

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
March 25, 2008; 2:00-4:00 pm EST Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at 2:00 by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Peter Groffman, Don Henshaw, Sarah Hobbie, Sally Holbrook, Chuck Hopkinson, Sherri Johnson, Berry Lyons, Steve Pennings, Dan Reed, Bob Waide; Unavailable: Morgan Grove.
2. Minutes for February 27, 2008, meeting approved by consent with one revision (item 6b).
3. Updates
 - a. Network survey. Bob Waide reported that the network survey will be back from the consultant shortly and distributed in early April.
 - b. Science Council Plans – Baltimore Meeting.
 - i. Science Meeting. Robertson relayed news from program chair Morgan Grove that the science meeting agenda is now complete and breakout conveners and moderators will be finalized once rsvp's are returned. Bob Waide reported that logistical information will be going to the SC by the end of the week.
 - ii. Business meeting. Currently on business meeting agenda are potential bylaw changes and election of chair (see below).
 - c. ULTRA (Urban Long-term Research Areas). NSF in a conversation with Robertson earlier today asked that the Network weigh in on the potential for USFS ULTRA sites to partner with NSF, and in particular to formally answer the question of whether ULTRA science questions are compatible with the network's decadal plan science questions. Robertson has added this discussion to the agenda (below).
4. Bylaw changes.

Robertson noted that there are a number of potential bylaw changes that merit consideration, and noted 5 in particular that have come to light in the past year. To be eligible for adoption at the upcoming SC meeting, potential revisions must be distributed to the SC by April 7. At Chuck Hopkinson's suggestion, each potential change was discussed and Robertson will circulate draft language for EB comment prior to submission to the SC on April 7. Discussion included:

 - a. Science council composition, to better define the role and term of the secondary representative so as to reflect their contribution to the SC's science meeting rather than to governance per se.
 - b. SC Chairperson selection, to make explicit the role of a nominating committee and to provide time lines for the nominating process.
 - c. National Advisory Board, to better define how the NAB chair is selected, the term of the chair, and to allow members to be reappointed to second 3-year terms.
 - d. Review of LNO performance, to provide for a network survey at least every other year rather than every year.
 - e. LNO renewal proposals, to provide for explicit EB approval prior to submission to NSF, with a timeline.

5. Chair election

Robertson thanked EB members for earlier encouragement to continue for another 2 year term and announced his intention to stand for election in May. Following review of bylaws and discussion, there was a consensus decision to appoint a nominating committee comprised of Chuck Hopkinson (chair), Sherri Johnson, Berry Lyons, and Dan Reed, who will present a slate of candidates to the SC. The committee will put together a call for nominations to be circulated to all LTER scientists by Bob Waide for a response by April 8, 2008.

6. Follow-up discussion from NAB/AD meetings

Robertson reported on comments from Henry Gholz and Dan Childers regarding discussions at the prior EB meeting with NSF Assistant Directors, and also noted that the NAB report will be forthcoming in a week or so from NAB Chair Peter Arzberger.

7. ULTRA – Urban Long-term Research Areas (added to agenda)

Robertson reported that NSF has requested that the LTER community respond to the possibility for NSF partnering with the USFS in their plans for an Urban Long-term Research Area initiative (see November 1, 2007 EB minutes) . In particular NSF asks if the science questions proposed by ULTRA are compatible with those in the LTER Decadal Plan, and has asked for a response “within a few days.”

Background: The USFS plans to fund as many as 9 ULTRA awards over the next 5 years (at funding levels similar to existing LTER sites) and is exploring with NSF both the potential for co-funding and for ULTRA sites to become formal members of the LTER Network. This would add 9 urban sites to our current 2 sites, and expand the network to 35 sites. Substantial discussion ensued, including the procedure for selecting sites (the USFS has already targeted 9 specific cities for inclusion, but not research groups); review criteria and process; funding longevity; data availability; implications for funding decadal plan science at existing LTER sites; site balance in the Network; the process for choosing the types of sites to be added to the Network; the value of responding to available funding opportunities as they arise; and positive nature of current support by USFS at existing LTER sites (through both experimental forests [e.g. HBR, AND, LUQ, CWT, BNZ] and BES).

The EB does not yet have the ULTRA proposed science questions, so cannot evaluate whether the questions are consistent with decadal plan science. Consensus is that Robertson will obtain the questions from Morgan Grove (a principal shepherd of ULTRA within USFS) and then draft a response together with Peter Groffman and Chuck Hopkinson (Morgan to consult as needed), to be circulated to the rest of the EB by next Monday. Depending on email response from EB members, Robertson will submit by midweek to NSF. [NB: see addendum for statement]

8. Other

a. next meetings

1. Apr 15, Tue, 2:30 - 4:30 pm EST
2. May 6 (EB), 7-8 (SC) - Baltimore

b. items for future agendas

9. Meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm.

Addendum: ULTRA Research Questions and Statement provided to NSF on April 2

ULTRA (Urban Long-term Research Area) Draft Strategic Research Questions

ULTRAs should include a significant focus on dynamics that cannot be understood under short-term funding cycles or other existing funding opportunities. ULTRAs should be developed around a site-specific conceptual framework that is broadly focused on an integrative and interactive approach for socio-ecological research. A template for this is provided in *Integrative Science for Society and the Environment: A Strategic Research Initiative* (Collins et al. 2007 <http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/urban/ultra/>). This framework, in an ULTRA context, will require the integration of traditional social and ecological sciences, applications, and education that involves six strategic research questions:

1. How do long-term social-ecological press and short-term pulse disturbances interact to alter ecosystem structure and function?
2. How can biotic structure, including built structure, be both a cause and consequence of ecological fluxes of energy and matter?
3. How do altered ecosystem dynamics affect ecosystem services?
4. How do changes in vital ecosystem services alter human outcomes?
5. How do perceptions and outcomes affect human behaviors and institutions?
6. Which human actions influence the frequency, magnitude, or form of press and pulse disturbance regimes and what determines these actions?

These strategic areas should be used to focus and integrate ULTRA research within and among ULTRA sites and with other networks such as LTER, NEON, and WATERS. These strategic research areas are broadly defined and must be incorporated into the proposed research, applications, and education.

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Date: Wed, 02 Apr 2008 13:41:30 -0400
To: Henry Gholz <hgholz@nsf.gov>
From: Phil Robertson <robertson@kbs.msu.edu>
Subject: ULTRA and LTER
Cc: Dan Childers <dchilder@nsf.gov>

Dear Henry,

As requested, the LTER Network's Executive Board has reviewed the draft science questions associated with the USFS' proposed ULTRA program and finds them consistent with (even congruent with) those identified in the LTER Network's Decadal Plan.

That said, I need to relay concerns raised by the Executive Board with respect to the formal inclusion of these sites in the Network. Most concerns are procedural and I expect can be worked out with careful discussion; one that seems more difficult is the pre-identification of specific geographic locations (i.e.

candidate cities) for these sites. The EB's main concern is that constraining the list to a set of specific locations (as opposed to biome types, as in the past) may diminish NSF's traditional primary emphasis on intellectual merit for site selection.

Existing long-standing partnerships with the Forest Service at current LTER sites have been extraordinarily productive, and much about the inclusion of ULTRA sites in the LTER Network could be modeled on LTER's existing USFS relationship. We welcome the opportunity to discuss further.
Phil