

US-LTER International Committee Report to the LTER Coordinating Committee, Spring 2006 meeting

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Over the past year we have been intensively engaged in working in detail through all the issues involved in making the ILTER an international organization that can effectively meet the long-term and ambitious goals that it had set for itself in its first ten years. Some highlights since March, 2005 (see CC report dated March 30, 2005) are as follows.

- Holly Kaufman, the consultant we hired in the spring of 2005, in collaboration with the team she has assembled, has spent the first eight months framing the key questions and getting the collective ILTER community and some key outside organizations/individuals to answer them.
- The ILTER annual meeting in Colima in October was well-attended. The 20+ country representatives present in Colima were fully involved in the strategic planning exercise that was undertaken under Holly's leadership.
- The key issue that the group raised and grappled with was the fact that the ILTER could no longer function as it had in the past, in the shadow of or a satellite of the US LTER. Through the open process that brought these issues to the floor, everyone made a commitment to the group to make ILTER an organization effectively run by its members.
- Through the strategic planning process, there is widespread buy-in to having a much more active executive committee that now holds conference calls monthly. In addition, the newly created planning and development task forces communicate regularly to meet their respective agendas in support of the reorganization. The composition of these task forces crosses regions and the developed and developing worlds.
- Key to the success of ILTER over the long term is getting member countries to see ILTER as an organization that can not only serve their interests, but that they can direct and contribute to.
- A first draft of the strategic plan has gone out in March, 2006 to the coordinating committee and feedback has been received. A revised document will be distributed over the next few weeks.
- In Namibia at the next ILTER general meeting in August, 2006, there will be extensive discussions about the strategic planning document.
- There will be an ILTER ASM workshop to expand on the work already engaged in by many network members including the US.
- The Executive Committee and the Planning Task Force are working on determining the best legal structure for ILTER, which currently does not have a legal existence. Understanding the implications of the ILTER structure is key to ensuring that it can function effectively across the globe and secure funding from multiple sources. The

Development Task Force, which has representatives from a range of network types, is indeed working on identifying and reaching out to a diversity of potential donors.

- The role of the US-LTER IC in the evolution of the ILTER has been central, but we have been assiduous in keeping a low profile, mostly by raising others' profiles.
- The US International Committee has supported collaborative projects with a host of different country networks, helping different countries' efforts to establish or strengthen LTER networks and a knowledge base within LTER about international LTER activities.
- We sponsored two organized paper sessions at Intecol/ESA this past year.
- The committee has met via phone and in person on a regular basis and we have made sure that there has been representation at all ILTER annual, regional, and country meetings for which US participation has been solicited over the past 19 months.