

Following is our response to a question posed by Todd Crowl and Henry Gholz via email on July 3, 2008, in which they ask us to address Coweeta LTER compliance with the LTER Network Data Access Policy approved by the LTER Coordinating Committee April 6, 2005.

The core responsibility of Coweeta Information Management (CWTIM) is to provide a comprehensive repository of scientific information from research and monitoring activities in southern Appalachia. As a regional site, the Coweeta LTER relies on data from a wide variety of sources. In adhering to the LTER Network Data Access Policy, Coweeta LTER makes every effort to release data in a timely fashion with as few restrictions as possible on a nondiscriminatory basis while ensuring that associated metadata are accurate and complete.

Data from LTER-supported investigators or collected by Coweeta technicians in support of project objectives are described in their associated metadata and made available as Type 1 or 2 data in accordance with the LTER Network Data Access Policy. Data from federal, state, commercial and non-governmental sources including USFS, USGS, NOAA, NCDNR, US Census, Claritas, and LTWA are obtained in accordance to the norms of each source. The data are accessible through the Coweeta web portal to the degree possible depending on commercial and/or confidentiality restrictions imposed by the original source as allowed by the LTER Network Data Access Policy.

CWTIM uses a team-based approach to standardize datasets and make them available through the Coweeta web portal as described in **Section 4** of the proposal. Long-term datasets that in most cases are generated by Coweeta technicians or made possible by LTER funds (e.g., biotic measurements on the terrestrial gradient) are available as Type 1 as soon as assembled and quality-assured. The availability of other long-term data through the Coweeta web portal depends on the original source. Some data (e.g., US Census) are obtained at no cost other than Coweeta personnel time to prepare it for access through the Coweeta web portal as Type 1 data. Some data (e.g., LANDSAT satellite imagery) are purchased with Coweeta LTER funds, processed by Coweeta personnel to add value then made available through the Coweeta web portal as Type 1 data. Finally, some data (e.g., stream and atmospheric chemistry) that were not produced with LTER funds can sometimes be made available through the Coweeta web portal as Type 1 or 2 data, but in other instances not at all although access for Coweeta investigators has in most cases been negotiated so that the data can be used as needed.

Selected instances of non-compliance with the LTER Network Data Access Policy historically involve short-term datasets generated by LTER investigators. Individual investigators are responsible for preparing their own metadata and data files, which are then submitted to CWTIM for content verification, formatting and posting. The implementation of a scalable and dependable architecture early in the 2002-2008 funding cycle was a direct response to the need to improve management, discovery and access to project related information from the beginning of the project in 1980 and even prior to the advent of computers. CWTIM is now in the process of completing

improvements that make it possible to audit the information archive, evaluate use of the information, and confirm acceptance of the terms of acceptable use of the information by investigators and users.

These changes are the foundation for additional improvements to the scalability and dependability of our information management system proposed for the next funding cycle (2008-2014). The purpose of these changes will be to provide for large, regional-scale collaborative projects within and across the boundaries of the Coweeta LTER project. Investigators currently submit a progress report each year that is used in preparing the NSF annual project report. As described in **Section 3** of the proposal project investigators will now also be regularly evaluated by the Coweeta LTER Science Advisory Council for, among other things, cooperation with information management practices in adherence to the LTER Network Data Access Policy. LTER funding will be allocated in support of initiatives with activities guided by a group of investigators. This group must submit a biennial progress report that details findings and datasets compiled, and presents a research plan and resource needs for the next two years.

The improvements as described in more detail in **Section 4** of the proposal, include our current collaboration with LNOIM to bring all Coweeta LTER data into full EML5.0 compliance and explicitly encode scalar concepts into database schema to serve data at the watershed, county, regional, and macroregional scale. We will continue to improve the efficient processing of data streams with particular attention to the procedural complexity of ingesting regional scope data from geographically dispersed investigators to maximize its usability. We will also explore development of a client/server application that allows users to “check out” data sets, add value by performing additional analysis and research, then “check-in” the data set, compare it against existing holdings, discard duplicate information and update the metadata. Such standardization will ensure the electronic encoding of data and information for exchange between users through a common portal whether at the site or Network level in accordance with the intent of the LTER Network Data Access Policy.