

September \_\_, 2002

Dr. Mary Clutter, Assistant Director  
Biological Sciences Directorate  
The National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Clutter:

We are very pleased to have received the report from the committee on the 20-yr review of the LTER Network. This review has been tremendously valuable for the Network in 2 ways: (1) it was a tremendous stimulus for us to do self-evaluation and prioritization of efforts. This has been going on for the past two years in preparation for the review process; (2) the review itself recognized areas and directions that the Network must develop to continue to advance the sciences that are important to increased understanding of the environment and the transfer of knowledge to various user groups from managers to educators. The 20-year review report has now been studied intensively by the LTER scientific community and openly discussed in our recent Coordinating Committee meeting. We have come to a consensus on the path ahead and have begun to formalize these plans as recommended by the review committee. This letter is the initial response from the LTER community and an acknowledgement that we are increasing the level of planning for LTER based on the review that will carry us over the next several decades.

We are pleased that the review committee lauded our accomplishments and recommended that we do more in each of the areas reviewed. In recommending that we develop a strategic plan for the future work of the Network, we recognize that the onus for program development and justification is appropriately with us. The Coordinating Committee of the LTER Network has taken on this task very seriously and has made significant progress. The plan we envision will take us well beyond the coming decade, will address new scientific questions at the scale of our network of sites, expand the diversity of expertise within the network, and maintain our leadership in the application of new technologies to our research enterprise.

Our strategic plan will be sufficiently vetted by the LTER community, our Committee on Scientific Initiatives and our National Advisory Board, in preparation for our Executive Committee visit to NSF in late February. It is our hope that this schedule will mesh with NSF's 2005 budget planning process. We would, of course, be pleased to brief you at an earlier date if that is advisable.

Following our February meeting our strategic plan will be fully fleshed out and reviewed by the community in consultation with NSF. We expect that the strategic plan will be finalized by the summer of 2003. We look forward to the next step in this important process and our continued discussions with NSF.

Sincerely,  
on behalf of the LTER Network,

James Gosz, Chair  
LTER Network Coordinating Committee