

LTER GUIDELINES FOR DATA MANAGEMENT SITE POLICIES

(Developed in October 1990)

Each Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) site should develop its own data management policy in consultation with key investigators and higher administrative units. The following provides general guidelines and rationale, but each site should be prepared to defend its own policy through the site and peer review process. The general policy of the Division of Biotic Systems and Resources*, National Science Foundation (NSF), is that the data are public property one year after termination of the relevant grant.

General Guidelines:

The management policy should include provisions that assure:

- A. The timely availability of data to the scientific community;
- B. That researchers and LTER sites contributing data to LTER databases receive adequate acknowledgement for the use of their data by other researchers and that sites receive copies of any publication using that data;

C. That documentation and transformation of data is adequate to permit data to be used by researchers not involved in its original collection;

D. That data must continue to be available even if an investigator leaves the project through transfer or death;

E. That standards of quality assurance and quality control are adhered to;

F. That long-term archival storage of data is maintained;

G. That researchers have an obligation both to contribute data collected with LTER funding to the LTER site database and to publish the data in the open literature in a timely fashion;

H. That costs of making data available should be recovered directly or by reciprocal sharing and collaborative research;

I. That LTER data sets not be resold or distributed by the recipient; and

J. That investigators have a reasonable opportunity to have first use of data they collected.

EXAMPLE

The following is an example of a policy that will meet these guidelines with respect to data sharing:

Data Type I. Published data and meta data (i.e., data about data).

Policy: Data are available upon request without review.

Data Type II. Collective data of the LTER site (usually routine measurements generated by technical staff).

Policy: Data are available for specific scientific purposes one year after generation.

Data Type III. Original measurements by individual researchers.

Policy: Data are available for specific scientific purposes two years after generation. Data can be released earlier with permission of the researcher.

Data Type IV. Unusual long-term data collected by individual researchers.

Policy: The principal investigator of the LTER site can

designate that such data can be withheld for longer periods.

Such action should be rare and justified in writing.

*Since October 1991, the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB),

Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO)