, GA

1. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION REPORT

Bruce Hayden reported that BIO, in its long range (4 to 6 year) planning process, is studying the infrastructure needs for field environmental and ecological research. The community is encouraged to think big in considering the "ecological observatories" needed for the decades ahead. Hayden suggested that the LTER community should engage in long range planning for common infrastructure development across the LTER network. Capacity for long-term integrated field research across all levels of biological organzation should be addressed in planning for the next generation of ecological observatories. Observatory capabilities in the areas of data and information management and networking ,microbial ecology, biodiversity, gas-flux towers, groundwater observations well, soil communities, remote sensing and calibration all need to be defined and the equipment that would be required needs to be considered. Hayden suggested that the network should consider establishing committees to engage in these studies. These network studies will help the Foundation better understand the research infrastructure needs in the years to come.

2. MICROBIAL OBSERVATORIES

At the October 1997 meeting, the Executive Committee appointed John Vande Castle to conduct a survey of the type of microbial ecology being accomplished at the LTER sites. John reported that he has received 19 reports, and he has created a web page, . Twelve sites have been documented. A motion was made and seconded to form a Microbial Task Group to develop a vision statement to present to NSF regarding a network-level microbial ecology program that will take advantage of site and cross-site capabilities. The motion passed unanimously. John Vande Castle will chair this group. People who are interested in participating in this group include Linda Bloom, Gene Lodge, Phil Robertson, Chuck Hopkinson, Peter Groffman, Diana Wahl, and John Moore. John Hobbie was unanimously elected to take a leadership role in stimulating an e-mail discussion about the LTER Network participating in microbial observatories.

3. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATORY

During the Executive Committee meeting in February 1998, Indy Burke agreed to conduct a survey regarding the elements that should go into a National Environmental Observatory. An ad hoc committee of twelve people was identified and asked for their opinions about what kinds of questions would stimulate the installation of an Environmental National Observatory. This committee will draft an introductory statement and distribute it to the LTER network to get ideas for a strong proposal for a National Environmental Observatory.

4. NATIONAL SOIL SCIENCE CENTER

John Kimble, of the National Soil Science Center, has done soil work with some LTER sites and is trying to reestablish some links with LTER sites so as to gather data to take to the agricultural/farming/environmental community. The NSSC develops soil maps at different scales and has lots of useful datasets. Jim Gosz suggested that the LTER Network Office put a page on its website that points to various soil datasets, maps, etc., and to collect requests from sites as to how they would like to work with John and the National Soil Science Center.

5. NETWORK OFFICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES

The transition of the Network office from the University of Washington to the University of New Mexico has been completed. The Network Office has made offers of employment to one programmer/analyst and one systems manager, who will begin working with James Brunt in the near future. The equipment purchases and installation of the LTER information and communication system is complete. Some of the network databases are being updated, including the Personnel DB. The web site is being redesigned. The new site is expected to be completed by July 1. John Vande Castle is continuing with NASA activities. James Brunt is developing an LTER Network Information System that includes core databases and prototype databases. LTER interests will be promoted at an exhibition and reception held by the Council for National Science Funding at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, DC, May 20, 1998. Patty Sprott, Bob Parmenter and Jim Gosz will be present. Site representatives who are close to Washington are encouraged to attend. A new issue of the newsletter has been produced and will be distributed soon.

6. EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee will conduct a workshop to be held in the fall of 1998. Teams from interested LTER sites will be invited. These teams should include a scientific representative from the site and a K-12 teacher from the local community. This workshop will produce some descriptions or models of how sites can integrate LTER science with long-term partnerships that lead to improved science education. Laura Huenneke announced that a mailing to all sites detailing the effort will follow in May or June.

7. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Chris French reported that twelve graduate students from eight LTER sites have been selected to participate in the US-Asia Graduate Student Exchange in June 1998. They will visit ILTER sites in Taiwan and China.

8. ALL SCIENTISTS MEETING, 2000

Bob Parmenter reported that the Year 2000 All Scientists meeting would be held directly prior to the ESA meeting in Snowbird, Utah. LTER meetings will be held Thursday, Aug. 3, through Saturday, Aug. 5. There will be field trips on Sunday, and the ESA meeting starts Monday, August 7. The theme will focus on synthesis, self-assessment and future directions.

9. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION

John Briggs will be working at NSF for one year and will not be able to complete his three-year term on the Executive Committee. The floor was opened for nominations to fill John's position, and Gus Shaver was nominated. John Porter had previously agreed to run for the position. Voting was by secret ballot; each site had one vote. John Porter received 11 votes, Gus Shaver received 9 votes, and there was one abstention. Voting was by secret ballot. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. * * * * * Chairman Jim Gosz called the meeting to order at the Lory Student Center, Colorado State University, on Friday, April 24, 1998, at 8:00 a.m.

10. PLUM ISLAND SOUND LTER SITE

P.I. Chuck Hopkinson described the newest LTER site, Plum Island Sound, and the research being done there.

11. PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Patty Sprott reported that the Publications Committee met on April 23, 1998, and drafted a charter for the Publications Committee. Konza Prairie's Synthesis Series volume is in press. It is will be available in June or July. There was discussion about interactions between the sites and Oxford Press. It was suggested that the Publications Committee act as a liaison between the sites and Oxford press to facilitate consistency in formatting and dealing with Oxford Press.

12. NETWORK VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Jim Gosz introduced John Dennis, of John Dennis Productions, who is interested in producing a Network-level video for the Y2K All Scientists meeting. Mr. Dennis presented film clips from a recent video production his firm did for Sevilleta to demonstrate the advanced digital technology capabilities of his company. There was discussion of the potential benefits of producing such a video, including outreach and as a recruiting tool. A motion was made and seconded that the Network Office investigate the possibility of using John Dennis Productions to produce a video. Following discussion, the motion was amended to state that the Executive Committee be authorized to make a decision during its August 1998 meeting on whether to use John Dennis Productions to produce a video. The amendment was seconded and passed by a vote of 19-2. The amended motion passed by a vote of 19-2. Voting was by a show of hands.

13. GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE

Christy Tyler, Co-Chair of the Graduate Student Committee, reported that the Committee is composed of one delegate from each site and 19 sites are represented on the Committee. They are attempting to compile a list of current graduate students at each site to facilitate e-mail communication with the grad students. The Committee is trying to organize student get-togethers at various national meetings in an attempt to expose students to the LTER Network and its resources. The next meeting of the Graduate Student Committee will be held in Baltimore in August 1998. Co-Chair Emma Rossi is retiring. Her replacement will be selected during the August meeting.

14. CLIMATE COMMITTEE

Doug Gooden reported that the Climate Standards document is available for comment on the CLIMSTAN home page. Glen Juday is Chair of the Working Committee on Climate Change and its Ecological Effects, which will follow up on the theme of the October 1997 Coordinating Committee meeting. Members are Ray Smith, John Magnuson and David Greenland. The committee will meet in the near future to decide on its product.

15. DATA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

John Briggs reported that the LTER Data Access Policy was presented to NSF in February 1998 as part of the Executive Committee meeting.. The Datatask Committee, which is a subgroup of the Data Management Committee, met in Corvallis, OR, in February 1998. A prototype database containing standardized information about each site, i.e., location, soils, vegetation, is being developed by Mark Harmon. Six sites have provided information for the database.

16. TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Jim Gosz reported that the Standing Committee on Technology, which has been inactive, is being rejuvenated. The national observatory and microbial observatory people are taking the lead in terms of a Technology Committee function. During the Executive Committee meeting held April 23, 1998, a list of people who are capable of contributing to the national observatory and microbial observatory effort was compiled. These people have not been contacted, but the Executive Committee feels they have expertise to assist the LTER Network in developing the technologies we want within the Network.

17. SYNTHESIS COMMITTEE

Jim Gosz reported that the Synthesis Committee on Technology has also been inactive and he believes it is critical that it be restored. Bob Waide agreed to lead an effort to reinvigorate the committee because future Network activities, including the Synthesis volumes and films, will require input from the Synthesis Committee. Bob is soliciting suggestions from people who would be willing and able to work on cross-site, network-wide efforts.

18. VERY LONG-TERM PROJECTS

Donna Francis reported on the Working Group on Very Long Term Projects, Datasets and Activities that David Foster proposed during the Executive Committee meeting in February. These kinds of activities are taking place at LTER and other sites. David proposed that representatives from these sites meet to share approaches for using long-term studies integrated with modern studies. The goal of this activity is to promote awareness of very long-term projects and generate interaction among sites. The working group would produce papers and a book that would be part of the LTER Synthesis Series.

19. WEATHERING WORKING GROUP

Berry Lyons reported on forming a working group on chemical weathering to try to develop intersite comparisons to examine chemical weathering and subsequent landscape development. A working group or planning group will meet in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in July 1998. The idea behind this group is to initiate intersite comparison that would eventually include all of the LTER sites that have a hydrological component. They would use hydrologic and chemical data to calculate weathering rates at all of the sites and then evaluate those rates in terms of climate, vegetation, land use, etc., with the idea of developing a better understanding of what drives chemical weathering.

20. CROSS-SITE PLANNING PROJECT POLICY

Jim Gosz reported that the Executive Committee is formulating a policy on how the LTER Network will entertain requests for funding cross-site planning projects. Such requests would be small amounts ($1- $3,000) for groups to meet to establish a planning effort A motion was made and seconded that the Coordinating Committee authorize the Executive Committee to make decisions on awarding funds for cross-site planning projects. The Network Office will ensure that all proposals are distributed to the Coordinating Committee for comments. The motion passed unanimously.

21. FUTURE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The North Temperate Lakes site will host the fall 1998 meeting. The meeting will be held on the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison October 16-18. The spring 1999 meeting will be held at Luquillo April 22-23. The fall 1999 meeting will be held at Hubbard Brook October 2- 3. It was moved and seconded to not have a Coordinating Committee meeting in spring 2000. The motion passed 20-1.

22. NSF 20-YEAR REVIEW

In keeping with its ten-year evaluation process, NSF will conduct a 20-year review of the LTER Network after 2000, using a Committee of Visitors (COV) approach. There was discussion about the makeup of the COV and opportunities for the Committee to visit various LTER sites during the review process.

23. USDA UV-B RADIATION MONITORING PROGRAM

Dave Bigelow, a co-PI on this project, gave a presentation on the data products being developed for agriculturists. The program has a network of 25 sites and expects to grow to approximately 35 sites. The network was designed around a grid-based system. The grid has not been filled in, and there may be opportunities for some LTER sites to participate in this program. Jim Gosz spoke about the national network effort being promulgated by OSTP to integrate monitoring networks with research networks. The idea is that the monitoring equipment be located at research-intensive sites in order to have a direct dataset associated with all of the research being conducted so as to interpret trends.

24. OBFS REPORT

Art McKee announced that OBFS would hold a workshop at NCEAS in May to try to improve networking at the OBFS sites and increase its links with LTER. James Brunt, from the Network Office, will participate in this workshop.

25. NETWORK OF NETWORKS

Bob Waide referred to the Risser Report's challenge to NSF and LTER to create a network of 100 world-wide LTER sites consisting of 25 U.S. sites funded by NSF, 25 U.S. LTER sites funded by other agencies and 50 international sites. There are presently 21 US LTER sites, more than 50 international sites, and no US agency-funded sites. In order to hew to the Risser Report, LTER needs to develop interactions with other agencies. Bob proposed that we use the same strategy we used with other countries, i.e., sending LTER representatives to these agencies. Bob attended a recent meeting at Yellowstone National Park where he met with a group of scientists from the greater Yellowstone ecosystem who is interested in developing an LTER site. This group is formulating a proposal to submit to a government agency. Bruce Hayden spoke about developing parallel networks in other agencies. LTER should be prepared to convince these agencies that building and funding parallel LTER systems consistent with the mandates of those agencies is appropriate.

26. IPA EXTENSION FOR CHRIS FRENCH

Chris French, of NSF, has been working at the Network Office on an IPA since November 1996. She is responsible for the logistical arrangements for LTER's interactions with ILTER. Chris wants to extend her stay at the Network Office so as to continue this effort. It was moved and seconded that the Coordinating Committee express its support for Chris' IPA extension. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.