



September 16, 2008

Dear Colleagues:

We thank you for your hard work and for your institutional contributions to the NEON planning and site survey process. The surveys yielded valuable information that has significantly informed the planning process and deepened our understanding of how the sites fit into the national strategy. We can now produce informed estimates of costs and risks – the motivation for and NSF’s primary requirement of the survey process. In the long run and far more importantly, together we began the process of creating workable site-specific designs from the initial generic or site-independent concept. In some domains, we are still selecting relocatable sites, but, thanks to the community effort, in all sites we have scientifically viable and exciting options that clearly contribute to the national questions.

On a practical level, there are several planning processes that are ongoing. First, the NSF has begun a programmatic Environmental Assessment process and has selected a contractor. NSF’s contractor will be contacting site representatives to arrange visits and collect additional data. In order to minimize the burden on you, NEON Inc. will provide as much information as possible based on the data that you already have provided. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the NEON Inc. EA lead, Jody Bolyard. Second, the NEON engineering team is developing detailed site planning documents based on the site surveys and other information. As these documents roll out, we will review them with domain and site operator contacts. Bill Porter, NEON Inc.’s Director of Facilities and Civil Construction will be the contact. Third, NEON Inc. is headed into a series of reviews and a period of intensive planning and documentation. We hope that you will forgive us if we are quiet during this period. However, if you have questions or concerns about NEON do not hesitate to contact Michael, Dave or one of the other listed contacts with questions or concerns. For telephone and e-mail information for NEON Inc. personnel please see www.neoninc.org.

During the site survey process, NEON Inc. recognized a potential need for each domain to have a domain-based organizing committee. These 20 committees will provide a forum for communication with NEON Inc. and the NSF. While each domain has unique combinations of academic, conservation, and government organizations involved with NEON planning, all domains have an interest in a clear conduit for communication. In the next few years, the organizing committees will be involved in several key activities including assistance recruiting candidate Domain Chief Scientists and consultation on the qualifications of the candidates and reviewing the adaptation of NEON Inc.’s national sampling designs and protocols to local conditions. NEON Inc. will be able to provide modest support to begin the activities of the domain-based groups in FY 2009.



We expect to initiate the recruitment of Domain Chief Scientists near the time construction funds become available, late 2009 to early 2010. Consistent with guidelines developed by the NEON Inc. Board of Directors, Domain Chief Scientists normally will be employed through their home institution via a Cooperative Agreement. NEON Inc. will issue a national call for applications from interested individuals for each domain. A distinguished national search committee will review applications. The search committee will provide a short list of qualified candidates by domain to NEON Inc. NEON Inc. will then review the top candidates and the proposed institutional arrangements, leading to a selection.

Thank you again for your contributions to NEON design and we look forward to continued collaboration in the development of the Observatory. Our domain contact list is still under development. We encourage you to distribute this letter widely and send us the any additional names that should be on our contact lists.

Sincerely,

Dave Schimel

Michael Keller