**LTER Communications Committee conference call**

**February 11, 2016, 3:00pm EST**

**Attendees:** Clarisse Hart (notes; Harvard Forest), Julie Doll (notes; Kellogg Biological Station), Jonathan Walsh (Baltimore Ecosystem Study), Marcia Nation (Central Arizona-Phoenix), Peter Groffman (Hubbard Brook), Marty Downs (NCO), Stacy Rebich-Hespanha (NCO), Charley Driscoll (Hubbard Brook), Lina DeGregorio (Andrews Forest)

**Overview**: The group met Marty and Stacy from the NCO staff, and discussed membership and past and future goals/activities of the committee.

**Action steps**:

* **MDowns** will draft, for comment, “job descriptions” for this communications committee and a wider LTER communications community of practice.
* **MDowns** willcontact PIs to identify site-level communication representatives.
* Committee membership: at this point we will not be specifically recruiting new members.
  + Phil Robertson wants to cycle off.
  + **CHart** will confirm with Chris Neill, David Foster, Daniel Nidzgorski, and Susan Dailey whether they want to continue to be members.
  + **MDowns** will be the official connector between this committee and NSF/Cheryl Dybas – and will communicate that to Cheryl. NSF will be invited to attend meetings with relevant agenda items.
  + If others have ideas for potential members, **email the chairs** so we can all discuss it via email.
  + Other members may emerge in the future from the community of practice.
* **MDowns** will circulate the draft survey that will ultimately be sent to PIs / site communicators.
* Activity-based working group ideas for this committee, with participation by the wider LTER, could include:
  + Planning events to communicate LTER science to NSF and other scientific/decision-making audiences (e.g. the mini-symposium)
  + Promoting the activities of NCO synthesis groups
  + Building case studies for the new communication community of practice
* **PGroffman** will confirm whether this committee will be invited to send a representative to the annual Science Council meeting
* **Everyone on social media** should “like” the [LTER page on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/uslter)
* We will meet quarterly (next meeting in June/July)

**Detailed Notes**

Agenda item #1: Introduce NCO staff Marty Downs (Communications Officer) and Stacy Rebich-Hespanha (NCEAS post-doctoral fellow)

* **MDowns**: goals include setting communication priorities, getting the website transition sorted out, building a community for site communicators. She is the only full-time NCO employee; many others are 30-50%.
* **SRH**: role at NCO is strategic planning and evaluation; bridging the divide between the science and practice of science communication; diversity, environmental sustainability, and virtual interaction. Currently 20% of her time is NCO.

Agenda item #2: Committee membership

* Framing questions:

1. What would be the ideal membership of this committee?
2. Do/should we have representation on Science Council?

* The current committee has good representation of skill-sets; are there changes we need to make? Is there an ideal number of members?
* **MNation**: Would be good to get more members on the committee (some members have left the LTER Network) and have a range of people (senior PIs to communication point people).
* Phil Robertson has asked to step down and rotate off the committee.
* **MDowns** offered to serve as the NCO/LTER liaison with Cheryl Dybas at NSF. **PGroffman** added that for Executive Board meetings, they set aside dedicated time for NSF people to contribute thoughts. We could dedicate some time at each meeting or offer time every couple of meetings.
* **JDoll**: Ideal number of members might depend on committee goals and activities.

Agenda item #3: Committee goals and activities

* **MDowns** put forward her ideas for creating a shared knowledge community around science communication. Two separate groups:
  + - Community of Practice for site-level comm. representatives
      * webinar-based, meets regularly (6 calls a year?): an hour-long presentation and half hour of discussion. Could walk through comm. case studies with the whole group
      * administrative coordination by Marty
      * **Marty will first identify the people at each site who are responsible for communications**
        + **PGroffman** suggested asking PIs; hopefully some will want to be the site rep
        + Ideally we could have both a PI and a comm. rep from each site
    - Communication Committee
      * set membership
      * more strategic; meets quarterly
      * organizes activities, helps to set calendar and topics for Community of Practice (topics, skill sets, etc.)
* Past role of this Communication Committee
  + **MNation**: implementing the strategic communication plan within the limitations of what an unpaid committee can do – revamping the website, doing the mini-symposium
  + **JWalsh**: Website content, and how to share science with the scientific community outside LTER, is what we worked on most.
  + **MNation**: The various chairs of the committees were invited to the once-a-year Science Council meeting. Comm. was always invited to participate. PGroffman would know if we are invited this year.
* Current role of this Communication Committee
  + **MDowns**: Advising on a new strategic plan for the NCO (somewhat iterative).
    - **MDowns will develop an outline in the next 2-3 months**, with input from this committee and conversations with various LTER leaders.
    - **MDowns will circulate a draft survey for input from this committee**, to send to communications point people / lead PIs, including information on prioritizing audiences, and what social media and web analytics every site has
  + **CDriscoll**: Mini-symposium: NSF seems to be not very comfortable with the model we’ve used for years. Could we recast it so it would be more effective? Or evaluate whether we should keep it? It’s unclear from Saran whether she wants it to continue. Deciding will require some interaction with NSF.
    - **MDowns** said she hasn’t seen that there are problems per se but that the return could be larger: larger press interaction or agency participation?
  + **CDriscoll**: Could this committee have events that are more outward looking? For example, that we could facilitate some kind of public presentation that would cover some type of LTER science that could be of broad interest?
  + **CHart**: Working groups led by members of this committee could work on specific activities (building case studies, facilitate a discussion about mini-symposium and other events, promoting the activities of NCEAS synthesis groups). Ultimately membership of this committee could grow from the people who are very interested.
  + **SRH**: What about getting advice on the kinds of communication training that we offer at NCEAS for LTER-related groups --- this could be gathered from the survey questions.

Agenda item #4: Synthesis working groups & Meeting frequency

* **MDowns** says the committee’s role in synthesis working groups is on more of a 2-year timeline. Having communicators as part of working groups would be great but probably isn’t going to be feasible. If the NCO sees proposals for which there is a clear communications element, they may suggest it. Sites submitting proposals should make that case on a local level.
* **MNation**: As proposals get funded, it would be useful for this group to get the titles and abstracts so we know what’s going on. It’s nice to be aware when there’s going to be an NCO press release – or a heads-up that Marty would like content to be reteweeted. As a network of communicators, we want to push along the communications products.
  + Marty suggested that everyone “like” the [LTER page on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/uslter)
* Meeting frequency: the group agreed that quarterly works.