

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
November 11, 2008; 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST; by Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at noon by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Peter Groffman, Corinna Gries, Sarah Hobbie, Sally Holbrook, Dave McGuire, Dan Reed, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Ted Gragson, Berry Lyons, Steve Pennings
2. Minutes for October 14, 2008, meeting approved by consent.
3. Updates
 - a. An ULTRA call for proposals is likely to be released very soon, for planning grants that will provide groups time to assemble more competitive LTER proposals. There may be a panel as early as late spring.
 - b. ASM planning is proceeding well. A more complete picture will be available shortly and reported out at the December EB meeting.

4. NSF Concerns about Site-Level Data Availability, cont.

Robertson reported on NSF's favorable reaction to the proposed short-term solution to NSF concerns discussed at our October meeting. Program officers indicated that the best-practices outlined (see October minutes) are adequate and will meet their immediate concerns as articulated this summer. They recognize that this is a first step on a longer trajectory set by the decadal plan, and that further steps will likely require resources to research and implement. They also appreciate that for some sites implementation may take more time than others, and that upcoming midterm reviews may be too short a time line for some sites.

Action: Following discussion, the EB adopted by consent the following best-practices for site-level data accessibility:

1. On the site home page provide a direct link to the data catalog, prominently displayed as a one-click url.
2. On the topmost data page:
 - a. identify signature data sets that best represent the site's research goals;
 - b. provide a capability to search datasets by LTER core area, by owner, and by keyword;
 - c. provide a capability to browse datasets by LTER core areas;
 - d. provide a prominent link to the LNO MetaCat system (a Network-wide database of metadata);
 - e. provide a prominent link to network-wide databases (ClimDB, HydroDB, SiteDB); and
 - f. provide a prominent link to the EcoTrends website.

Robertson will transmit these recommendations to lead-PIs/SC and include a sample page to be developed by the subcommittee in the next week or so; a draft of the letter will be circulated for EB edits and comments. He will also charge NISAC to consider a plan for implementing the longer-term recommendations: a) within metadata files, including a link to the data tables described, and b) address data access tracking, a controlled keyword vocabulary, and a units dictionary.

5. NSF Budget Concerns

a. Network response.

Robertson reported on conversations with NSF Division of Environmental Biology 10d ago as summarized in a recent email: Continuing Resolution funding has led the Foundation to postpone renewal increments for the 6 sites renewed in 2008 and the LNO. This has required affected sites to resubmit budgets with a 15% reduction from expected (and formerly approved) levels. It also will reduce the availability of 2009 site supplements to nil. The 15% funding shortfall is a serious issue that underscores the fragile nature of the LTER incremental funding model. Funding may be restored

once the NSF budget clarifies post-January, but full restoration depends on Congressional action. Discussion centered on LTER activities that might help to influence NSF appropriations, including participation in professional society activities (e.g. AIBS, ESA) targeted towards increasing research funding. Also discussed was the role of the upcoming 30-year review for helping to solidify long-term funding increments, and additional network activities that might increase the network's visibility in Washington.

b. LNO response.

Waide reported on how he proposes to build down the LNO budget to meet a 43% reduction from the proposal request and a 15% reduction from the anticipated cost-of-living increase for core operations. The revised budget must hold spending at current levels for the next 6 years. Impacts will be severe on current positions, with elimination of at least one position in year 1 and 4 positions in year two, when it will also be necessary to share 3 positions with other projects. Also forfeited under this plan are decadal plan activities: future research working groups (funding for current groups remains intact), planning meetings to advance the decadal plan, a number of network-level CI activities, and full funding of SC meetings (sites will be required to co-fund one of two site participants).

In an earlier meeting the EB had expressed its intent to provide input on priorities should the proposed LNO budget be reduced from requested levels. In light of the potential for budgets to be at least partially restored mid-year, and in light of the severity of cuts necessary, the EB at this time endorses without further discussion the budget reductions proposed by Waide. These will now be sent to NSF.

6. National Phenology Network, cont.

As discussed at the October EB meeting, we have over the past year negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the National Phenology Network (NPN). The MOU is largely cost-free, and positions the network to participate in mutually-beneficial activities including citizen-science and other outreach activities aligned with our Decadal Plan, in addition to research opportunities for sites.

Action: Mark Williams moved to approve the MOU between the NPN and the LTER Network for cooperation in phenological monitoring and assessment. Peter Groffman supported, and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

7. Upcoming Meetings

- a. December 11 Thursday 12-2pm EDT
- b. January 22, 2009 Thursday noon-2pm EDT
- c. February 24-26, 2009 Washington DC (Minisymposium Thursday Feb 26)
- d. March, April meetings tba
- e. May 12-14, 2009 EB/SC Meeting San Diego

8. Meeting adjourned 1:40 p.m.

Attached: NPN-LTER MOU as approved