

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

Board on Life Sciences

Dear Colleagues,

At the request of the National Science Foundation, the National Research Council is beginning a study on the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON). The study committee will first evaluate which important issues in ecology need to be addressed on an expanded range of scales (e.g., regional or continental) and whether these issues represent national concerns. The committee will then examine the NEON concept and assess whether NEON's national network of field and laboratory research infrastructure is an appropriate and necessary means to address these large-scale questions. The committee will also consider the impact that NEON may have on the scientific community and on the next generation of scientists.

The study will be structured around the following four questions.

1. What are the important issues in ecology and environmental biology that can only be addressed on a regional or continental scale? Are any of these issues of national concern?
2. Is a national network of field and laboratory research infrastructure (e.g. environmental sensor arrays, remotely operated gas and ion analyzers, biodiversity monitoring instrumentation) needed to address these questions?
3. Will NEON, as conceptualized in the series of six community workshops, be able to provide infrastructure and logistical support to address ecological and environmental questions of national concern?
4. What impact will NEON have on the scientific community and the next generation of scientists?

The committee would like to solicit suggestions and comments from the ecological community and the wider scientific community regarding the issues listed above. Hence, it will host a web forum for open discussion from June 2 to June 16. This is your opportunity to provide your perspectives and insights to the committee. Please navigate to www.nationalacademies.org/neon for more information on NEON and to join in the discussion. Please e-mail Bridget Avila at bavila@nas.edu if you have any difficulties with the forum or any other general questions and comments.

In addition to the web forum, the committee will be holding its first meeting on June 10, 2003 (Tuesday) at the National Academy of Sciences Building (2101 Constitution Ave., Washington DC), which will be open to public between 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. EDT. This will be an opportunity to learn about NSF's plans for NEON and about the views of relevant professional societies and other government agencies. Please RSVP with Bridget Avila by phone at (202) 334-2186 or via e-mail at bavila@nas.edu if you plan on attending this meeting.

If you cannot attend, you may participate in the meeting by listening to a live audio webcast and submitting questions using an e-mail form at <http://national-academies.org>. Listening to the webcast requires either RealPlayer or Windows Media Player. RealPlayer software is available free at <http://www.real.com/player>. Windows Media Player is available free at <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads>. For more information on using these players, see the respective Web sites.

Free technical support will be available during the webcast via a toll-free number.