

NSCN SSG conference call minutes

11 Jan 2012, 1300-1400

Prepared by Luke Nave (Coordinator)

Participants

John Baker	Marc Kramer	Margaret Torn
Rich Birdsey	Johannes Lehmann	Sue Trumbore
Jennifer Harden	Bob McKane	Eric Vance
Julie Jastrow	Stephen Ogle	Mark Waldrop
Mark Johnson	Mac Post	Larry West
Randy Kolka	Chris Swanston	

Welcome and Introduction

Chris Swanston called the meeting to order and summarized the agenda for the hour-long call.

SSG Business- resignations

Chris Swanston reminded participants of the general consensus on SSG resignations that emerged from last year's call. Specifically, that limited Network outputs and opportunities for SSG engagement compelled SSG members to remain on for at least another year.

Chris Swanston asked all participants on the current conference call to stay on for another year and offered the opportunity for anyone present to speak up and withdraw.

Sue Trumbore offered to step down given her limited involvement to date, then retracted and decided to remain on for one more year to stay closely involved in radiocarbon-related projects.

John Baker acknowledged his limited involvement and cited sharing representation of USDA-ARS interests with Ron Follett as justification. He stated he will remain on for another year.

Chris Swanston identified Bill Parton and Peter Thornton as two SSG members who have not participated in annual conference calls and suggested that these two should perhaps be invited to resign.

Margaret Torn agreed with CS, said that it would be good to rotate under-involved SSG members off and replace with more engaged individuals.

Rich Birdsey asked whether it would be possible to initiate SSG members from other countries.

Chris Swanston acknowledged this as highly relevant but better considered later in the call, after addressing questions of the Network's geographic scope.

Chris Swanston moved to discuss contacting Bill Parton and Peter Thornton and asking for their resignations.

Jen Harden seconded CS' motion and synopsised the relevant Roberts' Rules of Order: one person moves to discuss a topic, and if another person seconds that motion then discussion can occur. If the Chair feels that the discussion is productive, sufficient, and leading to a resolution on the topic, s/he may call a vote; otherwise the Chair may elect to table the item for further consideration, or discussion at a later time.

Marc Kramer stated that Catherine Ste.-Marie (Canadian Forest Service) would be a good addition to the SSG, as he has worked with her on joint US-Canadian Forest Service climate and management initiatives and knows she is active in soil, carbon, and research networks.

Chris Swanston noted MK's recommendation and requested additional discussion on the topic of asking for resignations from Parton and Thornton.

Eric Vance stated that the lack of participation by the two SSG members is sufficient grounds to ask for their resignations.

Chris Swanston called a vote. (Tally: 17 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions; motion carried). The Coordinator and the Chair will discuss specific plans for contacting Drs. Parton and Thornton.

Mac Post stated that he wishes to remain on the SSG for one more year, is pleased about Stephen Ogle's involvement, and will be a more active participant especially during the latter half of 2012.

Chris Swanston noted that it will be important to involve MP in continued development of the database and its mechanisms of access and use.

SSG Business- additions

Chris Swanston moved to consider Dan Richter (Duke) and Greg Lawrence (USGS) for SSG positions.

Unidentified (Johannes Lehmann?) seconded CS' motion and noted that Dan Richter would be a good addition.

Rich Birdsey seconded Marc Kramer's motion to consider Catherine Ste.-Marie and moved to consider Felipe Garcia-Oliva (National Autonomous University of Mexico; Mexican Carbon Program) as a new international SSG member.

Jen Harden seconded RB's motion.

Margaret Torn asked whether the SSG should remain the same size over time, in light of discussion about additions/resignations.

Chris Swanston affirmed that maintaining an SSG with 20 members is a good target, and that a few more or less members are acceptable.

Jen Harden seconded Chris Swanston's motion to consider Greg Lawrence, noting that his collaborations with the Forest Service demonstrate a solid commitment to interagency cooperation.

Rich Birdsey reiterated Dr. Lawrence's collaborative spirit based on past work at Hubbard Brook.

Jen Harden related that Greg Lawrence has been discussing establishment of a soil archive within the Smithsonian Institute, and suggested that this would be an important source of information relevant to the Network's growth in that direction.

Jen Harden asked that a future SSG meeting consider discussing the addition of modeling and data interpretation tools to the NSCN database and website within the next 1-2 yr.

Chris Swanston stated that four potential SSG candidates is sufficient for the present time, and that these individuals will be contacted.

Rich Birdsey requested that the SSG nominees should provide some basic information (CV) about themselves and their interests so that current SSG members may make informed votes when that time comes.

Luke Nave pledged to get CVs and statements of interest from the nominees, distribute said materials to the SSG, and set up online voting for incorporating them into the SSG.

Chris Swanston requested that the call proceed into a status report of 2011 activities, based on the FY2011 annual report.

Luke Nave synthesized 4 major Network accomplishments in 2011: addition of Drs. Kramer and Ogle to the SSG, distribution of publications and presentations, initiation of the NSCN Radiocarbon Collaborative, and release of the first-generation database.

Margaret Torn asked for guidance on publicizing the Radiocarbon Collaborative to colleagues and other scientists who would be interested in this resource.

Chris Swanston requested revisiting this question after addressing several specific items still on the agenda.

Discussion of next steps for 2012

Accommodating international collaborators

Chris Swanston requested adding the clause 'and internationally' to two locations in the Charter that presently refer to scientific efforts in the United States. CS offered several items in justification for broadening the NSCN's scope, including the importance of taking a non-political view of the carbon cycle, the presence of multiple linkages between SSG members and international efforts, and interest on the part of several international groups in using our database.

Jen Harden offered CS' request as a motion to discuss

Sue Trumbore seconded JH's motion

Jen Harden stated that some of her international partners in permafrost-C work are looking for a database but are too concerned with NSCN's written emphasis on the U.S. to commit to using ours. JH articulated a strong collective desire within the permafrost group to avoid duplicating database efforts.

She also stated that she had considered proposing to change the name of the NSCN entirely, but decided that changes to text on the webpage and in the Charter will likely be sufficient.

Mark Johnson stated that establishing international collaborations would in general be good, but questioned whether it would be possible to accommodate international partners' database needs if we move in this direction.

Chris Swanston noted the merit of MJ's concern and stated that while accommodating international collaborators would make more work and require more support, it would also open more opportunities for bringing in resources.

Johannes Lehmann asked whether the current status of database support would allow for allocation of U.S. Federal money to meet international collaborators' needs.

Chris Swanston remarked that this issue was bigger several years ago, but that the largest funder of the database (USDA-AFRI; Nancy Cavallaro) sincerely wants NSCN to become international (or at least North American), and has suggested that opportunities for continued support would increase if the Network does expand in such a direction.

Rich Birdsey stated that the Forest Service Northern Research Station, which is also a principal source of support for the NSCN, is fully supportive of international collaborations. He also mentioned that the office of International Programs would probably be supportive.

Sue Trumbore noted that in the short term, expanding internationally could rapidly increase database and modeling work by scientists who do global-scale work.

Jen Harden remarked that this would be a good immediate benefit.

Margaret Torn suggested that the NSCN focus on being a network more than being a database, and making an effort to link existing networks, resources, and science efforts.

Jen Harden concurred, and asked whether participants are aware of G-SCAN (Global Soil Carbon Network)

Chris Swanston said that he was unable to attend the G-SCAN planning meeting in the spring, and that he has not heard of any significant developments since that time. He suggested that if our database is a guide it could be several years before G-SCAN gets traction.

Jen Harden asked whether adding text to the Charter to reference international work would require the NSCN to account more specifically for the allocation of its support to U.S. vs. international interests?

Chris Swanston reiterated that the NSCN would have access to more resources if it expanded internationally.

Johannes Lehmann said that it makes sense to expand internationally and promote the NSCN as the primary database for soil carbon information, but that such expansions should include close coordination with G-SCAN and other similar efforts.

Chris Swanston agreed with JL, and suggested that the SSG could include leaders of such initiatives. He asked the group whether the pace of discussion is leaving sufficient time for all to air their concerns.

Margaret Torn perceived general support for the idea of expanding internationally, but was concerned that the Charter would have to be revised to prevent over-obligation of NSCN resources to a flood of international collaborators.

Chris Swanston pointed out that the Charter does not obligate us to do anything in particular for international collaborators.

Margaret Torn rescinded her concern.

Chris Swanston called a vote to change the Charter text as described above (Tally: 17 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions; motion carried).

Increasing frequency of SSG communication

Chris Swanston moved to discuss the idea of additional SSG meetings throughout the year.

Mark Johnson seconded CS' motion.

Sue Trumbore agreed that one meeting per year leaves too much to do in too little time.

Chris Swanston asked those present to commit to a 2nd conference call this year, and pledges that in return he and Nave will remain in closer contact with the SSG and make plans for more frequent meetings.

Mark Johnson said that given travel limitations, it may be necessary to rely on conference calls in lieu of face-to-face meetings.

Margaret Torn requested that the business covered during SSG meetings throughout the year should scale with the size of the group (i.e., no major decisions without good SSG representation).

Chris Swanston said that this has been the protocol since the initial Denver SSG meeting.

Marc Kramer asked whether there are guidelines in the Charter for subcommittees?

Chris Swanston affirmed this, asked whether there are any objections or abstentions to the motion to have more SSG meetings each year? None were expressed, so the remaining time was opened to the SSG for general feedback.

Open feedback

Rich Birdsey requested the opportunity for a near-term, small group SSG meeting to discuss support for the NSCN (incl. funding, human resource needs).

Stephen Ogle requested a small-group call to help modelers understand how they can get involved in NSCN.

Eric Vance described a need to link users and soil scientists from other fields (e.g., forest management) with the NSCN.

Chris Swanston pledged that he and Nave will email SSG members and schedule additional time to discuss topics going forward, especially the three raised during open feedback.

Mark Johnson asked for meeting minutes to be circulated.