NEON Great Lakes User Group Charter

Feb 2025

Purpose

The National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) is a continental-scale ecological observation facility funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation and operated by Battelle. NEON is designed to provide long-term open access ecological data across the United States to better understand how ecosystems are changing in response to ecosystem change and other drivers. The Observatory is divided into 20 ecoclimatic Domains that represent distinct regions of climate, vegetation, landforms and ecosystem dynamics. Domain 05 is the Great Lakes Domain which roughly follows the watershed of the Great Lakes Basin encompassing Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, northern Ohio, and portions of Illinois and Indiana. Four of the five field sites are located in Wisconsin and the fifth in Upper Michigan. Both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are represented in the sites. A user group with multi-sectional research interests in the region, together with NEON staff scientists, is needed to address and advance scientific and technical issues specific to the Great Lakes Domain.

Objectives

The overarching objectives of the Great Lakes User Group are to facilitate regionally focused, nationally relevant collaborative research, and to create a mechanism for communication between regional stakeholders and NEON staff within the Domain. Specifically, the user group will do the following:

1. Identify and pursue areas of research and appropriate funding opportunities to advance regional-scale scientific progress using NEON resources.
    a. Build and maintain a website for the Great Lakes User Group including a list of participants, their role, research interests, short biography, etc.
    b. Provide space for researchers to list their research activity within the region and encourage non-scientific projects to participate
2. Use NEON data to develop peer-reviewed scientific publications, presentations, technical reports and outreach products.
    a. Raise awareness of the Great Lakes User Group within the Domain and further afield
    b. Actively encourage researchers and others to engage with the Group
    c. Promote use of NEON data among researchers and other interested parties
3. Liaise with NEON
    a. Represent the NEON community in the region
    b. Advise NEON on data gaps and other issues
    c. Provide a framework to establish user groups in other NEON domains
4. Facilitate regional collaboration and growth of the NEON user community through in-person and virtual meetings and a website

Scope and limitations

The User Group will focus exclusively on research incorporating NEON data from within the Great Lakes Domain. Participation in the Great Lakes User Group is voluntary, self-selecting, and no

financial compensation will be provided. The User Group is intended to be a grassroots network open to all who are interested in applying NEON resources to scientific, outreach, and management questions, and will enjoy no special favor in its access to NEON resources.

Approach

The group will meet once per year, preferably in person at a NEON site, regional conference, or at the NEON Science Summit when appropriate. Approximately bimonthly meetings are envisioned in the early phases of Group organization, with more frequent and topically-focused meetings as specific issues and opportunities emerge and are pursued by all or some of the User Group members.

Individuals participating in the Group will give as much of their time as appropriate to the Group to further its objectives, in good faith, through organic collaboration. NEON will provide capacity for a basic website that publishes this Charter, names and links to or contact information of User Group members who are willing to provide that information, and a link to a listserv where new members can sign up.

Approval of the Charter and of other products emerging from the User Group will be by consensus of the members who participate in the development of such products.

Initially, two self-identified co-chairs will lead the development of the Charter and other key components of the User Group, and facilitate interaction with NEON staff. As the Group membership grows, formal timelines and processes for leadership transition will be developed and voted upon by all self-identified members of the Group.

Membership

Membership in the User Group will be self-selecting, with new members welcome at any time and any level of participation. An individual will not lose membership unless resigning or removed due to unacceptable behavior. Chair: runs meetings, helps develop agendas, facilitates discussion and liaises with NEON POC

    - Alison Donnelly – University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2022)
    - Luke Nave – Michigan Technological University / Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (2022)
- NEON POC: NEON staff members that serve as the primary NEON liaison with the group and are responsible for taking minutes, outlining action points, archiving communications, as well as preparing summaries of the group's discussions and recommendations.
    - Caleb Slemmons
- Members: individuals who participate in the group's activities and deliver the stated objectives
    - Ankur Desai – University of Wisconsin-Madison
    - Amy Marcarelli – Michigan Tech
    - Kate Heckman – USDA Forest Service
    - Kathryn Hofmeister – Michigan Tech
    - And others

Membership of the group will be reviewed annually by the NEON POC and Group Chairs and continued service will be considered based on participation in the previous cycle. An open recruitment process will be conducted for new members and will focus on ensuring membership from many sections of science, background, and perspective. Group members can suggest new members or individuals can request membership themselves. Membership will be flexible and open to anyone interested in research in the Domain and should include researchers and non-researchers with different interests and backgrounds.

Code of Conduct and Conflicts of interest

Group members are expected to abide by NEON's Terms of Use and Code of Conduct.