

Minutes of the LTER Science Council Meeting
Estes Park, CO
September 23, 2006

Welcome, introductions

1. Charge

Magnuson provided an overview of the Science Council charge from the bylaws.

2. Approval of minutes (Magnuson)

The Science Council approved minutes from the spring 2006 Coordinating Committee meeting unanimously by a voice vote. We agreed that we would send out the minutes within a month of our meetings and then again a week or so before the next meeting.

3. Election of Chair (Magnuson)

A nominating committee comprised of Nancy Grimm (Chair), Steve Carpenter, Hugh Ducklow, Dave Tilman, and Russ Schmitt identified two candidates for Chair, Jerry Melillo and Phil Robertson. Resumes and candidates statements were circulated to the Science Council before the meeting. Magnuson announced that he had spoken to each candidate and that each was able to devote 40 to 50 percent of his time to this effort were he elected. Both were interested in serving.

Phil Robertson stepped out for the vote. Jerry Melillo was not present. Written ballots were distributed to each voting member present and the votes were counted by Bob Waide and John Vande Castle of the Network Office. Phil Robertson was elected.

4. Report from the Executive Board (Magnuson)

Magnuson presented a report on the activities of the Executive Board. He included actions taken in the Polycom meeting September 8 and the face-to-face meeting September 20. He listed the members of the Executive Board (Peter Groffman, Morgan Grove, Don Henshaw (Information management), Chuck Hopkinson, Sherri Johnson, Barry Lyons, John Magnuson (Chair), Mark Ohman, Deb Peters, Dan Reed, and Bob Waide (ex-officio).

Magnuson discussed the response to the Integrated Science and Education Plan (ISEP) from the National Ecological Observatory network (NEON) that was prepared by the Executive Board. (response attached)

Magnuson presented an overview of the meetings scheduled in March in Arlington, VA (LTER Executive Board, LTER National Advisory Board, annual mini-

symposium). These meeting will take place at the National Science Foundation from March 7-9. The Executive Board –will meet from March 7 (0900) to March 9 (noon). The Mini Symposium will take place on March 8 from 8:30 am – noon, and the National Advisory Board will meet on March 8 beginning at 1pm and on March 9 until noon.

Magnuson introduced the members of the Mini-Symposium Program Committee, Steve Carpenter (Chair), Morgan Grove, and Chuck Hopkinson. He asked Carpenter to give a brief overview of the program for the mini-symposium. Carpenter indicated that the mini-symposium would be used to highlight the goals of the new LTER Research Agenda. Scott Collins will present an overview of the Planning Process, followed by several distinguished members of the LTER community who will provide examples of LTER research that incorporates the elements included in the research plan. One of the goals is to show the insights that can come from the framework developed in the planning process. The presentations will be followed by a short summary. Identities of the speakers will be revealed once they have accepted the invitation.

5. Spring Science Council Meeting

Hosts for the meeting will be McMurdo Dry Valleys (MCM) (Barry Lyons) and Palmer Station (PAL) (Hugh Ducklow). The meeting will take place from May 17-19 in Portland, OR. Travel days will be May 16 and May 19 (afternoon). Andrew Fountain from Portland State University and MCM will be the local host. The hosts including will help to develop field trips as well as define the program.

Magnuson mentioned that the dates of the meeting were constrained by the need to develop a draft of the Planning Grant proposal by July 1.

The main issue to be resolved is the topic for the meeting and a Chair and Program Committee. The Executive Board suggests an agenda where a proposal-writing meeting and a science meeting are held in parallel. The writing team (approximately 12 members with Scott Collins and John Magnuson as co-chairs) would be part of some 65 participants. The meeting would be 2.5 days and would include a field trip (perhaps a virtual field trip) and a short business meeting at the end of the meeting.

Four science themes would be addressed, one of which would be the writing team for the proposal. Based on Deb Peters' suggestion, the EB recommends that the TRENDS project be used to generate three other science themes. TRENDS is introducing seven thematic areas that are logically chosen as areas likely to produce publications or synthetic products. Discussions at ASM will select 3 areas to include as science themes at the spring meeting. The theme areas they will select from are:

ENSO signals and responses (Ohmann)
Responses to climate variability (Kratz)
People, land use, and vegetation (Grove)

Disturbances (Lugo)
N fertilization (S. Collins)
Atmospheric chemistry (Driscoll)
State changes (Peters)

Carpenter endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Board as a cross-cutting idea.

Hobbie asked how the Science Council would vet the planning grant proposal before it was submitted. Further discussion was postponed until the next agenda item.

Tilman suggested that patterns and control of diversity would be another topic.

Discussion centered on the optimum group size to actually produce papers at the meeting.

The Science Council should establish an ad hoc program committee for the May 2007 Science Council meeting. The Executive Board suggested that this ad hoc program committee be John Magnuson, Scott Collins, Deb Peters, and two others from TRENDS Project determined by D. Peters. The program committee will choose 4-5 topics from among the eight suggested above. Tilman volunteered to take leadership of a group focusing on diversity.

Ohman moved that the above program committee and process defined above be approved: the writing team plus four other topical areas including biodiversity and three others from the TRENDS project. The motion passed by voice vote.

6. Planning Grant writing team

The Executive Board suggested that the Science Council create a writing team for the Planning Grant proposal.

Motion - Suggest to SC that they establish an ad-hoc program committee for the May Science Council Meeting - named Proposal Writing Team - with Scott Collins and John Magnuson as co-chairs (and as LTER chairs change, role will change to new chair of the Science Council and Executive Board).

EB has provided suggestions on potential members for co-chairs to select. SC individuals are encouraged to give suggestions for Writing Team members' names to Co-chairs in the next week. Membership of Writing Team will be 'approved' by EB.

7. Report from the Planning Grant (Collins)

Scott Collins gave an overview of the recent progress on the Planning Grant. The Site Representatives meeting urged that Planning Grant working groups at the ASM be cross-cutting. Reports from these working groups as well as from other ASM

working groups will feed into the Planning Grant process. The Site Representative group overlaps strongly with the Science Council.

The Initiatives document needs to be submitted to NSF soon. It is about 85% complete, but it needs to be vetted and endorsed by various groups including the Science Council.

The deadline for the proposal continues to be July 1, 2007, but the actual submission date will be negotiated with NSF.

The next meeting of the Site Reps will be in early 2007. There is a meeting of the Science Task Force Advisory Committee planned for late October in Washington.

Magnuson suggested the possibility of a videoconference regarding the Initiatives document.

Magnuson asked Henry Gholz to make a few comments on the NSF view of the Planning Grant process. Gholz emphasized the importance of receiving the Initiatives document soon. He indicated that it would be a challenge for NSF to address the document, but the presence of a large number of NSF program officers at the ASM is a positive sign.

Carpenter moved that the Science Council establish a Writing Team with Collins and Magnusson as co-chairs whose purpose will be to produce drafts of a planning grant proposal for approval by the Science Council. Around 12 members of the Writing Team will be selected by the Executive Board from suggestions by the Science Council. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

8. Recognition and appreciation to organizers, etc of the All Scientists Meeting (Magnuson).

The Science Council gave consent for Magnuson to draft a resolution of appreciation to the organizers of the All Scientists Meeting.

Resolution from the Science Council: The LTER Science Council commends Bob Waide and the staff of the Network Office for the many contributions to this excellent All Scientists Meeting. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and diverse talents.

9. Questions from the floor

Hobbie reiterated the importance of providing information on the activities of the Executive Board in a timely fashion.

Magnuson indicated that minutes from both Executive Board and Science Council meetings should be circulated soon after the meetings. He asked for suggestions about what additional information should be circulated.

Tilman suggested that the Executive Board communicate any issues that were difficult to resolve within the EB to the Science Council.

Waide gave a brief overview of the functions of the different e-mail aliases. Site-exec@lternet.edu is used to communicate or ask for information from sites when that information is not sensitive. LPI@lternet.edu is used for sensitive information. Response@lternet.edu is used when a response is required. All_lter@lternet.edu is to distribute information.

Grove asked sites to make new LTER social scientists aware of existing resources like the web site and list serve.

McGlathery raised the issue of the timing (e.g., weekday, weekend) of Science Council meetings. We will try to have SC meetings on weekdays when possible. Magnuson explained the factors that will go into decisions about timing of meetings.

Magnuson pointed out that standing and targeted LTER committees recently submitted detailed reports of activities to the EB to facilitate a review of committees by that body. The annual reports that these committees submit will no longer go to the Science Council. No additional reports will be required this year.

Waide asked for comments regarding the venue for the 2009 All Scientists Meeting.

10. Adjourn 5:30

11. Dinner

Attachments:

Brief statement from the LTER Executive Board on the revised NEON ISEP

In general, the LTER Executive Board was impressed with the revised NEON ISEP. We were particularly impressed with the fact that the new plan has more flexibility and more potential for interaction with LTER science than the earlier version. We were also heartened to see a stronger link between activities proposed for NEON and the NRC Grand Challenges in Environmental Sciences; this link is consistent with current LTER planning activity.

There is a strong sense that a lot of the infrastructure proposed in NEON could complement research that we hope to accomplish in the LTER network in a powerful way. The proposed infrastructure for the core sites, gradients, and airborne observatory could provide fundamental support for existing and future LTER activities. Any NEON gradients and experiments should be carefully designed to be complementary and supportive (and not duplicative) to existing LTER activity

Many LTER scientists have been involved with NEON from the beginning. We feel the new ISEP is a positive step, and we look forward to continuing to help NEON come into existence.

On page 74 concerning the creating NEON Partnerships, last sentence:

What is not said here is where these partners will obtain support to conduct the actual research. NEON by its nature externalizes the cost of the non-measurement aspects of the research.

We would like to offer the follow suggestions for your consideration in the final draft of the ISEP.

- It is unclear how positioning core sites on wild land will address Grand Challenge questions because many of the example questions require data or measurements from urban or interface areas. In addition, the document still contains references to core sites in urban areas. A more explicit link between the goals of measurements in core sites and measurements along gradients might help to clarify the link among the different NEON components.
- Organization of some studies, for examples, wildfire, hurricanes, drought, zebra mussel invasion, do not fit well into the climate domain model. This is obvious from Figure 3.1. This suggests a potential conflict between the sentinel and Grand Challenge roles of NEON. Additional wording should be added to explain how climatic or biotic phenomena are dealt with under the core site structure.
- The concept of transects/gradients and experiments is good. But the openendedness of these gradients and experiments leads to difficulties. With the description provided, there might be a moisture gradient in one domain, a land use gradient in another, a temperature gradient in a third, and a river continuum that crosses through tree more. This has some local or regional advantages. But what will connect this diversity of studies together to form a single, national observatory?
- The ISEP will yet undergo modifications by NSF, in part based on available funding. It is critical that the major elements of the plan be preserved. If they are not, subsequent versions of the plan may not be as well received. The balance between standardization and innovation is particularly subject to budgetary pressures.
- On page 69, it seems as though one of the goals of NEON should be to catalyze research that uses the facilities and open up dialog with various potential partners and funding agencies. Some of these partnerships may well be with state agencies or non-governmental organizations that manage land.
- On page 78 the brief description of LTER is misleading. LTER is a long-term ecological research program funded by the National Science Foundation with 26

sites in the US, Puerto Rico, and Antarctica. Some 1200 researchers conduct site specific, intersite, and regional studies. The LTER provides both potential sites for the NEON infrastructure, users of the data streams from NEON sites and projects, and science partners especially on gradient and experimental studies.

submitted by:

John Magnuson, Interim Chair of the LTER Science Council and Executive Board
jjmagnus@wisc.edu