Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting  
August 31, 2009; 12pm-2 pm EDT; Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at 12:10pm by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Nick Brokaw, Hugh Ducklow, David Foster, Ted Gragson, Corinna Gries, Sarah Hobbie, Dave McGuire, Steve Pennings, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Sally Holbrook

2. Minutes for 16 July 2009 approved by consent following addition of NAB chair decision.

3. Updates
   a. ASM 2009. Bob Waide reported that we currently have 746 registrants, 75 working groups, and 317 posters, and that a number of recent ULTRA-EX awardees will be at the meeting.
   b. NAB chair. Phil Robertson reported that Carol Brewer has accepted our invitation to be the next NAB chair.
   c. Robertson noted that a week for the winter meeting in DC will need to be polled owing to a conflict with an AGU marine meeting in late February.

4. NSF ARRA Award – EB Role
   Waide reported on the terms and conditions underlying the Sept 1 NSF ARRA award. The EB is specifically involved in project governance and reporting. In particular, the EB is expected to participate in the construction of the detailed operational plan for the expenditures of award funds, which must be submitted to NSF within 6 months of Sept. 1. The EB is also required to conduct an annual review of the LNO’s progress on activities sustained by the award, to be submitted to NSF annually. A suggestion that the EB subdivide into groups that can address the 4 major functions of the award was discussed. Also noted was the potential (and NSF’s informal encouragement) to convene an external advisory group for the CI portion of the plan. A specific plan for EB involvement will be adopted at our next meeting on Sept. 13.

5. LNO Annual Review Metrics Committee
   Steve Pennings reported on the outcome of the subcommittee to devise LNO annual review milestones and metrics (attached below). The purpose is to provide a clear and transparent means by which to judge LNO performance. It was noted during discussion that metrics will change annually, so that any current deficiencies can be readily fixed for the ensuing year, and that approving the next year’s metrics should be part of the current year’s review. After additional discussion and general agreement that these should serve us well, the metrics were adopted by unanimous consent.

6. NAB Chair Appointment
   Network bylaws call for the chair of the National Advisory Board to be “selected from among NAB members, recommended by the Executive Board in consultation with the outgoing NAB chair, and invited to perform this service by the EB Chair for a once-renewable 2 year term.” In May, following consultation with outgoing chair Peter Arzberger, Robertson had asked Carol Brewer to be interim chair for the June NAB meeting. Following discussion, Steve Pennings made a motion to invite Brewer to undertake a full 2-year term; the motion was seconded and adopted unanimously. Robertson will extend the invitation.
Robertson reported on the current status of EcoTrends discussions. Since the last EB meeting he has met with Deb Peters (at ESA) and then again by phone in a conference call with Peters, Waide, Henry Gholz, and Todd Crowl. Waide additionally met with Peters at the SEV site review 3 weeks ago. Robertson reported on 3 points of agreement and 2 points unresolved. Agreement includes the desirability of having 1) a data shepherd who can help sites error-check datasets to be included in EcoTrends (and eventually in NIS), subject to annual review and renewal; 2) the desirability of an LNO-based data manager to coordinate the harvesting, validation, transformation and loading of EcoTrends data into NIS; and 3) the need to include Ecotrends activities funded by the LNO in the LNO’s detailed operational plan, with periodic review by the EB and NSF as noted in agenda item 4, above. There is less agreement on 4) the scope of further web site development. As noted earlier, the EB is willing to consider a 1-time web improvement, external to the LNO, that addresses specific x-y graphing and presentation hierarchy issues, and the operation of the Ecotrends web site by JRN until a time determined by the detailed operational plan. Peters believes a more extensive web site overhaul is warranted to address underlying database issues related to the way that disturbance data are presented and to address other presentation design issues. There is also less agreement on 5) governance. Robertson suggested an EcoTrends governance body as a network committee under NISAC to provide scientific oversight and priority setting, and topic area meetings funded by EB calls for synthesis activities. Peters believes an advisory committee reporting directly to the EB is more appropriate.

An additional consideration raised in the NSF phone conference is the potential for additional funding to push both NIS and EcoTrends in parallel. Required for this will be a sound argument that a coordinated approach is worthy and will benefit the larger EON community. This would require a proposal to NSF.

EB discussion followed. There was general agreement that a data shepherd that could serve both Ecotrends and (by extension) NIS could be very helpful, but that the scope of the position would need to be prioritized and well-defined inasmuch as it would otherwise be very open-ended. Also noted was the imprecise nature of web-development activities, with a danger of creating graphing and analysis tools either not needed or redundant with others already available. On the other hand there was widespread agreement that insofar as EcoTrends is a part of NIS and the Decadal Plan, that the EB needs to further embrace EcoTrends by including it as an integral part of the detailed operational plan being developed for NIS, with funding appropriate to current priorities.

The consensus is that further discussion of EcoTrends is needed and should take place in the context of the operational plan for NIS. Robertson will invite Peters to the Estes Park EB meeting for any further need for clarification.

8. Upcoming Chair Election
Robertson noted that a new SC/EB chair will be elected at the June 13, 2010, SC meeting, and that prior to April 13 a nomination committee must be appointed to submit nominees to the membership by May 13. It could be useful to have the nomination committee in place at the ASM. After discussion it was decided that Robertson will solicit nominees for the nomination committee from the SC and EB prior to the next EB meeting.
9. Upcoming Meetings
   a. Sep 13, 1-5pm, Estes Park; pre-ASM
   b. Oct-Jan TBD
   c. Feb TBD (3d, Washington DC; minisymposium)

10. Meeting adjourned 1:40 p.m.
Purpose: Clear performance criteria will enable the EB to do a better job in its annual review of the LNO.

Goal 1 – Increase the pace and scope of scientific synthesis in the LTER Network

Milestone 1 – By the end of the 3rd quarter, prepare for and carry out the LTER All Scientists Meeting, including at least 50 working groups. **Criteria for evaluation:** scores on a post-meeting survey evaluating logistical issues (LNO is not responsible for scientific content of working group discussions).

Milestone 2 – By the end of the 2nd quarter, prepare and carry out the Science Council meeting in San Diego. **Criteria:** comments of participants and EB.

Milestone 3 – By the end of the calendar year, solicit proposals for synthesis projects from the LTER community as directed by the EB. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 4 – By the end of the calendar year, develop and populate a database with information on working groups funded by the LNO, including final reports, lists of participants and their site affiliations, and products. **Criteria:** database is online, contains the information described, and is accessible; EB members evaluate completeness and usability of database.

Milestone 5 – By the end of the calendar year, complete a draft operational plan to update LTER Network spatial data holdings in conjunction with the LTER Spatial Data and Analysis Committee. **Criteria:** plan completed or not.

Milestone 6 - By the end of the 3rd quarter, execute a sub-contract for continued activities of EcoTrends as determined by the Executive Board and NSF.

Goal 2 – Support Decadal Plan cyberinfrastructure goals

Milestone 1 – By the end of the calendar year, release a revised LTER intranet page that provides direct control of content to LTER scientists and students. **Criteria:** new page is released, has a standardized format and functions as described.

Milestone 2 - By the end of the calendar year, make a go/no go decision on integrating ClimDB and HydroDB databases from Andrews to the LNO. **Criteria:** decision made or not.

Milestone 3 - By the end of the calendar year, conduct and evaluate a single trial web-based informational activity designed to provide information on LNO CI services and activities to broad LTER audience. **Criteria:** done or not, report of evaluation to EB.

Milestone 4 – By the end of the calendar year, complete a schedule for biannual web-based seminars to provide information on cybersecurity to sites. **Criteria:** schedule completed or not.

Milestone 5 – By the end of the calendar year, acquire hardware necessary to capture and webcast LTER presentations. **Criteria:** hardware acquired.
Milestone 6 – By the end of the calendar year, meet all sub-milestones for the development of the NIS. **Criteria:** feedback from NISAC on sub-milestone progress.

Sub-milestone A: By the end of the calendar year, complete a draft operational plan for the continued development of the Network Information System and submit that plan to NISAC. **Criteria:** done or not done; evaluation by NISAC to recommend steps to accelerate pace and, if needed, reallocate resources.

Sub-milestone B: By the end of the calendar year, test and evaluate functional prototypes of three major components of the PASTA framework: 1) data identification, 2) parsing and loading, and 3) data caching. **Criteria:** done or not done; evaluation by NISAC.

Sub-milestone C: By the end of the 2nd quarter, provide operational redundancy for EcoTrends and LTER Data Catalog applications by completing deployment of backup/fail-over servers and services for both the EcoTrends web portal and the LTER Data Catalog. **Criteria:** done or not done; evaluation by NISAC.

Sub-milestone D: By the end of the calendar year, improve the LTER community repository for NIS software projects by completing migration of the Subversion version control system from a standalone implementation to an integrated web-based implementation. **Criteria:** done or not done; evaluation by NISAC.

Sub-milestone E: By the end of the calendar year, complete decoupling of the LTER Data Catalog web application user interface from the current Metacat “skins” model, making it easier for sites to deploy local views of the LTER Data Catalog. **Criteria:** done or not done; evaluation by NISAC.

Sub-milestone F: By the end of the calendar year, assist the IMC controlled vocabulary working group (CVG) to (1) develop an optimal “data structure” and (2) modularize the current “auto-completion” feature such that it can deployed on site web-pages. **Criteria:** Description of requests and responses by LNO and review by NISAC.

Sub-milestone G: By the end of the calendar year, conduct searches for four new technical staff positions to contribute to the development of the NIS. **Criteria:** how many searches conducted.

Milestone 7 – By the end of the calendar year, complete an assessment of current LTER Cyberinfrastructure and future CI needs through a survey of all LTER sites. **Criteria:** survey completed and assessment presented to EB.

**Goal 3 – Support Network governance and operations**

Milestone 1 – By the end of the calendar year, organize cost-effective meetings of LTER committees: Science Council (1), Executive Board (3), LTER Mini-symposium (1), National Advisory Board (1), Network Information System Advisory Committee (2), Information Managers annual meeting (1), and IM Executive Committee (1). **Criteria:** meetings successfully held, survey responses every 2 y, EB collective assessment.
Milestone 2 - By the end of the calendar year (or earlier if required by NSF), provide requested materials in support of the 30-year review of the LTER Network. **Criteria:** done or not.

Milestone 3 – By the end of the 2nd quarter, complete negotiations for the renewal of the LNO Cooperative Agreement. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 4 – By the end of the 3rd quarter, complete negotiations for the Cooperative Agreement for support for the LTER Decadal Plan. **Criteria:** done or not.

Milestone 5 - By the end of the calendar year, submit a detailed annual report to the LTER Executive Board. This report will contain evidence of completion of the milestones contained herein and proposed milestones for the year to come. **Criteria:** done or not.

Milestone 6 – By the end of the 3rd quarter, submit a supplement proposal to NSF to provide funding for travel of the U.S. International Committee. **Criteria:** done or not.

Milestone 7 – By the end of each quarter, obtain updates of information on committee web pages from committee chairs. **Criteria:** Description of requests by LNO and responses by sites.

Milestone 8 - By the end of the calendar year, prepare a draft of a detailed operational plan for the expenditure of ARRA funds for review by the Executive Board. The contents of this operational plan will be determined by the requirements in the General Programmatic Terms and Conditions that govern the pertinent Cooperative Agreement. **Criteria:** done or not. RBW/MM/IB/MS/JVC/BM

**Goal 4** – Improve information flow within LTER and between LTER and others.

Milestone 1 - By the end of the calendar year, complete a schedule for meetings necessary to draft a Strategic Communication Plan for the LTER Network. **Criteria:** schedule completed or not.

Milestone 2 – By the August 2009, Ecological Society of America meeting, complete a redesigned LTER display. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 3 – Complete an informative and attractive newsletter by the end of the 2nd quarter and another by the end of the 4th quarter. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 4 - By the end of the calendar year, facilitate and subsidize reprinting of two site brochures. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 5 – By the end of the 3rd quarter, complete and administer a web-based survey of LNO performance and analyze results following guidance from EB. **Criteria:** completed or not.

Milestone 6 - By the end of the calendar year, complete a schedule for training activities for LTER scientists and information managers for calendar year 2010. **Criteria:** completed or not.

**Goal 5** – Create productive collaborations that improve interoperability with other networks

Milestone 1 – By the end of the calendar year, identify specific future activities that will mutually benefit the Organization for Biological Field Stations and LTER. **Criteria:** list of activities.
Milestone 2 – By the end of the calendar year, review the relationship between the LTER Network and the National Biological Information Infrastructure and set mutually-beneficial goals. **Criteria:** list of goals and recommendations.

Milestone 3 – By the end of the 3rd quarter, organize a workshop as directed by NSF to provide information to planning projects for the Urban Long Term Research Areas to allow for coordination with LTER scientific and cyberinfrastructure standards. **Criteria:** workshop organized or not, as directed by NSF.

Milestone 4. Maintain contact with cyberinfrastructure developers and information managers at NEON and develop a plan to formalize the relationship. **Criteria:** List of accomplishments.

Milestone 5. Advise EB of promising opportunities with other networks through annual updates as part of LNO annual report. **Criteria:** Completed or not.