

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
May 5, 2008; 9:00 am - 5:00 pm; Baltimore, MD
(approved July 24, 2008)

1. Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Peter Groffman, Don Henshaw, Sarah Hobbie, Sally Holbrook, Chuck Hopkinson, Sherri Johnson, Berry Lyons, Morgan Grove, Steve Pennings, Dan Reed, Bob Waide; Unavailable: none. Also present were incoming EB members Corrina Gries, Ted Gragson, and Mark Williams; and from NSF (for a portion of the meeting) Henry Gholz and Dan Childers.
2. Minutes for March 25, 2008, meeting approved by consent with one correction (item 7).
3. Network Survey Results
Bob Waide summarized results from the April LNO evaluation survey (sent to lead PIs, grad student representatives, and IM representatives at each site). In general there was strong satisfaction with most aspects of LNO performance; a few specific issues emerged and were discussed:
 - graduate students feel poorly informed. Discussion noted the need to ensure that the communication plan proposed in the renewal proposal targets and involves grad students in particular. Additionally there's the potential for the 2009 All Scientist Meeting to provide opportunities for involving students in network-level activities, and also a need to encourage sites to more regularly update student information on the network personnel database. Adding the grad rep to Site Contacts on each site's profile would provide impetus to sites to provide this information. An annual request to update the site profile would then result in updating grad rep information.
 - the usability of the document archive was noted by several respondents. Partly this is organizational (a table of contents might help); partly this is priority-related (minutes of meetings and workgroup products are not very timely). Discussion also suggested that a summary calendar would be useful, as would a network history overview including an event timeline.
 - the remote sensing archive seems to be underutilized, which may reflect a lack of need. Following discussion there was agreement to form an ad hoc group to advise the EB on current site needs and the best path forward.
 - discussion about IM support for sites revealed that database servers for some sites are being administered by the LNO. Consensus is that there should be wider availability of this opportunity and the LNO should consider a fee structure since there are administrative costs for hosting these.
 - the site image gallery needs updating. The EB/LNO should put out a call to sites for updated images suitable for print (NSF, Network brochures) and web.
4. Science Council Meeting Planning
Robertson led a discussion of potential outcomes of this week's science meeting and how to charge the work groups. Immediate aim is to position us to respond to current and emerging opportunities to advance decadal plan science. CNH program is one short-term outlet and others may emerge shortly. Agreement that decadal-plan-related proposals will include the ISSE loop model, will fall within one of the 3 decadal plan research themes, and will involve a number of sites (but not necessarily 26). Charge to groups should

include identification of the most exciting specific questions that could be addressed in the near-term. Follow-on workshop products could be research proposals to address these questions or synthesis papers drawing on existing data. The decision was made to allow groups to self-sort rather than assigning individuals to workgroups. Also suggested was the potential for sites to contribute funding to the follow-on workshops by cost-sharing participant travel. The SC Business Meeting agenda was also presented, discussed, and approved by consent.

5. ULTRA Update

Morgan Grove provided an update on the Forest Service's (USFS) proposed ULTRA network. The USFS Research Executive Team is expected to make a funding recommendation to the USFS Research Director (Anne Bartuska) within the next few days. Under consideration is FY09 funding to initiate research at 9 candidate sites, already identified. The status of efforts to partner with NSF is unknown; it's likely that discussions will be undertaken in earnest once a funding decision is made by USFS. Discussions would be at the Assistant Director level within the Foundation. As noted in earlier minutes, as requested by NSF the EB has endorsed the research direction of ULTRA but at the same time has raised concerns about the site selection process, in particular.

6. Committee Reports

Discussion of annual committee reports was postponed until a subsequent meeting.

7. Request from Microbial Sciences Working Group

Robertson led discussion of a request from a Network group led by Tom Schmidt (KBS) to form a Microbial Systems Science (MSS) working group. The request follows a microbial ecology workshop convened as a follow-on activity from the 2006 ASM. The function of the MSS group would be to promote and coordinate network-level microbial work, to improve the management of nucleic acid sequence data within the network (including coordination with other national and international sequence database efforts), and to update the current Microbial Ecology section of the LTER website.

Following discussion the EB endorsed the proposal and voted as noted below to establish the MSS as an ad hoc committee as provided in Network bylaws. The members of the committee will be those individuals named in the proposal; the chair of the committee will be chosen by the members as per bylaws. The EB encourages the MSS to engage NISAC in the genomic database work, and to work with John Vande Castle in the LNO to update the web site section. The ASM Program Committee will be informed of the group's interest in organizing MSS-related workshops at the upcoming ASM.

Action: Peter Groffman moved to create the Microbial Sciences Working Group as an ad hoc committee as described above. The motion was seconded by Sherri Johnson and passed by unanimous consent.

8. NSF Report

Henry Gholz and Dan Childers provided NSF updates. Gholz noted that 2008 supplement proposals were funded at or close to the levels requested (close to \$3M), an extremely favorable outcome. At the network level this includes proposals to fund the 2009 ASM, support for workshop activities to follow from this week's SC meeting, and the EcoTrends request. At the same time he noted that supplement opportunities in 2009 will probably be very limited as a result of an NSF budget that will likely be flat and six site renewals that require budget increases. Gholz also noted the need to report results of past supplemental support in requests for OISE and SBE funding. Also noted was the upcoming LNO site visit by the renewal panel this fall.

9. National Advisory Board Report

Robertson led discussion of the NAB report received in April. The EB noted the thorough, thoughtful, and helpful nature of the report. Each of the 4 specific recommendations was discussed in detail. A response will be assembled for action over the coming months. Also discussed was the absolute need for LTER-PI representation at each NAB meeting to better inform their discussions (the current LTER member was not able to attend the meeting), and the manner in which the NAB is charged by the EB prior to meeting. The EB also discussed the upcoming NAB chair transition, and a preferred next chair was identified by the group; Robertson will follow up with current NAB chair Peter Arzberger.

Additionally, a suggestion to hold the next NAB meeting in concert with the 2009 Science Council was made and endorsed. This would allow NAB members to interact with site PIs, to participate in a site tour (CCE in 2009), and to observe science discussions.

10. ASM Planning

Bob Waide led discussion of planning for the 2009 ASM to be held in October 2009 at Estes Park. Following a description of the 2006 ASM planning committee and process, discussion centered on thematic goals and composition of the program committee for 2009. Discussion of specific goals brought up the need to emphasize social science and re-engage with ILTER. The program committee was suggested to include 9 site scientists, the graduate committee co-chairs, and representatives from the international and IM committees plus LNO. Robertson will query lead PIs for site nominations, which should provide a list of up to 26 site scientists from which a representative committee of 14-16 can be formed. This will be an ad hoc committee to be approved at the next EB meeting.

11. Next SC Meetings

Robertson noted that the next SC meetings are scheduled as below, and noted that we plan to have a 2009 SC meeting in addition to the ASM. The EB reaffirmed its intent to hold the 2011 meeting on-site at MCR, noting the importance of SC meetings for exposing site scientists to different sites. The SC will be asked to endorse this intent and for sites' willingness to cost-share travel to MCR.

2009 - California Coastal Ecosystem (CCE)

2010 - Plum Island Estuary (PIE)

2011 - Moorea Coral Reef (MCR)

2012 - Georgia Coastal Ecosystem (GCE)

12. EB Transitions

Robertson and other EB members thanked outgoing members Morgan Grove, Don Henshaw, Chuck Hopkinson, and Sherri Johnson, who are rotating off of the EB after this meeting.

13. Upcoming meetings

- a. next EB meetings – dates for summer VTC meetings will be set in June
- b. Fall planning workshop date to be set once the LNO site visit date is known
- c. 2010 Minisymposium – date to be set with NSF

14. Meeting adjourned at 5:10 pm.