

Mid-Atlantic Region Ecological Observatory (MAREO) A NEON Implementation

Report on Executive Committee Meeting November 2, 2005 Smithsonian Conservation and Research Center Front Royal, Virginia

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Proposed Agenda:

- Round-table update on recent activities relative to MAREO
- How to go about developing a Prospectus (i.e. proposal for NEON Observatory)
- Regrouping as Domain 2 and reaching out to new members
- The MAREO agenda, independent of NEON - do we want one? How to develop one, etc.

In attendance:

Robert Gardner, Francisco Dallmeier, Eric Nagy, Mike Bass, Mark Luckenbach, Mike Reiter, Mary Beth Adams, Andrea Weeks (for Chris Jones), Patrick Megonigal

Executive Committee members unable to attend:

R. Chris Jones, Brent Yarnal, Anthony S. Overton

The Executive Committee meeting opened with introductions and approval of the agenda. It was agreed that the big issues to deal with at the meeting were

- 1) how to prepare the "prospectus" that NEON Inc. / NSF will be requesting soon (spring 2005?),
- 2) how to handle the recently redrawn "Domain" boundaries, and
- 3) the definition of a MAREO mission independent of NEON (if any).

To bring folks up to speed Pat Megonigal presented a PowerPoint presentation he had recently given to a regional conference. This was a springboard for the "boundary" discussion #2. After quite a bit of discussion it was decided that MAREO would not try to unify, or orchestrate, all of Domain 2. This position was adopted after recognizing that the current MAREO membership and leadership are drawn from a fairly narrow geographic area, and due to the fact that much of the "new" territory defined in Domain 2 is occupied by folks already well organized around a different Region (SEEON). It was felt strongly that cooperation *among existing efforts* would be more productive than trying to force everyone into single planning effort. The discussion evolved into a consideration of #3 – "what is the purpose and mission of MAREO?" It was recognized that there has been longstanding interest in both watershed and Chesapeake Bay issues within MAREO. There was some discussion about potential cooperative efforts that could be forged to

define a MAREO role in these areas. Overall it was agreed that MAREO must serve two functions –

- A. to spearhead the development of one or more proposals (prospectuses) for a NEON Observatory to be hosted by Domain 2,
- B. to coordinate a regional network independent of, but complimentary to, NEON - perhaps centered around Chesapeake Bay and watershed issues.

Both of these issues will be the focus of two membership meetings tentatively planned for February and/or March 2006. The meetings will be planned to come shortly after the Science and Education Plan is released from the NSF. All interested parties in Domain 2 will be invited. The meetings will be designed to foster Prospectus development. It is conceivable (and in fact likely) that more than one prospectus effort may emerge – i.e. that members can see several possible scenarios for an observatory in Domain 2. MAREO will not try to constrain planning to a single model, and will do what it can to facilitate all emergent models. Prior to these meetings the MAREO Executive Committee will poll all Domain 2 members to see what planning efforts are already underway, and to expand the database of interested parties and facilities.

A second focus of the meetings will be to continue defining a regional agenda for MAREO to pursue independent of NEON. In pre-meeting communication the Executive Committee will solicit and compile a brainstorm of ideas to work with.

There was very strong consensus and enthusiasm among Executive Committee members on both of these two major issues. They felt these two tracks will serve the NEON cause, the MAREO/Domain 2 membership, and regional interests.

So MAREO now recognizes a four-part mission for itself:

- 1) **MAREO should not try to orchestrate all NEON planning activities in the new (expanded) territory** defined by Domain 2 (Mid-Atlantic). MAREO will still invite and actively recruit any interested persons or organizations to join MAREO and NEON planning efforts. And MAREO offers to represent all Domain 2 efforts and interests to COREO, NEON Inc., and the NSF.
- 2) **MAREO will shift emphasis to coordinating and developing one or more Observatory Prospectuses for Domain 2.** Leading up to and during the MAREO meetings tentatively planned for February 2006 MAREO will facilitate a bottom-up process for developing one or more Domain 2 Observatory models. Parties from all of Domain 2 will be invited to participate in this process. And since MAREO will allow for the possibility that multiple observatory models may emerge, the process will be inclusive of efforts already underway in “new” parts of Domain 2.
- 3) **MAREO will continue to pursue regional networking initiatives** in addition to, and complimentary to, NEON efforts.
- 4) **MAREO will continue to update and inform members** on NEON related developments regionally and nationally.