

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting  
January 22, 2009; 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST; by Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at noon by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Corinna Gries, Peter Groffman, Sarah Hobbie, Sally Holbrook, Dave McGuire, Steve Pennings, Dan Reed, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Ted Gragson, Berry Lyons.
2. Minutes for November 11, 2008, meeting were approved by consent.
3. Updates
  - a. NSF budget. With the expected approval of the current year (FY09) budget early next month there is cautious optimism that sites renewed in FY09, including the LNO, will have the budget reductions imposed last month restored later this year. The FY09 DEB budget is 13% greater than FY08. Additionally, the federal stimulus package expected to be approved shortly will likely have ca. \$3B in new NSF funding, which may present some new opportunities for LTER.
  - b. ASM plenary speakers are nearly finalized, and planning is now moving forward for other activities. Bob Waide will distribute information shortly about site travel support.
  - c. Recent announcement of the USDA's LTER program (LTAP: Long-term Agricultural Program) is available as part of the recent AFRI announcement. The rfp specifies 5 2-year planning grants for a single site.
  - d. ULTRA is still on track but delayed by transition planning at NSF. It appears to be awaiting final approval in the BIO office, and could be announced "any day now."
  - e. We are asked to help publicize three open positions at NSF: a permanent program officer for Ecosystems Studies, which will supplement Henry Gholz' current half-time appointment in this position; DEB Division Director (Bob Sterner steps down in June); and BIO AD (Jim Collins' term ends in September). Robertson will circulate a request for input to LTER co-PIs.
4. Remote Sensing Ad Hoc Committee Report

At the September EB meeting we appointed an ad hoc Remote Sensing Committee to advise the EB on current site needs for the LNO remote sensing archive and the best path forward. The committee included chair Andrew Fountain (MCM), Morgan Grove (BES), John Vande Castle (LNO, ex officio), Dave Verbyla (BNZ), and Mark Williams (NWT).

Recommendations from their 4-page report, summarized by Mark Williams, include 1) decommission the current archive due to disuse (it is now more effective for remote sensing users to go directly to the source for images); 2) develop a centralized database of image sources for each site to include sources for satellite, aerial, LIDAR, and other products; 3) develop cooperative agreements to acquire on a regular basis LIDAR and hyperspectral imagery from NCALM and NASA, respectively (sensors for both data types are plane-based); 4) develop a small archive of the best Landsat-5 imagery for each site; 5) encourage all sites to make remote sensing products available via site data catalogs; and 6) facilitate GIS/GPS capabilities and data exchange among sites. The group also suggested formation of a network Spatial Data and Analysis Committee to motivate continued coordination between LNO and the sites and to maintain a collective expertise in emerging technologies and data opportunities relevant to LTER.

Discussion noted (among other observations): the high value of remote sensing products to many sites and for cross-site work; the desirability of centralized opportunities for acquiring data (e.g. LIDAR, Global Fiducial data); that cooperative agreements could reduce but not eliminate costs for data, which would remain substantial, but that needs are congruent with those described in the Decadal Plan; that LNO support not now budgeted would be needed to implement some recommendations; that there may be opportunities to partner with NEON for the plane-based measurements; that sites should be polled to discover cross-site databases already compiled (the social science database at CWT, for example). There was general agreement that a new

targeted standing committee could be useful for coordination as noted by the ad hoc committee's report, and consensus is that Robertson should ask the ad hoc committee to suggest a membership roster to include at least one information manager, to clarify the committee's purpose, scope, and relationship to current RS and GIS working groups, and to prioritize its initial tasks. Action on this new committee should be taken at the next EB meeting in February.

5. NEON

Robertson reported on a late November meeting with NEON CEO David Schimel, which included 1) a request that LTER provide input on the NEON Observatory Design document (NOD) when released later this month; and 2) a winter meeting to coordinate metadata development with LTER. Discussion centered on how to recruit reviewers for LTER input, and the extent to which LTER will be involved in the EML development. Robertson and Waide will follow up.

6. San Diego Science Council Program

Peter Groffman reported on plans for the SC Science Program in San Diego, and solicited input on the alternative scenarios including time for workshop follow-up and an emphasis on climate change to take advantage of expected NSF initiatives. The program committee will announce a plan to sites shortly in order that second site representatives can be lined up soon. There was general agreement that the meeting should be product oriented, which might require additional pre-planning as well as plans for meeting follow up.

7. NAB chair rotation

Peter Arzberger will step down as National Advisory Board chair at the upcoming NAB meeting in San Diego. Bylaws require that the EB identify a new chair among current members in consultation with the current chair, and the EB suggested several alternatives. Robertson will discuss further with Arzberger and extend an invitation to one or more of those identified. Waide suggested that the EB should consider reducing the current three-year term for chair to provide more flexibility in recruiting new chairs.

8. Site-Level Data Availability

Robertson reported on the generally positive reaction by lead PIs to our November guidelines for site-level data accessibility. He noted that NSF expects to append the guidelines to the IM review criteria for upcoming site reviews, with the expectation that sites will be judged on progress towards meeting the criteria not necessarily on having met the criteria. Corinna Gries reported on specific IM concerns related to core area terminology (there are different versions of the 5 core areas in different places) and to a perceived need to dumb-down search forms at some sites in order to accommodate the recommended guidelines. Discussion noted that the official core area terms (from various rfp's) are at a particular place on the network web site and Bob will distribute. Discussion also noted that the EB guidelines describe minimum functionality, not an exact look and feel, so theoretically a more sophisticated search form could meet the guidelines.

9. Approval for D. Peters to modify Ecotrends workshop award.

Debra Peters and Wade Shelton have asked permission to modify the conditions of their network workshop award to allow for a meeting to be held in June (workshop award letters specified that all workshops are to be completed prior to the May SC meeting). Permission was granted by consent.

10. ESA Presence

The 2009 Ecological Society meeting will be held in Albuquerque and Bob Waide introduced possibilities for highlighting LTER in addition to the tours being provided to SEV and JRN. The potential of an LNO open house was suggested and discussed as an opportunity to introduce more network scientists to LNO activities.

11. Upcoming Meetings

- a. February 24-26, 2009 Washington DC (Minisymposium Thursday Feb 26)
- b. March 30, 2009 11am-1pm EST

- c. April 22, 2009 noon-2pm EST
- d. May 12-14, 2009 EB/SC Meeting San Diego

12. Meeting adjourned 2:05 p.m.