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Tue, 07/28/2009 - 4:15pm — [mobrien](#) ^[1]

DRAFT agenda

Friday, July 31 from 2:30-4:30 EDT

2:30-3:30 EcoTRENDS and response to e-mail from Deb Peters

3:30-4:30 IMexec meeting

Reports

LNO Proposal and budget update (James) OR NEXT WEEK?

Virtual Water Cooler Schedule (Suzanne)

Governance WG Update (Nicole)

ASM Planning

EcoTrends Notes

by Emery Boose

Video participants: Corinna Gries (lead), Karen Baker, Barbara Benson, Emery Boose, James Brunt, Jason Downing, Hap Garrett, Mary Gastil-Buhl, Don Henshaw, John Porter, Ken Ramsey, Suzanne Remillard, Wade Sheldon, Kristin Vanderbilt, Jonathan Walsh

Phone participants: John Campbell, John Chamblee, Nicole Kaplan, Eda Melendez-Colom

The following documents were circulated by email this week and provide background information:

EcoTrends Project Vision and Resource Needs_june12_09.pdf (Deb Peters)

EcoTrends_update_july_09.doc (Deb Peters)

2009 June 22 EB minutes approved.pdf (Phil Robertson)

2009 July 16 EB minutes approved.pdf (Phil Robertson)

To what extent was NISAC involved in the EB decision? NISAC evaluated the functionality of EcoTrends as it stands now. Wade provided informal commentary on Deb's plan but the plan was not vetted by NISAC.

Wade was invited to join the EB conference call but was not available. Will Pockman (NISAC co-chair) did participate.

Deb submitted a 22-page report (EcoTrends Project Vision and Resource Needs, above) to the EB at Phil's request. Action plan and recommendation for future funding.

Does this report complete the original plan or extend the EcoTrends vision? This is a point of

contention.

LNO submitted a renewal proposal 2 years ago. Only basic operations (not all personnel) were funded. LTER decadal activities will now be funded through ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds. The new funding will support Duane plus several new IT positions at LNO (data manager, interns) as well as IT training workshops. Also extensive support for science.

This money is not really up for grabs. Need to set priorities within funding constraints. EcoTrends is one of several priority areas.

Some confusion at this point about what has actually happened.

Total of \$5.3M over 5 years. About \$500/year for IM activities, including personnel, training, and mini-sabbaticals.

Deb's report to EB requested about \$450/year. Possibly fund from both IT and science pots (half of each)?

EB has not terminated EcoTrends. Funding to maintain EcoTrends database is included in LNO budget.

The question is how best to use these resources. EB, LNO, NISAC, IMC need to implement a plan for this money. NSF has requested a detailed plan from LNO in 6 months.

Corinna, Will, Mark, and Bob Waide participated in the EB action.

Competition for resources between NIS and EcoTrends. What would IMC like to see happen?

EcoTrends subcommittee of EB met on July 8. Consensus that EcoTrends has been very successful and has contributed to our understanding of what is required for synthetic projects. Current limitations were outlined in Deb's report.

The subcommittee weighed the benefits of focusing on derived data (e.g. EcoTrends) vs. developing a more general solution (NIS). How to maintain both efforts with current funding?

EB recommended that EcoTrends be supported in a major way for another year to address issues from NISAC report. Then EcoTrends application would be moved to LNO.

What is the current status of the NIS? How does EcoTrends fit into the NIS?

At this point, NIS is a collection of fairly disparate databases. A technical plan is required to integrate these databases, implement automatic loading of data, and make data available to other applications. At present sites must load data separately into different applications (ClimDB, etc).

NSF is also concerned about finding the original data at the sites.

In the last IMC VTC, Mark presented the current plan for Pasta. A complete Pasta prototype would be developed in 2 years. See notes on the IM website.

The EB minutes from June recognize that the content of the NIS is as important as the delivery of data. EcoTrends has shown how much effort is required to produce clean and comparable datasets. An important lesson for us.

Potential conflicts of interest here. A potential problem for the LTER community. It will be

important to figure out how to work together on this.

How to take advantage of the lessons learned from EcoTrends?

What was the original source of funding for EcoTrends? LTER supplements (cross-site) plus USFS and ARS funding. Support included a large contribution of LNO staff time (Mark, Duane) funded in part by an LTER supplement shared by LNO and JRN.

Other sources of funding for EcoTrends might be pursued.

The concept of dynamic uploading of data came from LNO and NISAC.

What is the goal of this discussion? Clearly there is a lot of history and a variety of opinions. Has this group been asked to make a recommendation? Or should IMs talk to the PIs at their sites? Is there a goal beyond information exchange?

An IMC response was requested by Deb. But there is no clear charge from the EB.

Everyone has a right to express an opinion. A consensus would be more effective. Failing that, a range of concerns could be expressed.

EcoTrends includes data from the entire site, not just one scientist or IM. Need consensus from sites.

How to determine IMC consensus? Not everyone is on this call. Some of us have conflicting interests (science, IT).

Deb's letter came across to some as a lobbying effort. Indicative of a break down in communications. Related to how issues were originally scoped. How to reconcile short-term decisions with long-term impacts?

The question was not referred to the SC, NISAC, or IMC. Need larger context for decision.

Question of funds needs to be considered. Not entirely an IM project, since EcoTrends is intended to support science. We do not want to lose the experience of EcoTrends personnel (esp. Christine). Need to clarify the relation between sites and centers.

The difficulty in explaining the NIS is telling. Conceptualization, long-term planning, and governance need to be considered.

Focus so far on prioritization, not coordination. How to make best use of Christine's experience?

Mark's report on the NIS last month did explain how the various pieces fit together. The original vision for Pasta arose from the desire to make EcoTrends updatable. But what is inside the boxes in the Pasta diagram? How much effort, etc?

EB realizes that the current plan for NIS is not as well developed as the original plan for EcoTrends. LNO is working on an implementation plan for Pasta. But Deb's report is also lacking in technical implementation details. Some of these details can be found in the NISAC review of EcoTrends.

What are the options at this point? Vote for EcoTrends or Pasta? Recommend a committee to study how to combine the two projects?

In the past, NIS modules were often developed outside of LNO with the intention of eventually moving them to LNO. But some may view this case as a hostile take-over.

EcoTrends is a practical short-term solution but not a good long-term solution. Can we provide some sage advice about the transition?

How to move ahead? IMExec could frame a document expressing IMC concerns, examining the end decision and the process by which the decision was reached. Alternative sources of funding could also be explored.

Recent emails have made EcoTrends appear as something outside the NIS. Others view it as a module within the NIS.

Does the IMC agree with the EB decision? Is the IMC willing to part with some of the IT money in the LNO budget to move EcoTrends forward? Some constraints are imposed by the nature of the funding

LNO position descriptions are tied to specific tasks (Pasta, other IM activities). Moving these funds would require re-scoping the proposal. Could one of the new positions be deployed at JRN?

Historical datasets take the most effort. New data will be better suited to automated harvesting and assimilation.

Pasts (when completed) will provide data to applications such as EcoTrends.

Deb's report included significant funding for personnel outside of LNO, plus a redesign of the data model and web interface independent of the LNO plan. These items may have raised concerns in the EB.

Deb's report drew a distinction between Pasta development at LNO and EcoTrends development at JRN. The two separate development lines were predicated on the view that Christine's role is critical and precludes automatic treatment of data.

Intense manual refactoring of data vs. automatic treatment will be an important topic for future discussion.

Three types of data repositories: science-driven (e.g. LTER sites), resource-driven (theme or domain based; e.g. EcoTrends), and archive-driven. Diagram with three nodes: sites, centers, archive. Each has a different amount of automation.

Christine's work highlighted one of these connections: site and center. We still need to optimize the other two connections. The LTER Network is a great opportunity to work out these relationships. Opportunity to co-develop NIS and EcoTrends (and three types of repositories).

EcoTrends personnel have felt some frustration over the pace of the EcoTrends website development.

The IMC has always been good at developing a consensus wherever possible.

Deb's communications raise some good and accurate points, including a depressing view of our current ability to manage data and metadata at the site level. Many site datasets have serious shortcomings. An indication of our readiness to engage in network synthetic activities.

We need to find a structural way to incorporate these comments into our plans. Need more help at the site level. Bob Waide is working on a proposal to get more funding directly to sites.

Similar observations from earlier efforts by SEEK to use site data with Kepler. E.g. data and metadata do not match. These are basic checking issues.

The same issues will arise when site data are located into Pasta.

This has been a thoughtful and articulate discussion despite differences of opinion.

Meeting Notes ^[2]

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This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Cooperative Agreement #DEB-0236154. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in the material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

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