

NISAC Annual Report (May 2012-April 2013)

May 7, 2013

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NISAC membership as of April 2013

Co-Chairs

Paul Hanson (NTL) (Spring 2012-2016)

M "Gastil" Gastil-Buhl (MCR) (Spring 2011-2015)*

Suzanne Remillard (AND) (Spring 2012-2016)*

*Knowing that co-Chair John Porter (VCR) was rotating off of NISAC in the Spring 2013, discussions at ASM 2012 led to the possibility of Gastil and Suzanne sharing co-chair responsibilities. This was voted and approved by NISAC members on 3-13-2013.

Members

Bill McDowell (LUQ) (Spring 2011-2014)

Paul Bolstad (CWT) (Spring 2013-2016)

Peter T Doran (MCM) (Spring 2013-2016)

Aaron M Ellison (HFR) (Spring 2013-2016)

Cristina Takacs-Vesbach (MCM) (Spring 2013-2016)

Linda Powell (FCE) (Spring 2011-2014)

Sven Bohm (KBS) (Spring 2013-2016)

Mark Servilla (LNO) (lifetime member)

James Brunt (LNO) (lifetime member)

Bob Waide (LNO) (lifetime member)

Members departed since May 2012

John Porter (VCR)

Chuck Hopkinson (PIE)

Will Pockman (SEV)

Libe Washburn (SBC)

Plans for leadership transitions

Science co-chair will rotate in spring 2016

IM co-chair Gastil will rotate off in spring 2015, Remillard in spring 2016

NISAC Meetings and Organization

Since the April 10, 2012 winter meeting in Albuquerque, NISAC has had one video-teleconference (VTC) call on 8-28-2012 and one in-person meeting at the 2012 ASM on September 10th in Estes Park. Member nominations have been discussed since last April, but actual nominations and voting didn't take place until February 2013 where 4 new scientists were elected to serve 3 year terms. One IM replacement was selected by the IMC at their annual meeting in September, prior to ASM. These were approved by the EB in April 2013. Suzanne Remillard (AND) represented NISAC at the May 2012 Science Council meeting that was held at the Andrews Experimental Forest in Oregon. Paul Hanson met with IM-Exec committee during their winter meeting (February 20-21, 2013) in Albuquerque. The NISAC committee has not yet approved of Terms of References for NISAC, which serves to clarify NISAC mission and activities.

NISAC Recommendations

Summary statement

PASTA development was accelerated in response to a recommendation from the LNO mid-term review and a production system was released in January 2013. The developers have initiated a production and a staging tier of PASTA allowing sites to continue to test before submitting packages to the production server. This method will ensure that EML packages are of high quality. Many LTER sites have made substantial progress in modifying and preparing their EML to meet the new standards and submitting data to PASTA. Overall, NISAC is pleased with the progress on PASTA, although they have not evaluated progress since the acceleration, and is confident that PASTA is well poised to support the data sharing requirements of network science. Furthermore, network science projects, including ClimDB/HydroDB, VegDB and StreamChemDB, supported by the LNO, have communicated with PASTA developers about using PASTA for their science projects. NISAC has played a role in facilitating these interactions.

Recommendations below are based on discussions held during the All-Scientists meeting in the fall of 2012 and during the April IM-Exec meeting (co-Chair Hanson participated). Recommendations for future NISAC activities are adapted, in part, from the pre-meeting materials, as well as the discussions of the February IM-Exec meeting.

Broader NIS programmatic initiatives that NISAC should lead or facilitate:

1. Improve communications between the information management and scientific communities. NISAC should meet more frequently with the IM-Exec and the scientific community to help all involved better understand current and proposed capacity of the NIS, as well as the opportunities for improved collaboration between LTER members.
2. Develop and/or distribute a short document that both reiterates the impetus, history, and justification of PASTA, and outlines its deployment's implications, as well as that of the eventual deprecation and shut-down of metacat.lternet.edu. This document should consider as its audience the following stakeholders: LNO; site IMs; site scientists; NSF; the scientific community beyond LTER.

3. Evaluate the extent to which LTER sites are on the path to broad PASTA adoption, and identify the easily digestible, widely distributable documents, in the form of white papers, newsletter articles, and/or "tech tip" or "knowledgebase" entries necessary to facilitate adoption.
4. Work with LTER IMs and PASTA developers to evaluate site progress on PASTA adoption.
5. NISAC encourages the example set by the VegDB project, working within the PASTA workflow framework and integrating data within the network data catalog rather than a separate entity. We see this as a general model for other cross-site projects like ClimDB/HydroDB and StreamChemDB.
6. Work with IMs and PASTA developers on a general specification outlining both the desired and required functions for the LTER Data Portal and an accompanying timeline for when such functions will be available. This timeline should be conditional on the prioritization of PASTA development, but should include some milestones that run parallel to PASTA development, so that core functions can receive testing and comment from the community.

SIP review and response

Not evaluated comprehensively during this cycle, but a few highlights of note: In table 5.6, items 2B parts A and D relating to DOIs and metadata structural quality are done, and Item 3B, PASTA, is two years ahead of schedule.

Status updates and old business

LINX Data

The LINX group has obtained funds to archive data from LINX II project. They have hired Linda Ashkenas (AND) to condense data from all sites into a single database. The group has decided to submit their data into a site based data management system that will be harvested into PASTA. They have decided to use the Andrews systems, since that is where the data management work is happening. This is a change in plans since August 2012.

Cross-Site Synthesis Groups

NISAC was asked to help identify other cross-site synthesis projects that may be producing data that would be appropriate for using in PASTA. Some examples include VegDB, PDTNET, and possibly a new project that will homogenize climate data from ClimDB/HydroDB (Jones & Thomas, AND).

VegDB

The VegDB group has been working to develop a cross-site system to improve access to synthetic vegetation databases using PASTA. They recently (April 29-May2, 2013) held their second workshop to design a prototype system. The prototype design they developed is general enough to accommodate other synthetic database projects including ClimDB/HydroDB and StreamChemDB.

Other IM working group progress

NISAC will work with IM-Exec to determine the status of previous working groups like Unit Registry, Controlled Vocabulary, PersonnelDB, SiteDB, Web Services, and Sensor Network Data.