

Minutes of the LTER Executive Board Meeting
October 11, 2010; 12-2 p.m. EDT; Videoconference

1. Meeting called to order at noon by Chair Phil Robertson; Members attending: Nick Brokaw, Hugh Ducklow, David Foster, Ted Gragson, Corinna Gries, Steve Hamilton, Dave McGuire, Emily Stanley, Bob Waide, Mark Williams; Unavailable: Scott Collins. Also attending through item 10: Nancy Huntly (NSF).
2. Minutes for 18 August 2010 approved by consent.
3. Updates:
 - a. Minisymposium planning.
The minisymposium planning committee (chair Scott Collins, Diane McKnight, Hugh Ducklow, David Foster, Dan Reed) has met and is making good progress (5 of 6 speakers identified).
 - b. Sapelo Island SC Program planning
The science program committee for the Sapelo Island SC meeting (chair John Blair, Merryl Alber, Kirstin Dow, Nancy Grimm, Morgan Grove, Sharon Harlon, Mark Ohman) will have their first planning meeting next week.
 - c. ESA 2011 Symposium proposal
Robertson and Foster submitted an LTER symposium proposal to ESA in September for the August, 2011, meeting in Austin; speakers are first-authors of articles proposed for the BioScience issue; notification will come in December.
4. NSF Highlights
Nancy Huntly introduced herself and described changes in LTER management at NSF. With Todd Crowl's leaving, Nancy is now the new lead program director for LTER in BIO, which funds about 75% of the Network. Nancy will be lead PO for two years, at which time the situation will be re-evaluated; there will be no changes without forewarning. The main difference between past and current management models is a more team approach to LTER program management, with more participation in decisions by the LTER Working Group, which is comprised of LTER program staff from other directorates – notably GEO, Polar Programs, SBE, EHR, CISE, and OISE. Matt Kane will remain as back-up in BIO. The renewal proposal approach will not change, although feedback from the LTER community, the 30 year review, and the budget process will have an effect. In answer to questions, Nancy noted that she expects to participate in all site reviews in which DEB is not in conflict, though reviews for sites not in BIO will be led by that site's lead officer (GEO for coastal and marine sites, Polar Programs for Antarctic sites). The 30-year review committee is expected to report its findings to the BIO Advisory Committee at its spring meeting. The new NSF data management policy will be rolled out slowly and impact on LTER is not yet clear.
5. Synthesis (Legacy) Data Prospectus
Robertson reported that the Synthesis Data Prospectus provided to NSF in late summer was well received. At a September meeting, Liz Blood indicated that NSF would be receptive to receiving competitive bids for achieving the objectives laid out in the prospectus, in line with the first or second management models; from the prospectus:
 - Model 1. The Data Council selects a consulting firm to work with site Information Managers and scientists to discover, modify, and provide data in NIS-appropriate format. Funding is made available to sites to free Information Manager time to work with consultants.

– Model 2. The Data Council selects among proposals from institutional entities (sites; networks; centers; NEON, Inc., the LTER Network Office; etc.) to work with site Information Managers and scientists to discover, modify, and provide data in NIS-appropriate format. Funding is made available to sites to support Information Manager time to work with institutional entities. This model implies that one site (or a synthesis center or research group) could apply for funding to help other sites or other networks provide NIS-appropriate data. In this model, the site or center would be an alternative to the consulting firm in model #1 above.

Liz Blood suggested contacting Tony Beasley at NEON for suggestions on how to prepare bid documents and solicit appropriate bidders. Consensus is to ask the legacy data committee to help guide the bid development process including the development of specifications and priorities (Peter Groffman, chair; Emery Boose, James Brunt, Ted Gragson, Don Henshaw, David McGuire, Margaret O'Brien, Debra Peters, and Wade Sheldon) supplemented as needed with additional IM and domain science input. James Brunt, Waide, and Robertson will contact Beasley for initial advice on procedures. A full proposal appears not to be needed, but best to have the bids to NSF as early in the fiscal year as possible.

6. Transformative Science Highlights

The transformative bullets committee (Ducklow, Hamilton, Robertson, Stanley, Waide) has finished reviewing the accomplishment bullets from all sites for style and specificity, and bullets from 17 sites have now been through another round of revision and are ready for final editing; the remaining sites are expected to be complete within a few days. The committee asked communications consultant Kathy Lambert to review and revise HBR bullets as a potential model. EB consensus is that the Lambert revision is appealing and appropriate to our primary audience – Hill staffers and other science policy stakeholders. Waide will ask her to start working on remaining bullets.

Half-page narratives to accompany each bullet have been submitted by about 6 sites and are being reviewed to find an appropriate model. The committee is consulting with Cheryl Dybas at NSF for advice on level of detail and tone desired before asking sites to submit or revise further. Huntly suggested that to the extent possible bullets and narratives should emphasize the contribution of long-term observations to the accomplishments in order to highlight the unique importance of LTER.

David Foster suggested that we consider packaging and presenting bullets in other formats such as a brochure that could be distributed at the minisymposium, briefings, or elsewhere.

Bullets and narratives will be reviewed by NAB and provided to the 30y review committee later this fall.

7. Strategic and Implementation Plan

Comments have been received from standing committees and a number of PIs. Additional informal feedback from NSF is expected later this week, and from NAB members within 2 weeks. Robertson, Collins, and Waide will meet next week to reconcile comments to date and prepare a final draft. The current plan is to share with the 30y Review Committee later this fall – perhaps as early as their Albuquerque meeting depending on final draft progress. Discussion followed regarding roll-out to NSF and the need to ensure adequate visibility, including personal meetings with staff and administrators in various directorates. There was a suggestion that we should prepare an executive summary of the SIP for dissemination at the mini-symposium and to interested partners.

8. NISAC Committee Membership

Waide provided background on 4 nominees to fill upcoming NISAC vacancies. Proposed IM appointments are Mary Gastil-Buhl (MCR) and Linda Powell (FCE), and domain science appointments Bill McDowell (LUQ) and Paul Hanson (NTL). Hugh Ducklow made a motion to appoint as noted, supported by David Foster, and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

9. BioScience Prospectus

In late September Robertson submitted to editor Tim Beardsley the LTER prospectus prepared by the BioScience Prospectus Committee (chair David Foster, Chris Boone, Sarah Hobbie, Dan Childers) following revision to reflect EB input in August: consolidation of the proposed 9 articles to 6 plus an introduction, reflecting the incorporation of social science and information management into other articles rather than standalone. BioScience had earlier suggested no more than 5 articles could be published in a single issue. Beardsley has this week responded positively, with acceptance of all 6 articles plus an introductory editorial to be written by the coordinating editor. David Foster has agreed to be coordinating editor, and is now corresponding with Beardsley about the timeline, after which lead authors will be contacted and co-authorship lists finalized. The preferred timing is publication at about the same time or shortly after the ESA symposium, if accepted.

10. 2011 Working Groups Call for Proposals

The 2011 LTER working groups call will go out shortly, following approval of announcement wording. The EB reviewed the 2009 call and consensus is that the wording is still correct for promoting cross-site science with synthesis publications and proposals as prime products. The potential for including more postdoctoral salary support was discussed and approved. Waide and Robertson will finalize the wording and distribute the call to all_lter for a December 1 submission deadline. We will also need to identify a separate meeting date in December to rank and approve proposals.

11. Report from Chair's NSF Visit

Robertson reported on a mid-September visit to NSF to discuss with LTER program officers and DEB administrators the SGS decision, changes to the LTER management model, the legacy data prospectus, development of the strategic implementation plan, and funding pathways for the Future Scenarios project. Individual meetings were held with DEB administrators, BIO and EHR program officers, and Todd Crowl and Nancy Huntly arranged a roundtable discussion with the LTER Working Group.

- a. SGS PIs and Colorado State administrators met via conference call with BIO administrators in September and were told that the decision to terminate SGS is non-negotiable. The EB letter appears to have had little impact. Any change to the probationary procedure (such as the additional site review step suggested) would require National Science Board review since probationations are counter to current NSB policy and persist only because grandfathered. The chances of a successful review are likely marginal, with a potential for backfiring, which makes BIO unlikely to pursue.

SGS has since been directed to submit a 3-year budget, to include funding for transferring long-term data to the LNO for permanent curation. The funds used for SGS are not expected to disappear from the LTER budget at NSF, which opens the potential for re-competing a shortgrass steppe site in the future if that is the community's priority. EB discussion centered on how best to determine and present this. Waide noted that the social networking analysis to be published in BioScience this December (Johnson et al.) shows that SGS was the site most involved in cross-site publications 1980 to 2006.

- b. Robertson's perspective on the LTER management shake-up, gleaned from many conversations at NSF, is that it appears to be largely the result of former AD Jim Collins' directive that all BIO programs be managed by cluster rather than by individual program officers. Prior to September, LTER was said to be the only program not so-managed. No one in BIO sees Henry's abrupt transfer as a message to the Network, nor as a rebuke to his exemplary performance as LTER program director. No one below the DEB level (nor in other directorates) appears to have known that change was forthcoming. Almost all at NSF agree that it should have been handled better.
- c. A legacy data prospectus discussion with Liz Blood, Todd Crowl, and Nancy Huntly led to the outcome noted earlier (see item 5, above).
- d. A draft SIP was shared with members of the LTER Working Group, and the main subject of a roundtable discussion. There was broad enthusiasm for having a document that will lay out a vision and path for Network science, education, and CI growth. The SIP is likely to garner broad attention within the Foundation. Among other comments were the suggestions that the vision presentation might be more discovery-orientated and with a stronger long-term rationale. Other informal comments may be transmitted by Nancy Huntly in the following weeks.
- e. The potential for funding a large synthesis initiative such as the Future Scenarios Project without a call for proposals is a conundrum for NSF. Once the initiative is articulated as a community priority in an adopted SIP it will be time to discuss potential paths. EB discussion noted David Foster's intent to continue with a November workshop aimed at producing a scaled-back version suitable for existing competitions, despite the frustration of knowing that it's the broader effort that will have the most science impact.

12. Upcoming meetings

- a. October 26 (a.m.), Albuquerque and (tentative) VTC; with 30y Review Panel
- b. November 17, 12-2 EST (VTC)
- c. December 6, 12-2 EST (VTC)
- d. December proposal evaluation tbd
- e. January, February, April tbd (VTC)
- f. March 1-3, 2011, Arlington (Minisymposium Wednesday, March 2)
- g. SC Meeting May 17 (EB), 18-19 (SC), 2011; Sapelo Island

13. Meeting adjourned, 2:20 pm