DRAFT LETTER TO SARAN RE: THE PO COMMENTS.

First two paragraphs (incomplete) are lead ins to the third, which is the meat of the message.

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Dear Saran,

Now that we are underway with research for our recently awarded grant, we would like to take time to respond to the review process . . . . We have a number of our own concerns that we would like addressed as soon as convenient. Also, since the next opportunity for us to address concerns raised by the review process is the Site Review, we wanted to make a suggestion for the timing of that visit.

But, first we would like to thank you for your help in contending with the problems we had in receiving funding for our last grant. Your help and counsel was tremendously helpful as we worked through[all that bs].

We have thoroughly studied the reviews we received and the comments of the program. We were thrilled to receive high marks from the *ad hoc* reviewers on our renewal proposal. We understand there are remaining issues to be addressed. What we would like to address here is the marked difference in tone between the ad hoc reviews and the PO comments. To be certain the PO comments raised some valid concerns, ones that we look forward to addressing in the Site Review. As for areas of disagreement, we are not interested in finely dissecting the PO comments. Rather we want to address one fundamental issue: We don’t know where we stand. The PO comments appear to us to channel the most negative comments of the reviewers, primarily those of one reviewer. More over, they raise a number of issues (e.g., x, y, z) that were not mentioned by any of the ad hoc reviewers. To cap things off, the penultimate statement, “They [the concerns] are not major enough now to terminate the site,” makes it seem as if the goal of the program IS to terminate the project. Certainly we understand this is not what was meant but this impression underscores a strong sense of apprehension our group felt after reading the PO comments. To put it simply, to read the ad hoc reviews one would think we had received a B+ going on an A- while the tone of the PO Comments is that we received a C- going on a D+. We simply cannot tell of the program thinks our LTER program is on solid ground or not.

We look forward to further opportunities to show that we think our LTER program is on solid ground. As we all know, NSF will perform a site review sometime before the next renewal proposal is due. We assume the renewal will be due in March of 2018. If true, and understanding that the time of the review is ultimately up to the program, then we would like to suggest that the Site Review be timed about a year before the renewal is due. This would give us time to incorporate our responses to the Site Review into the proposal writing process.