

The following is an update on NEOO (Northeastern or New England Ecological Observatory) based on the January 28-30, 2004 NEON Meeting at the Smithsonian Conservation and Research Center (CRC) at Front Royal, VA

### Summary

- NSF has released an RFP for a \$6 million competition for the development of a NEON coordinating consortium and program office (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2004/nsf04549/nsf04549.pdf>). The previously planned meeting of the Mid Atlantic Region Ecological Observatory (MAREO; <http://www.mareo.org/>) at CRC was used to (1) discuss a response to this call for a national effort and (2) develop the MAREO effort in conjunction with individuals who have been participating in other regional NEON efforts across the U.S. The meeting was coordinated by Bruce Hayden, who is leading MAREO and Jeff Goldman, who is leading the AIBS IBRSC effort on NEON (<http://ibrsc.aibs.org/neon/index.asp>)
- On the National level a group at the meeting emerged to write a proposal in response to the NEON RFP. The turn-around on the RFP is extremely rapid – letters of intent by March 8, 2004 and final proposals due on April 26, 2004. Tentative Co-PIs include: Hayden, Goldman, Jim MacMahon (Utah), Bill Michener (New Mexico), and Jerry Franklin (Washington), with a desire to add 1-2 others. There is discussion of trying to have AIBS be the lead institution in order to provide broad involvement from the scientific community and to keep the initial effort independent of any specific academic institution. **The PIs have committed to spending 50% of their time over the next two years leading this effort (!)** The effort will require major involvement of consultant groups familiar with the development of big science initiatives and an advisory board of individuals involved in such efforts. A potential group of senior science personnel on the proposal may include: Kris Kristalka, Knute Nadelhoffer, Hilary Swain (Archibold), Russ Monson (Colorado), Mark Bain (Cornell), Alan Covich (Georgia), David Foster, and others (this group will greatly expand and morph as the proposal writing phase progresses; there is desire to have this group be diverse in all possible ways). The proposal will be reviewed at NSF by a broad group crossing the disciplines and including technology, management, informatics representatives and will be largely focused on potential for success at developing a big science initiative. DEB will be a modest player in this review.
- The emerging concept of NEON at this meeting largely follows that of the recent AIBS report <http://ibrsc.aibs.org/reports/pdf/NEONCoordRpt.pdf>. Broadly, there is interest in addressing the six themes that emerged in the NRC report on NEON within a regional framework that covers the U.S., writ broadly to include the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean basin, DC, La Selva, and the 50 states. It is felt that in writing the RFP that NSF adopted much of the thinking in the AIBS report.

- Note that even if this effort succeeds in a successful proposal that there will be a two-year planning effort and there remains a need for Congress to allocate the funds. Thus, this is a lengthy and involved process and we remain distant from actually seeing science on the ground.
- A draft map of regional NEONs was produced, covering the entire U.S. and consisting of 13-14 regions. Regions and regional participants (few of which claim to be the final lead PIs for their regions, but all of whom have been involved in regional discussions) include among others:

Mid Atlantic Region (MAREO) – Hayden, Smithsonian reps

Great Lakes (GLEO) – Knute Nadelhoffer

Pac. Northwest – Jerry Franklin

California – Mike Allen

Great Plains (GREO?) – Alan Knapp, Loretta Johnson, Kristalka, John Blair,

Southeast (SEON) – Covich

Tropics (NEONEON; currently includes Pacific and Atlantic)– Jo-Ann Leong, others

Alaska – (Howie Epstein reported) – Gus, Shaver, Terry Chapin, Marilyn Walker

Rocky Mts (ROMEIO) – Art McKee

Great Basin – Jim MacMahon

Southwest (SWEIO) – Jim Gosz, Terry Yates

Corn Belt – Phil Robertson

Northeast (NEEO) – Foster, Peter Grofmann

- The tentative geography of NEEO is New England plus Long Island, NYC, the Hudson and Adirondacks.
- Note that Cornell, AMNH and others have proposed a NYC NEON (<http://environment.cornell.edu/initiatives/NY/neon.htm>). There has been a discussion of an urban sub-regional approach, for example bring together all of the eastern urban-rural efforts.
- Next steps for NEEO
  1. DRF will provide an overview of the emerging NEON effort at the Harvard Forest LTER and NIGEC Annual Meeting on March 29, 2004. This will include feedback and updates from others involved in prior NEON activities, including the NRC report (e.g., J. Aber).
  2. We will plan a meeting of the Northeastern group for late winter/early spring in order to discuss the national effort, identify a broad group of participating institutions and individuals in the Northeast
  3. Development of a NEEO Web page  
<http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/neon/neon.html>

- The list of attendees at the MAREO meeting is at:  
[http://mareo.org/local/auto\\_docs/MAREOmeetingreg\\_table\\_of\\_contents.html](http://mareo.org/local/auto_docs/MAREOmeetingreg_table_of_contents.html)

Much more information can be found on the MAREO and AIBS/IBRCS home pages. A full report of the meeting, a map of the regional efforts, and a NEON powerpoint presentation from AIBS will soon be available on the MAREO page.

[www.mareo.org](http://www.mareo.org)

<http://ibr.cs.aibs.org/neon/index.asp>