

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
May 17, 2007
Portland, Oregon

1. Meeting was called to order by Chair John Magnuson at 4:00 pm; members present: John Magnuson, Scott Collins, Peter Groffman, Morgan Grove, Donald Henshaw, Charles Hopkinson, Sherri Johnson, Berry Lyons, John Magnuson, Mark Ohman, Debra Peters, Dan Reed, Phil Robertson, and Bob Waide; members absent: none. Also present: Henry Gholz (NSF), Ted Gragson (CWT), Corinna Gries (IMC), Sally Holbrook (MCR), Peter Prescott (OUP).

2. Approval of Minutes of March 1-9, 2007 at NSF in Washington DC (Magnuson)

3. Announcements (5 minutes)

a. New Publication Chair Alan Knapp selected by the publications committee to replace Phil Robertson as he rotates on as Chair of the Science Council and Executive Board.

b. Outgoing members of the Executive Board are Scott Collins, Mark Ohman, and Debra Peters.

c. Incoming Members of the Executive Board are:

Sarah Hobbie (shobbie@umn.edu) CDR

Sally Holbrook (holbrook@lifesci.ucsb.edu) MCR

Steve Pennings (spennings@uh.edu) GCE

Each will serve three years through the Science Council Meeting in 2010

d. Future Science Council Meetings. The Executive Board confirmed the future sites previously agreed to by the Coordinating Committee. Note that they alternate from east to west and include many of relatively new sites

2008 – Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES)

2009 – California Coastal Ecosystem (CCE)

2010 – Plum Island Estuary (PIE)

2011 – Moorea Coral Reef (MCR)

2012 – Georgia Coastal Ecosystem (GCE)

e. Phil Robertson begins as LTER Chair of the Science Council and Executive Board at the end of the Science Council Meeting on Saturday morning.

4. Comments by Henry Gholz LTER Program Director

Supplements – all of the integrated education proposals will be funded; social science funding is still pending as the funding available is still under discussion. Nineteen requests came in for international, and about 10 will be funded. The total amount of supplemental funding this year

will be more than \$2,000,000. In addition, Jornada and LNO received some funding for the TRENDS project.

It is an interesting time for the NSF budget, as three different budgets are being discussed now. The most recent funding has a 7% increase, which was distributed evenly over the Foundation. BIO got about 4%.

This year all but the augmented sites are at the same level. There is no way to predict whether funding will be increased at the next funding cohort, but there is still a lot of time before this needs to be worked out. FY-08 funding is being debated in Congress, and while signs are positive, there are major Federal funding issues that might influence the eventual outcome. There is no pot of gold in the 08 budget, since priorities were set some time ago. For FY-09, discussions are going on within NSF for submission to OMB and then to the White House. There may be something in the area of environment put forward that could provide an umbrella for an LTER request.

The three LTER cohorts are not equal. Site visits occur in odd years. One approach to increased funding is a network wide proposal focused on a large programmatic effort or to include something in the renewal proposals that would contribute to the ISSE effort. Individual multi-site proposals to existing programs or the LNO renewal are other possibilities. It is important that the EB have a strong role in advising the LNO about its renewal.

There may be some opportunities in the NEON arena. Peter McCartney is heavily involved with NEON and is working closely with Henry.

NCEAS has been renewed for five years, but there will be an open competition in year 3 of their grant. There will be a series of open meetings that will address the question about what synthesis ought to look like, with centralized or distributed models to be discussed. We should be prepared to participate in that discussion.

Only our two urban sites have SBE funding, and they have social scientists on their review teams. For both urban and augmented sites, BIO provides funds for social scientists on the review teams. Should there be social scientists on all the review teams given the ISSE focus? Should the review criteria be changed? It is important to discuss this so Henry can get feedback before providing guidance to those sites that are up for renewal.

5. Opportunities for social science funding (Ted Gragson)

With six sites going for renewal in 2008, Ted Gragson asked about renewing sites' approaching SBE at NSF for funding for social science research that would be in addition to funding from BIO/DEB. They would like to expand LTER research to include social sciences. Benefits include co-locating social and economic and ecological research and to approach social science research from a long term perspective. There has been discussion with SBE about building capacity but not explicitly about immediacy of funds for LTER research. Questions include:

- Is there a commitment by SBE to fund social science research at 26 sites?

- If so, how best to proceed?
- Should additional funding be requested by sites as they renew or should it be a separate competition for all LTER sites?
- Should it be a competition that includes only LTER or is open to anyone?
- If the 6 renewing sites do request additional funding, how best to ensure continued SBE involvement for next sets of renewals?
- If SBE funding were part of the renewal, would it be separate review that could be denied or rejected?
- Should this request for social science funding at LTER sites wait for the ISSE to become recognized? If so, what is role of other agencies in addition to NSF in funding this research?

All agreed that we need to discuss these alternatives about how to proceed in a polycom discussion of the EB and it needs to be soon, so that sites working on renewal proposals have time to develop or incorporate social science research.

6. Approval of letters of review for committees as modified by the Executive Board (Magnuson)

The letter to the Climate Committee should be modified to more directly request feedback regarding better justification for continuing or disbanding the committee. The committee should be encouraged to seek active new leadership should it be continued. John will redraft the letter and send to the Chair and the entire Climate Committee.

The Information Management letter expands the range of responsibilities of the IM Committee to include GIS/RS spatial data and technology issues related to sensor network management and quality control issues of streaming sensor data. The IMC is asked to self-organize to accomplish this and is asked to provide details of any reorganization in the next IMC annual report. The letter includes an annual IM budget of \$32K but does not preclude asking for more resources. The letter is approved with no changes. John will send the letter to the IM Committee co-chairs.

The Technology Committee letter formally disbands the Technology Committee. Issues related to new sensor technology including managing and quality assurance of sensor streaming data will be a part of the Information Management Committee. Remaining issues and needs that have been dealt with by the committee will be assumed by the LTER Network Office staff. The letter is approved with no changes. John will send the letter to the Technology Committee Chair.

The co-chairs of the Information Manager Committee (IMC) have requested funds to support the leaders of the former GIS/RS working group (2 people) and one outside GIS specialist (total \$4000) to participate in the IMC meeting in San Jose, California in August 2007. Corinna Gries (IMC co-chair) presented this request in person at the EB meeting. This request follows in response to the EB committee review that responsibilities of the IM Committee will include spatial data and data from sensor networks, and the IM Committee will self-organize to accomplish this.

Discussion: The EB does not want to see an expansion of annual IM meeting size, but understands this is a transition period. There was some question of the need for this in light of post-ASM funding for GIS and social scientist activities. The need to manage data for GIS science, curated at the same level across sites and with standard data layers, is considered essential. GIS functionality requirements for sites could be presented by GIS group leaders and be vetted through NISAC.

A question for debate is whether this is a policy or administrative issue. Bob Waide stated that finding this money is achievable, and suggested that EB review this in the midst of the ongoing review of the IM Committee. The EB endorsed this IM Committee request for additional funding.

7. Annual LNO Review

Status of 2006-7 Review (Waide)

Bob Waide reviewed the history of the procedure for reviewing the LNO including the survey, making it clear that the review came about (in 2003) in response to an NSF site review team's concern about the need for an ongoing mechanism for annual review. The issue on the floor is how the EB will go forward with the 2007 review of the LNO.

There is a sense that the survey needs to be updated/redesigned. Groffman asked what we learned from the survey this year, and Waide listed a number of points that came out of the survey results. Grove asked about feeling regarding collaboration tools, and suggested that collaboration tools will be an increasingly important LNO function.

Response to the survey this year was generally positive. The survey this year was exactly the same as the one used last year and scores in general appear to be higher. However, it will be important to look at the results a bit more carefully to come to some conclusions about just what LNO activities are valued by the network. Such an analysis would be very useful as we prepare the LNO renewal proposal. Bob will prepare a brief synopsis (< 1 page) of the results for discussion at our next meeting.

Transfer of LNO review from Science Council to the Executive Board (Waide)

LNO proposes that EB conduct the review rather than the SC. This is more in spirit of new governance plan and also will be more streamlined. In addition, we suggest making the survey focus only on site and network needs, and conducting the survey every 3 years instead of annually. The EB would have to determine what was required to evaluate the LNO. Grove suggested that evaluation part of survey was useful to engage LNO and staff and to provide feedback loop for sites to assess LNO. Magnuson suggested that the survey instrument is acceptable. Discussion focused on whether the evaluation should be conducted by the LNO or by people external to the LNO.

Additional thoughts of Ad Hoc Committee (Hopkinson & Groffman)

There was much discussion about ways to improve the survey and the following consensus points emerge:

- Bob will consult with a professional to improve the survey along the lines from the previous discussion (see notes from the meeting of March 8) and to separate the “needs” versus “evaluation” questions.
- The EB must write an evaluatory letter for the file every year based on a discussion and/or the survey. For this year, Phil will write the letter after presentation and discussion of the synopsis at our next meeting.
- Pull out evaluation questions, merge with questions developed by Hopkinson and Groffman, and send to EB for review and comment
- Survey should be conducted every two years.
- After the survey synopsis is prepared and discussed, Robertson will draft a letter of review for the LNO for this year.

8. LTER Network Proposal (Waide)

The LNO renewal proposal is due to NSF in February, 2008. Bob Waide expects to get a first draft by December 1. To stimulate discussion by EB, we have circulated an initial outline that is organized on the basis of network needs. The topic for consideration by the EB is the process by which suitable input can be gathered from sites and the EB. The proposal will be organized to address clearly defined needs of the LTER Network and sites. Four principal topics will provide the focus for the proposal: synthesis, cyberinfrastructure, outreach and external relations, and basic support. Discussion ensued, including the suggestions that network needs be vetted by sites via the EB, and that consideration be given to proposing to establish a network-level IM manager who would be responsible for maintaining and updating network-level data such as those now being organized by the TRENDS group. This could be a major new initiative. A request was made to circulate the 2005 mid-term LNO site review report as well as a draft budget whenever it is ready. Further discussion of the EB's role in the development of the proposal was put off to the next EB Polycom meeting. A potential timeline should be prepared for the next EB videoconference.

Role of LTER Chair of SC and EB (not discussed)

9. Synthesis Volumes (Peter Prescott)

Peter Prescott from Oxford University Press provided an update on sales and marketing of network volumes. He reported that most OUP volumes have sold between 300 and 600 copies except for the Konza and soils methods volumes for which sales have been >1300 to date. He indicated that site volumes that were conceptual sold better than straight descriptive accounts of the findings. Series books are now printed hardcover only, although OUP would do simultaneous softcover if the books were to be used for graduate courses (rather than marketed as monographs). Also commented that subsidies could help to significantly lower prices, e.g. \$5,000 might drop the price of a site volume by 50% depending on the numbers of pages and color plates. He also commented that OUP co-publishes some books on-line and

although this often increases hardcover sales that OUP does not, as a matter of policy, publish edited books on-line due to permissions complexities.

10. 2008 Science Council Meeting at Baltimore (BES) (not discussed)

Date

BES contact for coordination with LNO and arrangements

Science Council appoints Program Committee for the science at Saturday's Science Council Meeting.

11. Planning Grant Completion and ISSE Handoff (Collins)

All elements of the Planning Grant (The LTER Strategic Plan) will be submitted to NSF by September 30, 2007. This will constitute the completion report of the NSF Grant we received to prepare a research (strategic) plan. Prior to sending it we will continue to request feedback and suggestions from the LTER Sites and approval from the LTER Executive Board. Such feedback may be sought at any time at the judgment of Scott Collins and Phil Roberson as leaders of the Writing Team, and by subcommittees of the writing team if specific information is needed. After September 30, 2007 we will solicit and respond to comments from the STFAC, the LTER National Advisory Board (perhaps through a meeting of this Board), the National Science Foundation, the LTER Sites, and others to shape the materials into a final form suitable for funding if and when that option becomes real. Materials on various parts of the planning Grant will be sent to the sites as they are available, and the Research Plan will be sent to them by September 1 to solicit comments with a very short turnaround (ca. 1 week).

Between now and September 30 and after September 30 we will continue to inform the National Science Foundation and other groups and organizations about the ISSE, and seek additional endorsements from scientific societies and organizations as appropriate. Henry Gholz is the ISSE point person at NSF and we will work through him to develop a continuing interaction on the ISSE with the National Science Foundation. We have been tentatively invited to make a presentation (Scott Collins and Phil Robertson) at the next ACERE (Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education) meeting at NSF in October 2007.

12. Mini symposium topic in March 2008. (not discussed)

13. Report from NISAC (not discussed)

14. Strategic Planning assignments discussion led by those assigned (not discussed)

15. Mini research projects (not discussed)

16. Appreciation for outgoing EB members. The Executive Board thanked the outgoing members of the Executive Board, especially Deb Peters, because she will not be present at the Science Council meeting on Saturday.

Scott Collins
Mark Ohman
Debra Peters

17. New Business - no new business at this time.

18. Adjourned at 7:40 pm.