

Prepared by James Brunt for the Network Information System Advisory Committee

NISAC was appointed in Spring 2003. The group is made up of LTER principal investigators **Tim Kratz** (NTL), **Mark Harmon** (AND), **Robin Ross** (PAL), **Deb Peters** (JRN), and **Stuart Gage** (KBS); information managers **Don Henshaw** (chair, AND), **Barbara Benson** (NTL), **Emery Boose** (HFR), and **Peter McCartney** (CAP); and LNO representatives **Bob Waide**, **Bill Michener**, **John Vande Castle**, **James Brunt**, and **Mark Servilla**. The Committee met three times in the last year and had numerous conference calls. In addition to setting ongoing NIS priorities at the Network Office, the group is developing a Network Information System (NIS) module selection process and a strategic plan for the Network Information System, revising the LTER Network Data Policies, and helping to refine information management review criteria.

The Committee will meet again in June in conjunction with the Network Science Working Groups and is charged with assessing current LTER information capabilities and IT infrastructure, and will work with the Science Task Force in defining infrastructure models to support and facilitate the goals of synthetic research.

NIS module selection process

NIS modules are specifically targeted information content for the NIS. To make decisions and prioritize the selection of new content, NISAC developed a process (since approved by the LTER Coordinating Committee (CC)) that names potential data types and outlines the process and documentation necessary to propose a new module. Adding content to the NIS helps document the progress of synthesis activities, and modules become Network resources that increase efficiency of future synthesis. The NIS module proposal guidelines are included with CC meeting materials.

Network Information System Strategic Plan

NISAC is in the final phase of strategic planning that defines the mission and goals of the NIS effort and elaborates the strategies and actions necessary to make progress over the next four years. The draft plan defines NIS as an infrastructure for confederation and research collaboration depending on site data repositories, and comprising information technologies and information products resulting from research activities across LTER and its partners. NIS enhances information flows among data, synthesis, and knowledge about ecological systems. NIS will be implemented through the use of shared standards, software tools, training, and support, to integrate and provide compatibility across LTER sites, institutions, and researchers. The NIS strategic plan seeks to balance the development of short-term priority products with the development of long-term generic solutions and an improved network-wide infrastructure. While NIS serves primarily the LTER scientific community and collaborators, it is also a “portal” to LTER data products for the broader scientific community, natural resource managers, policymakers, and the general public. The current draft can be reviewed:

<http://committees.lternet.edu/modules.php?op=modload&name=UpDownload&file=index&req=viewsdownload&sid=5>

ILTER Network Data Policy Revision

A NISAC working group was charged with analyzing the current LTER site policies for the release, access, and use of LTER data. As a result, the group recommended: 1) expanding the current LTER Data Access Policy to cover the release of data and metadata, 2) standardizing Network requirements for accessing LTER data, and 3) drawing up data use agreements specifying terms of acceptable use of LTER data.

Consequently, revised LTER data release and general data use policies have been drafted and are in review. The adoption of these revised policies by the LTER Network is motivated by the needs:

- to ensure that the data release, data access, and data use language is consistent and clear across the network
- to standardize the approach to data access requirements for automated data distribution
- to standardize the requirements for data provision and use
- to ensure that the LTER Network data policies are consistent and interoperable with those of other NSF-funded programs.

Re-evaluation of the policy serves to assure data providers that their data sets will be used appropriately and promotes a culture within the ecological community of making data available to the general scientific community in a timely fashion. Current versions of the NISAC Data Policy Revision report and the new data release and access policies are included with CC meeting materials.

Information Management Review Criteria

NISAC is working with the Information Management committee to develop criteria for reviewing LTER site information management systems. The aim is to provide appropriate and unambiguous criteria to site information managers, management teams, and reviewers on the kind of data and information management standards the LTER Network expects of its sites. The effort is spearheaded by **Emery Boose**, and the document is in its final phases of review and will be available for discussion at the Spring CC meeting.

Drafts of all the documents mentioned above can be viewed on the LTER committees working area of the intranet (<http://committees.lternet.edu>)