

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting  
March 1-3, 2011; Washington, DC

1. Meeting called to order at 9am Tuesday by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Nick Brokaw, Scott Collins, Hugh Ducklow, David Foster, Ted Gragson, Corinna Gries, Dave McGuire, John Moore, Emily Stanley, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Steve Hamilton. Also attending Tuesday: James Brunt, John Vandecastle; NAB (as noted below) on Wednesday and Thursday; and NSF visitors (as noted below) at various times.

National Advisory Board: Alan Covich (acting chair), Ann Bartuska, Nancy Grimm, Tony Janetos, Jim MacMahon, Osvaldo Sala, Susan Stafford (unable to attend: Carol Brewer (chair), Robert Kates, Sander van der Leeuw, Frances Westley)

NSF Administrators and Program Officers:

BIO: Joann Roskoski (Acting Assistant Director for Biological Sciences), Bette Loiselle (DEB Director), Penny Firth (DEB Deputy Director), Liz Blood (NEON), Nancy Huntly (LTER/DEB), Matt Kane (LTER/DEB), Peter McCartney (DBI and CISE);

GEO: Teofilo "Jun" Abrajano (Section Head, EAR), Enriqueta Barrera (CZO/EAR), Dave Garrison (OCE), Phil Taylor (OCE);

SBE: Myron Gutman (Assistant Director for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences), Tom Baerwald (BCS), Steve Langdon (BCS)

2. Minutes for 19 January 2011 meeting approved by consent.
3. Reports and Discussions with NSF (note- meetings were not sequential and happened over 3d)
  - a. Myron Gutman (Tuesday afternoon)

Discussed continued importance of SBE activities within the Network, efforts to engage SBE scientists in both cross-site and site-specific research, and strategies for moving Network SBE science forward. Specifically discussed was potential path for Future Scenarios initiative. Dr. Gutman was not hopeful of funding a Future Scenarios initiative outside of existing programs such as Macrosystems Ecology, though recognized that funding anything larger than a 3-4 site effort would require funding beyond the reach of present programs. Suggested discussing with program officers now developing SBE portions of the new Foundation-wide SEES initiative the potential for including LTER-targeted opportunities. SEES may have funds directed towards networks of research projects across many dimensions of sustainability. There has been no discussion at the directorate level of providing social science augmentations to sites (as first mentioned by Tom Baerwald in December), but this is an interesting idea that may bear further investigating. Dr. Gutman noted his personal view that LTER is underfunded and has been for some time.
  - b. Joan Roskoski, Bette Loiselle, Penny Firth, Nancy Huntly, Matt Kane (Wednesday afternoon, with NAB)

The meeting began with Dr. Roskoski's noting LTER's flagship status within the Foundation and discussion touched on a number of issues:

    - i. 30y review. The 30y Review Committee is in the final stages of writing their report, expected to be delivered or summarized at the upcoming BIO/AC meeting at the end of March. Representatives from the EB and NAB are invited to attend the presentation, which will occur during an open portion of the meeting. Both NSF and the Network will need to respond to the report in writing in the months following. The report is still expected to be forward-looking rather than evaluative.

- ii. LTER Program Director continuity. With Nancy Huntly's leaving on October 1 there will be another lead program officer transition for LTER. NSF is currently searching for three POs in the Division of Environmental Biology, and expects to have the flexibility to identify a next PO in the coming 2-3 months so there will be sufficient overlap prior to Dr. Huntly's leaving. BIO plans to identify a permanent employee who will work with a 2-year rotator. The EB expressed appreciation for the lead time and emphasized the importance of this position to the Network for providing internal leadership and exploring partnership opportunities with other directorates and agencies.
  - iii. Assistant Director for Biology position. A new search committee has recently been appointed to renew the Foundation's search for the Assistant Director for Biology. Dr. Roskoski asks that names of potential rotators be sent to her or others in the directorate.
  - iv. Synthesis/Legacy data initiative. The EB noted the current status of the legacy data initiative, one of several SIP priorities. Dr. Roskoski noted her continued support.
  - v. ULTRA. Competition for Urban Long-term Research Area sites is expected to occur in FY12 or FY13. There are currently 21 ULTRA-EX awards.
  - vi. Opportunities for funding LTER SIP initiatives. Discussion centered around several upcoming initiatives expected to provide opportunities relevant to LTER. The cross-directorate SEES program (Science, Engineering, and Education for Sustainability) might provide opportunities for the Future Scenarios initiative, and in particular an expected opportunity to link existing networks in new ways. The Network may also want to consider pursuing STC (Science and Technology Center) funding; although distributed Centers have not to date been funded there is nothing in the description of the centers that would preclude consideration of a center distributed across many institutions. The current RCN (Research Coordination Networks) call for proposals has a sustainability focus that should also be of interest. New education initiatives are being discussed as part of the America Competes act and will likely emerge in the coming months and for which the Network may be well-positioned. Evaluation of schoolyard LTER program might be a reasonable thing to begin to think about. CyberInfrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a 3-page document that lays out the need for funding data sharing initiatives, for which the Network is already in a leadership role. For international LTER activities the PIRE (Partnerships for International Research and Education) program is making very large awards; an April call for proposals is expected.
  - vii. NSF recognizes the difficulty of funding mid-size initiatives such as those envisioned for Network-level science (\$8-12M awards). A National Science Board task force on mid-size activities is currently working on the issue.
- c. Nancy Huntly and LTER Working Group members Tom Baerwald, Liz Blood, Dave Garrison, Matt Kane, Peter McCartney, Phil Taylor (not available: Dave Campbell (EHR), Roberta Martinelli (OPP), Myra Mcauliffe (OISE), Deborah Winslow (SBE), Stephen Langdon (SBE)) (Thursday morning)
- i. Continuation funding. NSF is working on solving the issue of non-standard start dates for sites, which has meant that some sites being continued this year face 2-3 months of lost funding similar to what happened in the 1990s when start dates were changed from Oct 1 to Dec 1 for this same cohort. The solution will be to ensure that the next cycle for these sites starts on December 1,

2016 (or whatever date is 6 years from their last award's termination date), rather than 72 months from the actual start date; the affected sites should plan on this. The nature of the awards allows for potential overlaps at the end of the cycle.

NSF is in the process of developing guidelines for standard start dates and other issues not now enshrined in policy to keep these snafus at bay. There is no longer an active solicitation for LTER, and therefore no formal policy-approved document that lays out the different characteristics of LTER. This will be remedied with either a Dear Colleague letter or a new solicitation in the coming months.

- ii. **Supplements.** Budget uncertainty means that a request for supplements will not be issued until later this month, and will be truncated relative to prior years. BIO expects to fund only sLTER activities at all sites; it does not expect to award LTER-specific REU/ROA/RET funds, nor CI, nor equipment funds. SBE expects to make supplement awards for social science in a separate call for proposals once the FY11 budget is finalized; may be similar to last few years for which they made available \$350-400k. OISE will likely make funds available for international activities but no word yet. OCE expects to fund REUs and to make equipment funds available at the end of the fiscal year to their sites (marine, coastal). BIO expects to put out a general call for REU/ROA/RET supplements for underrepresented groups (students, teachers, and PIs) that LTER sites will be eligible to apply for. Sites in the 2008 renewal cohort, which have their annual site increments provided through supplements, are not at risk – those supplement funds are in a protected portion of the base budget even though they must be awarded through annual supplements.
  - iii. **Site mentorship activities.** The EB described activities presently in place to mentor probated sites and asked for additional suggestions. No further ideas were forthcoming, but general endorsement of current EB plans.
  - iv. **Guidelines for new proposals.** The letter specifying proposal guidelines for sites up for renewal in 2012 will likely be issued in August, as per usual. Guidelines are not likely to be substantively different from those for the 2010 cohort assuming there are no surprises from the 30y review. The 15% funding increment as for earlier cohorts will be included, as well as base funding for sLTER and REUs.
  - v. **National data management.** As a result of new NSF-wide data management requirements, LTER may find itself playing a repository role for non-LTER programs and projects. The Network will need to be prepared for this possibility, and a formal letter may need to be drafted shortly.
  - vi. **Gulf Coast LTER site.** Discussions of a potential new Gulf Coast LTER site to be funded initially with Deepwater Horizon disaster funds have not progressed past initial discussions last summer.
- d. **Enriqueta Barrera and Jun Abrajano (Tuesday afternoon)**  
Discussed potentials for LTER partnerships with the Critical Zone Observatories, funded in 2008 to advance understanding of earth surface processes as mediated by the presence and movement of fresh water. Two of 6 CZOs are associated with LTER sites (NWT, LUQ). The CZO program is now being reviewed to consider its long-term continuation, including the addition of more sites. Program directors are particularly impressed by opportunities to collaborate and build on existing programs at LTER sites, and by the potential to partner on information management issues.
4. **LNO Review / Annual Evaluation**  
Bob Waide reviewed the LNO Annual Report, delivered in January. This is the second report in the new

format, built around performance milestones approved by the EB last year. These include 5 milestones related to synthesis goals, 7 to non-NIS cyberinfrastructure goals, 13 to Network governance and operations goals, 5 to communication goals, 5 related to interoperability with other networks, and 8 related to progress with the Network Information System (NIS). NISAC had previously evaluated progress towards CI goals, as requested by the EB. Waide reported that all milestones were met but for 2-3 for which progress was slower due to dependence on outside groups or external requests to slow the timetable. NISAC reported that all CI milestones were met or exceeded. The EB met in executive session (without Waide, LNO staff, or NSF) to further discuss. The EB requested that milestones for 2011 be organized by SIP goals and objectives before discussing further at an upcoming EB meeting. The EB's evaluation report (required by Bylaws) will be prepared following that meeting.

5. Support for sites on probation

Robertson noted that he has contacted probated sites with offers to provide an administrative advisory group made up of lead PIs from sites that have emerged from probation and to form a pre-panel of proposal reviewers who could provide comments on a draft proposal in the fall prior to final submission (see December EB minutes). From discussion emerged the suggestion that reviewers might include non-LTER scientists and scientists funded by other GEO programs with long-term mandates.

6. Lead-PI Meeting – Sapelo

Potential topics for the May 6 lead PI meeting at Sapelo Island were discussed. Program chairs Nick Brokaw and David Foster will query lead PIs by email for additional ideas. Nancy Huntly has been invited and will likely attend, and the potential for inviting Henry Gholz was discussed.

7. National Advisory Board (NAB) Charge and Agenda

The NAB will be meeting concurrently with the EB beginning Wednesday afternoon. The NAB is currently at 11 members and should probably be rebuilt to the 15 members allowed by Bylaws in order to ensure diversity and sufficient availability for meetings. Robertson provided the initial charge for the NAB that was then refined following discussion; specific advice to be sought on funding strategies for Future Scenarios, communicating LTER science to other agencies and other funders, plans for coordination with other networks, and site mentoring. The EB met with the NAB Wednesday 1:30-4:30pm and again Thursday 11:00am-12:00 pm

8. Synthesis Data Initiative Update

Bob Waide provided an update on plans to hire a consultant to work with the LNO and Synthesis Data Committee to develop and submit a statement of work and requests for information and proposals. Specific individuals were discussed and will be contacted. Following discussion the EB agreed that three sites should be included in the pilot effort: SGS, as it readies its data for transfer to the LNO; CWT as an example of a site with a rich set of both biophysical and social science data; and a third site with primarily biophysical data. Final pilot site selection will depend on PI and IM willingness to accept the burden of early adoption and prototyping.

9. Thanks and congratulations will be extended to minisymposium organizers and speakers for an excellent program and an enthusiastic turnout, including >125 web viewers. Speakers included Mark Ohman (CCE), Scott Doney (PAL), Anne Nolin (HJA), John Blair (KNZ), Marcy Litvak (SEV), Tom Spies (HJA), and Michele Romolini (BES). Nancy Huntly provided welcoming remarks and an NSF perspective of LTER.

10. Next meetings

- a. March 23 (Wed), 2011, 11am-1pm (VTC)
- b. April 20 (Wed), 2011, 11am – 1pm (VTC)

- c. May 17 (Tues), 8am – 5 pm, Sapelo  
May 18-19 (Wed, Thur), SC Meeting, Sapelo  
May 20 (Fri), 8am – 1pm, Lead PI meeting, Sapelo
- d. Summer VTC schedule tbd

11. Meeting adjourned Thursday, 12:10 pm