

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting  
February 25-27, 2009; Washington, DC

1. Meeting called to order at 1pm by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Corinna Gries, Peter Groffman, Sarah Hobbie, Sally Holbrook, Berry Lyons, Dave McGuire, Steve Pennings, Dan Reed, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Ted Gragson.
2. Minutes for January 22, 2009 meeting approved by consent.
3. Reports and Discussions with NSF (note- meetings were not sequential and happened over 3d)
  - a. Henry Gholz and Todd Crowl (Program Directors, DEB)
    - i. Budget. NSF is now working with three budgets: current continuing resolution for FY09, proposed FY09, and proposed FY10 (summary to be released this week), in addition to expected stimulus funding. FY09 has a proposed 7% increase for NSF; if approved, sites renewed last year can expect to have increments restored as can LNO for core continuing-activities portion of the LNO proposal (still pending); LNO decadal plan additions likely to be funded from stimulus package. Supplement requests are in and several multi-site requests were favorably reviewed, decisions still pending.
    - ii. OISE/ILTER. Frances Li is moving from current OISE position; LTER contact will now be Deandra Beck. NSF expects to provide support to ILTER by 1) funding US travel to annual ILTER meeting for the US ILTER committee - to allow consistent US representation (\$20k); 2) paying dues to ILTER via OTS (\$10k); and 3) providing assistance in search for new ILTER Executive Director to help jump-start the position.
    - iii. LTAP. The official USDA rfp for long-term agricultural research is expected to appear shortly; relationship to LTER still needs defining and we should make contact with LTAP program officer Mike Bowers to initiate discussions.
    - iv. ULTRA. The rfp for 2-year exploratory awards will be out soon, now in Director's office. Cost is evenly split between USFS and NSF, with NSF's portion split between BIO and SBE. NSF will administer the awards. Exploratory awards are not expected to be prerequisite for competing for full awards when/if LTER competition announced.
    - v. LTER 30-year review now being discussed and planned.
  - b. Alan Tessier (Chair, Working Group for ERE and Program Director, DEB)
    - i. The AC/ERE (Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education) green book is in final stages of revision and likely to be released at their April meeting. Recommendations are expected to have broad impact at NSF, but funding won't appear until FY11 at earliest, if then. It will be important for the science community to promote the committee's findings for any impact to be realized.
  - c. Roberta Marinelli (Program Director, Office of Polar Programs)
    - i. Logistical support for the research vessel used by PAL is problematic because of funding constraints. Palmer relies on 1 month of service to carry out LTER research, which normally costs about \$1M (\$30k/d x 30d). NSF is currently looking for a solution. A letter of support from LTER could be well-received.
  - d. Bob Sterner and Penny Firth (Division Director and Deputy Division Director, DEB)
    - i. Budget. Noted dominance of LTER in DEB budget, and general importance to directorate: LTER is 20% of DEB budget of \$110M, and the largest single program funded in BIO.
    - ii. 30-year Review. Will be heavily data driven, should not be onerous for LTER given 20-year review findings and subsequent activities; expects to focus on challenges and opportunities, and to happen soon and take less than a year. Will likely be commissioned by BIO.
    - iii. Decadal plan research funding. Has never seen a stronger climate for environmental research at NSF, but essential to fit within national portfolio, to work closely with NSF to formulate proposals. ISSE per se will not be funded. Rather the Network should advance omnibus proposals that can be developed with input from NSF program officers. Reasonable strategy would be to develop

prospecti that are short summaries of big-picture ideas containing enough details for consideration and discussion by program officers and division directors. Full-blown proposals could then follow with combined funding from different directorates. Should also consider partners from outside the foundation, e.g. NOAA and DOE Office of Science.

e. Jim Collins (Assistant Director for Biology)

- i. The ecological community is looking at unprecedented opportunities for research funding and policy impact. In particular climate, carbon valuation, and species change arenas.
- ii. Funding strategies. Assistant directors just met to discuss how science communities can best advance larger proposals, e.g. of the sort envisioned by decadal plan. Groups of investigators should start conversations with program officers and division directors then broaden to other levels of NSF. NSF is open to nontraditional funding mechanisms – e.g. recent request for proposals in synthetic biology resulted in 170 ideas; the 30 top proposers were summoned to a week-long workshop that provided real-time feedback from evaluators; likely that similar approach will be used for other topics.
- iii. Opportunities current or pending include CHN, Life in Transition, Integrated Global System Science.
- iv. Relationships with other observatories. Will want to think about negotiating with NEON regarding airborne observing package at LTER sites. Coastal sites should be thinking about collaborating with Ocean Observing Initiative (OOI); other opportunities include Earthscope, and Diversitas has proposed a biodiversity observing system to GEOS.

4. National Advisory Board recommendations, chair search, and agenda

NAB currently consists of 12 members with several rotating off after the coming May meeting, including chair Peter Arzberger. We are in the process of identifying a new chair, which is a shared responsibility of the EB and outgoing chair. Robertson will query the SC for membership suggestions at and after the upcoming SC meeting. Discussion of NAB recommendations from last year's report ensued. Robertson will compile and circulate an update, to be presented to the NAB in May. Also discussed was format for the May meeting: Joint with the SC on day 1 (morning plenary, site tour, and dinner) and by themselves on day 2 (with participation by EB as required).

5. Decadal Plan Progress and Strategies

- a. Proposal strategies. Considerable discussion centered on progress and best forward strategies for operationalizing decadal plan (DP) science program. Discussion of appropriate tactics revolved around the feasibility of getting large-scale approaches funded. Collaborations among a limited number of sites will be appropriate for many questions and could be funded by existing programs. The Decadal Plan themes, on the other hand, are focused on larger-scale network science questions and endeavor explicitly to forge new approaches. General consensus is that both immediate small-scale and longer-term, broader participation projects should be encouraged. And that the role of the EB is to press for the development of frameworks to provide coordination of these different approaches towards common goals, without sacrificing the bottom-up science that has been the hallmark of successful network-level efforts to date. Notwithstanding the importance of larger projects, also voiced was the concern that there are no mechanisms now in place for funding research programs in the \$8-10M range, and that we could expend substantial effort developing projects for which there are no funding mechanisms [but see Sterner's and Collins' comments above, which came after this part of the discussion].
- b. Workshop strategies. Consensus is to use the upcoming SC meeting to build on working group efforts initiated at last year's Baltimore SC meeting and continued (in most cases) with follow-on workshops. These include three related directly to the 3 DP themes (sea level rise, winter climate change, land use change / urbanization) as well as climate change and species change experiments. Groups will be charged to work towards experimental designs that can be summarized with budgets in prospecti that can then be

used for funding discussions with NSF.

- c. SC meeting format will follow last year's successful model: a morning plenary session with talks related to on-going research themes provided where possible by existing workgroup organizers; an afternoon site tour; and a 2<sup>nd</sup> day of breakout groups focused on workgroup themes and charged as above. Funding is expected to be available from the LNO for follow-on meetings so long as DP LNO funding is successful (see Gholz comments above). Peter Groffman, chair of the SC Program Committee (Groffman, Merryl Alber, John Blair, Nancy Grimm, David Foster, Debra Peters) has started contacting potential plenary speakers and workgroup leaders and will firm commitments shortly after this meeting.

## 6. LNO Report

- a. Annual review of LNO. As required by Bylaws, the annual report and EB review from 2008 was distributed to the EB earlier in the month. The site survey is still in preparation, so the completion of the annual review will occur at May meeting.
- b. Site survey. The UNM Institute of Public Policy (IPP) has been contracted at a cost of \$4200 to devise the survey instrument based on the questions used in the 2008 survey. They will create, program, and implement a web-based survey of all personnel associated with LTER. Working with LTER staff, IPP will prepare a summary report of findings for the Executive Board and for use in site feedback discussion. Performance period shall be from March 1, 2008 – April 30, 2009.
- c. All Scientist Meeting update. Bob Waide presented an overview of the status of the program for the 2009 ASM. The program committee has completed a timeline of activities, developed a draft program, and identified plenary speakers. The LNO has had discussions with The Schneider Group and the YMCA of the Rockies to assign responsibility for different activities. Planning for the meeting is on schedule. The timeline for major activities includes:
  - February 25 – second call, including preliminary program
  - March 1 – Information to sites on funding
  - March 15 – working group submission opens
  - April 1 – housing reservations open
  - May 1 – poster submission opens
  - June 1 – meeting registration open
  - July 1 – working group and poster submissions close
  - August 15 – final programEB discussion elicited several suggestions for changes, including setting a deadline for housing registration; having sites invoice the LNO for site-scientist travel support rather than have site scientists arrange travel individually through the LNO as in the past; and allowing participants to make housing arrangements directly with Estes Park. Also discussed was need to have an EB meeting Sunday, September 13, 1-5pm.
- d. Working group progress. Waide presented a brief report on the progress of the seven working groups that were funded with LNO funds in 2008. Four of the groups have met, and two others will meet in early May. The EcoTrends group has split into six sub-groups, 1-2 of which will meet in June. Each of the working groups is required to provide a written report in anticipation of the Science Council meeting in May.
- e. Status of LNO renewal proposal. Funding presently in limbo; at present, the only secure funding is at current levels, the same as other sites renewing this year. The cost of living increment will depend on 2009 and 2010 budgets being considered by Congress, as noted earlier (Gholz comments, above). Cyberinfrastructure and Decadal Plan activities in the LNO budget might be funded with stimulus funds, which will require submission of a separate proposal due in late March. Additional changes may be

needed due to Bill Michener's diminishing role in the LNO as he becomes involved in the anticipated DataNetOne proposal, in EPSCoR, and as lead PI on three other substantial grants or subcontracts. Issues to cover include development of the communication plan, development and maintenance of strategic partnerships, and informatics training.

- f. Communication plan. The LNO will produce a "living" Strategic Communication Plan for the LTER Network. The plan will address: (1) who LTER wishes to communicate with; (2) why LTER wants to communicate with them; (3) what LTER desires to communicate; (4) how the information can be communicated most effectively; and (5) when and how often LTER needs to communicate with stakeholders. The plan will include suggested public communication and outreach tools and products; proposed activities and tasks (e.g., development of an LTER media kit); and timelines, metrics and milestones. Participation by the EB is important and the EB needs to address the means for their participation and work with the LNO to complete the communication plan in 2009-10.
7. NEON Observatory Design review. Robertson will solicit LTER participants to review the NOD with respect to identifying points of intersection between LTER and NEON.
8. SC Business Meeting May 14, 2009
  - a. Consensus is to use same format as last year – a dinner meeting limited to one evening.
  - b. Any bylaw changes to be considered at the Business Meeting need to be circulated shortly. No bylaw changes are currently being proposed.
  - c. EB rotation occurs at the Business Meeting: HFR, LUQ, and PAL rotate on, HBR, SBC, MCM rotate off.
  - d. Other discussion items include themes for 2010 minisymposium and science council; potential discussion of site volumes as suggested by John Hobbie; and an NSF report from Henry Gholz.
9. 30-year anniversary of LTER. At a future EB meeting we need to consider ways to celebrate next year's anniversary, e.g. symposia at professional meetings.
10. Thanks and congratulations were extended to minisymposium organizers and speakers for an excellent program and enthusiastic turnout. Speakers included Deb Peters (JRN), Meryll Alber (GCE), Gene Likens (HBR), Sujay Kaushaol (BES), Sally Holbrook (MCR), Jason Neff (NWT), and Doug Landis (KBS). Organizers were Peter Groffman and Deb Peters. Henry Gholz provided welcoming remarks and an NSF perspective of LTER.
11. Next meetings
  - a. March 30, 2009 11am-1 pm EST (videoconference)
  - b. April 22, 2009 noon-2 pm EST (videoconference)
  - c. May 12-14, 2009 EB/SC Meeting San Diego
  - d. Summer VTC schedule tbd
  - e. Sept 13, 1-5pm at Estes Park
12. Meeting adjourned Friday, 12:10 pm