

Spring 2004 Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes Santa Barbara Channel, April 28-29, 2004

Wednesday April 28

After introductions around the room and logistic instructions, Jim Gosz asked for changes or additions to the agenda.

NSF report

Henry Gholz gave a report from the National Science Foundation that touched on the following issues:

- This has been a very busy year for LTER. Mid-term reviews of 8 sites and 7 renewals were completed with two sites coming off of probation.
- Renegotiated LNO renewal with reorganization and work towards strategic planning.
- Funding for BIO in 2004 is slated for a slight increase, around 5%, but may be essentially flat when the final budget is actually reached. This is OK for LTER this year since there are not any site renewals, but renewals in FY05 will require a sufficient budget.
- The BIO directorate will take over funding for CAP and BES from EHR.
- There was funding for a record number of supplements. All sites were funded for Schoolyard and REUs, but other elements of the supplement requests are still pending decisions in EHR.
- There were 22 proposals for the competition for coastal marine sites, with a panel meeting in May. Up to 3 new sites may be added to the Network in 2004 or 2005, and additional funding will be provided to LNO from the Geosciences directorate. This will lead to new opportunities and challenges with especially for coastal sites like SBC.
- For ILTER there has been a move to more autonomous activities, with potential funding for the US ILTER Committee and representation for the US LTER within the ILTER program. OISE has put significant money into the supplement process this year.
- From site visits, it was clear that sites are attempting to put their process and mechanistic results into a spatial context. There are also more common themes and integration of research. LTER information management is moving forward. However, most LTER web sites are considered "first generation" with not much data readily available, much out of date information, and a need to focus resources. EML status is very uneven, with some sites not yet implementing standards as agreed at the 2003 KBS CC meeting. This is also true for Clim/Hydro DB with some sites having most recent data listed as far back as 1998. We are still in need of standardized metrics to evaluate LTER information management.
- Databits could use more visibility, including more prominent links to it from the LNO web site.
- The LTER planning grant proposal has just been received at NSF and is under review. The submission is timely considering the hyper-awareness of IM/CI and networking issues within NSF.
- Be on the lookout for the rfp for OPUS, which is focused on funding for synthesis activities.
- Arden Bement, who is the director of NIST, is the interim director for NSF. Mary Clutter, AD for BIO, is retiring and Joe Bordogna is running a search for a replacement. This BIO AD will be a rotator position. Margaret Leinen will be staying on as AD in GEO.

Jim Gosz asked about the critical review of the LTER Web sites, and how this review is perceived. He mentioned that even though Henry had focused on a number of deficiencies, sites had still passed their reviews and asked if perhaps insufficient weight was being given to web accessible data. Henry pointed out that sites don't have additional funding to beef up IM at sites, but that this would be a key area to refocus efforts during the planning effort – making data readily available and visible.

Committee Reports

Don Henshaw reported on the activities of the Network Information System Advisory Committee (NISAC) and discussed recommendations from that committee. NISAC proposed a mission statement for the NIS, as follows:

The mission for the LTER Network Information System (NIS) is to provide the IM/IT infrastructure to facilitate and promote advances in collaborative and synthetic ecological science at multiple temporal and spatial scales.

Action Item 1:

Grimm moved and McGlathery seconded that the Network adopt the NIS mission statement developed by the NIS Advisory Committee. The motion passed 22-0.

NISAC requested that the CC determine and agree on a process or series of processes for identifying new NIS science modules or network databases or additional components to existing network databases (e.g., ClimDB). Discussion resulted in a motion to empower NISAC to perform this function with input from individual LTER scientists to determine the scientific rationale for the development of individual NIS modules.

Action Item 2:

Moved to empower the NISAC to determine and make recommendations to the CC on a process or series of processes to identify desired NIS expansion and identify new NIS science modules or network databases or additional components to existing network databases (e.g., ClimDB). The motion passed 19-2.

Patrick Bourgeron provided a report from the US International Committee. He pointed out the present move to make the ILTER Network an autonomous body independent from the U.S. LTER program. A proposal sent to NSF from the U.S. committee is now under consideration for U.S. involvement, and separately for an ILTER coordinator. Patrick will prepare a written report in a few days to send to Waide.

Henry Gholz mentioned that OISE has been very supportive of ILTER and has provided over \$400K for ILTER activities, plus support for individual sites

Sonia Ortega gave details of the Education Committee report. The Education Committee is preparing proposals for network wide educational activities, primarily focusing on middle schools. Ten sites have participated in development of a pre-proposal, due next month, with the final proposal due in September. The Education Committee requested that the Network support the participation of all 24 sites in 2 cross-site NSF EHR proposals. At a minimum, this would provide mean providing access to data. There was discussion about what "access to data" meant, including that this is what the sites are supposed to be doing anyway. Some sites would work to make specific data available. The Chair asked that the education committee decide on a person to serve on the NISAC.

Action Item 3:

Moved that the Network support the participation of all 24 sites in 2 cross-site NSF EHR proposals developed by members of the Education Committee. At a minimum, participation would involve providing access to data. The motion passed 23-0

Planning Grant

Jim Gosz and Scott Collins presented the details of the Planning Grant for discussion. Breakout groups then discussed approaches to the four overarching science themes described in the planning grant. Reports from these breakout groups were made by Nick Brokaw, Nancy Grimm, Deb Peters, Morgan Grove (4a), and Peter Doran (4b) are posted at <http://intranet.lternet.edu/>.

LNO Report and Strategic Plan

Bob Waide presented a short overview of activities in the Network Office. Major points included:

- LNO has identified funds to create the technical support position requested by the IM Exec Committee and mentioned in the Executive Committee review of the LNO (see below). This position will be initiated for one year and continued if funds become available as a result of the competition for new coastal marine sites.
- The LNO has \$50,000 for a competition for post-ASM working group/science theme awards. The mechanism for awarding these funds will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Jeanine McGann and Michelle Murillo have been hired in the LNO to replace departed staff. Duane Costa has been

recruited to work on the Network Information System with new money from NSF. A Lead Scientist for the NIS and a replacement for Patty Spratt are being recruited.

- Bill Michener has taken a lead role in the preparation of the AIBS NEON Consortium proposal.
- Bob Waide has recently made visits to NTL, VCR, LUQ, and CAP to report on LNO activities and to gather ideas from site scientists on improvement in LNO services.
- SiteDB is in its final stages and can be viewed at (<http://savanna.lternet.edu/site>).
- John Vande Castle has been proposed to assume the duties of LTER Coordinator under the proposal submitted by Brown University.
- The LNO Strategic Plan is in draft 7. The Executive Committee has determined that they will need an additional meeting to properly review the present draft and make recommendations for a final version. This meeting will be held before the Fall CC meeting.

Action Item 4:

The EC will hold a special committee meeting to focus on the LNO Strategic Plan, develop language that accurately reflects the role(s) in the LTER Network (e.g., service, leadership on specific areas), and the issues in the LNO Strategic plan that should be integrated into the developing LTER Network Strategic Plan. This will be reported to the CC during its August, 2004 meeting and final approval.

Oxford University Press

Peter Prescott gave a brief overview of the success of the Oxford book series and discussed means to improve the series.

Closed Session

The CC had a session attended only by site representatives.

Thursday April 29

Elections

Action Item 7:

The election for Executive Committee replacements for Alan Knapp and Nancy Grimm considered six nominees sent previously to the LNO: Indy Burke, Scott Collins, Morgan Grove, Mark Harmon, Deb Peters, Mark Williams. There were no additional nominations from the CC during the process.

Scott Collins and Deb Peters were elected for the 3 year period spring 2004 to spring 2007.

Action Item 8:

The election of the next chair of the LTER Network Committee was held with only 1 nominee, James Gosz.

James Gosz was elected for the 4 year period spring 2004 to spring 2008.

Fall 2004 CC Meeting

John Hobbie and Gus Shaver presented information related to the planned fall 2004 LTER CC Meeting in Fairbanks and Toolik. Arrival in Fairbanks will be August 17 (16th for the EC) There would be a Science Theme meeting organized by Terry Chapin on August 18 with a half day CC meeting on the 19th and tour of the BNZ LTER. The 20th is a travel day to Toolik Lake. The 21st will consist of a half-day field trip and a half-day business meeting for the CC. On the 22nd, participants will drive to Deadhorse and fly to Anchorage.

2006 All Scientists Meeting

Bob Waide presented results from the ASM survey to inform a decision about the venue for the 2006 meeting. He also presented a series of options for discussion. Discussion of venues included a decision to eliminate those sites with marginal space for break out groups and to consider alternative resort options such as Keystone and Park City. September is preferable to October for the meeting because of potential federal budget concerns and Antarctic research scheduling.

There was some concern that the 2006 ASM not become a mini-ESA meeting, and to have a focus for synthesis, particularly including a venue to encourage this. Options for this could also be part of the Planning Grant, if funded. There was much discussion about better ways for LTER to communicate. Use of Polycom H323 standard units should be investigated as well as Access Grid nodes for meetings. The Network Office will work the IM communities to investigate these options.

Action Item 9:

Moved to select the YMCA of the Rockies (at Estes Park) for the LTER All Scientist Meeting in September of 2006 if available. If the YMCA site is not available, the alternative selection would be Snowbird or an equivalent resort facility. The motion passed.

The LNO will contact The Schneider Group to initiate negotiations with YMCA of the Rockies.

Action item 10:

Moved to have the LTER Coordinating Committee solicit nominations for a Program Chair or Program Co-Chairs for the 2006 All Scientists Meeting (ASM). The Chair/Co-Chairs must commit to working on organization, outcomes, and structure of this important LTER meeting with a committee consisting of Network Office representatives, an Executive Committee representative, and other LTER scientists selected by the Chair/Co-Chairs. The Program Chair or Co-Chairs will have flexibility to develop creative new ideas for the ASM, while being sensitive to survey results from the last ASM. Nominations are to be submitted to the Coordinating Committee Chair by May 14th, 2004. Selection will be by the LTER Executive Committee. The motion passed 24-0.

Additional comment:

There was discussion about linking the ASM to a smaller meeting of LTER scientists to focus on synthetic research efforts needed in the Network (a Some Scientists Meeting). The program committee should develop this effort in conjunction with the Exec. Comm.

Future Meetings and New Science Themes

Action Item 11:

Moved that the annual competition for the \$50 k in the LNO available for science themes be split into two types of competitions for proposals from the LTER Network:

- 1) Up to \$10 k for working groups focused on a science question (cross-site or synthetic question);
- 2) A larger effort (initially \$20 k) to develop a science theme for a CC meeting. This would support the organization of the science theme that should culminate in a major product (e.g., book, journal series). Additional funding would be sought for postdoc help, follow-up meetings, etc., to develop the major product(s).

The LNO will send out the solicitation for these competitions. Motion passed 23-0.

Action Item 12:

The floor was open for site locations for future CC meetings. The list below was moved and passed.

Spring 2005 – Florida Coastal Everglades

Fall 2005 – Virginia Coast Reserve

Spring 2006 – Cedar Creek

Fall 2006 – All Scientists Meeting (YMCA of the Rockies if available)
Spring 2007 –Palmer if feasible, with Andrews as backup
Fall 2007 – Baltimore
Spring 2008 – Georgia Coastal Ecosystem
Fall 2008 – Plum Island

New Business

Action Item 13:

LTER should actively work with the NEON Coordinating Consortium. To that end, the Chairman will invite the lead of the successful Neon Coordinating Consortium to the next CC meeting that will be held in Alaska, August 2004.

Action Item 14:

Discussion was held on the timing and theme of the next mini-symposium at NSF. The theme selected is Long-term Research in Coastal/Marine Environments. Organizers are Hugh Ducklow, Chuck Hopkinson, and Dan Reed. The mini-symposium will be held in March 2005.

Action Item 15:

The mini-symposium in 2006 will focus on LTER work in the four Grand Challenge Domains identified in the LTER Planning Grant. This may be held on Capitol Hill. The organizers identified at this time are David Tilman and Deb Peters.

Exec Review of LNO

Nancy Grimm presented the Executive Committee's recommendations regarding the Network Office (see attachment). Discussion about the Executive Committee review of the LNO indicated that recommendations should be approved by the Coordinating Committee for possible incorporation into the cooperative agreement. There was continued discussion about the relationship of the LNO with the sites, as well as discussion about the relationship with NSF. Foster pointed out that we all need to do a better job of communicating among ourselves what the LNO does and to find ways of fostering better communication. In particular, it would be very useful to have a breakdown of duties as well as a mechanism to track and summarize requests for assistance. Foster also suggested that the survey regarding the performance of the LNO should come from the Executive Committee.

Action Item 16:

Motion that recommendations included in the Executive Committee review of the LNO be approved for possible incorporation in the Cooperative Agreement. Motion passed 23-0.

Morgan Grove presented new business related to social science activities. Supplemental requests for social science are being considered for additional funding by NSF/SBE. Other funding opportunities for social science and cross-discipline research are planned for this year as well.

Executive Committee Review of the Network Office 26 February 2004

The LTER Executive Committee (EC) met in Washington, D.C., and prepared this review on the basis of materials received from the LTER Network Office (LNO), including: 1) its annual report to the NSF; 2) a draft of the LNO Strategic Plan, and; 3) discussions with Executive Director Bob Waide. The EC appreciates the obvious effort the LNO has put into the strategic planning process, and believes that continued attention to this activity should improve the effectiveness of the LNO. Furthermore, we are impressed with the degree to which the LNO has become involved in, and contributed to, cutting-edge efforts to develop information technology through research grants awarded to LNO personnel and participation in network-of-networks activities (e.g., KNB, SEEK, and other such projects).

The EC has concerns about the mechanisms by which the LNO is fulfilling its responsibility to facilitate science in the LTER network. Although it is possible that these concerns are a result of lack of information, some of them appear to be long-standing issues. In any case, the LTER Network has not been adequately involved in the development of responsibilities and priorities for the LNO. To improve the flow of information, the following deficiencies in the current review process need to be remedied:

- The structure of the NSF annual report does not allow assessment of the amount of effort expended by LNO personnel on specific tasks that are priorities for the LNO.
- Previous breakdowns of time allocation have not been useful, again because they are not keyed to priorities.
- Actual LNO priorities are not explicitly presented or discussed relative to activities.
- Contact of the EC with LNO personnel is mostly limited to the Executive Director.

To this end, the EC recommends the following changes to future reviews:

1. The LNO should develop its priorities in consultation with the EC and CC before proposals are submitted to NSF for the Cooperative Agreement
2. The LNO should develop an explicit list of its priorities, and clearly indicate how the work of its personnel has addressed them, whether in its annual report to the NSF or separately in preparation for this annual review by the EC.
3. The LNO should work to improve its communication of accomplishments and activities to the sites and the Coordinating Committee (CC).
4. The Information Manager member of the EC (or other EC member familiar with IT) should visit the LNO prior to the annual review by the EC, in order to gather information from the LNO on its technical (IT development) activities.

The LTER network is moving into a new era, with the objective of using the network to its maximum potential—taking the science to a new, higher level. The problems and concerns with the operation and effectiveness of the LNO, whether real or merely perceived, need to be solved if the LNO is to play a significant role in this new era of network-level science. The EC has identified certain minimum expectations that should be met by the LNO, and plans to revise and revisit this roster of expectations on a regular basis.

1. Demonstrate the applicability for the LTER network of developing informatics and technology products.
2. Communicate about, train for, and deploy new products and tools as they are developed, rather than after all development is complete.
3. Target those tools for development and testing that enable scientific synthesis.
4. Provide a “helpdesk” to the sites for network informatics and technology products.
5. Provide support for new sites where needed or requested.
6. Be responsive to database needs that arise from the LTER science community, especially in relation to network data products (as per #4 and 5 above).

Breakout Group Reports:

[Change in Biodiversity Group](#)

[Climate Group](#)