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# US/IBP Desert Biome Executive Meeting Minutes

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US/IBP DESERT BIOME

EXECUTIVE MEETING

Salt Lake City, Utah, March 20, 1974, 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Fred Wagner, Jim MacMahon, Ben Norton, Fred Turner, John Thames, Bob Chew, Walt Whitford, Dunc Patten, Gene Staffeldt, Chuck Romesburg, Fred Walk, Steve Black, Tom Callahan (observer).

ABSENT:

Clive Jorgensen, Wayne Minshall, Irwin Ting.

PROCEEDINGS:

1. 1975 proposal

Fred Wagner asked Tom Callahan to indicate what was expected in terms of 1975 research. In reply, Tom indicated they expected a fairly concise document of 30 to 35 pages which would not constitute an official proposal for 1975 but rather a progress report based on the goals of the last proposal, the progress which had been made in 1974 and the expectations for 1975. It would also need to have a complete budget for 1975 submitted at the same time. In general terms, NSF would like to see us assess our program and specify a "tightening-up" of 1975 goals and objectives. Such a proposal should be submitted by mid-September this year.

2. NSF site visit, 1975

Following receipt of the proposal outlined in item 1, a site visit by an NSF panel will be made, probably in November.

3. Funding expectations

Tom reported that the Biome can expect the Desert Biome grant to be reduced by 100,000 to 150,000 dollars in 1975 and warned the meeting to expect a further reduction of the same magnitude for 1976. In 1977 Tom expects that between 200,000 and 500,000 dollars will be available for wrapping up the synthesis and modelling efforts.

#### 4. Post-IBP projects

Once again the meeting sought Tom Callahan's views on NSF policy. As the Biome programs wind down, funds will be available from the Ecosystems Analysis Office to support other interdisciplinary, inter-institutional ecosystem studies, but they will be of a smaller magnitude from the current large Biome programs -- something in the vicinity of \$200,000 to \$500,000 per year. NSF is in the market for proposals for such studies right now, and will welcome proposals from sub-groups of the present Biome programs. In other words, a proposal oriented to a particular Biome site would be an appropriate new ecosystem study for consideration by NSF for the post-IBP period.

#### 5. Validation site review

Jim MacMahon reported on the Site Review Committee meeting held on February 23 in Tempe with Bob Chew, Dunc Patten and himself present. The review was based on the performance of validation sites in terms of their objectives and as reported in the validation site annual progress reports. A memorandum report on that committee meeting was circulated to the Executive.

#### 6. Reverting funds

Fred Walk was unable to give an accurate estimate of the amount of funds reverting from the 1973 budget since many institutions had been unable to report final invoices as of this date. Fred's best guess was that the total reverted funds would amount to between \$25,000 and \$30,000. The following requests and commitments have been made so far on the reverted money:

- a. \$7,000 to carry Tucker's project for 6 months into 1974.
- b. \$1,500 to Sleeper to work up the insect data from Rock Valley.
- c. Some equipment for the Tucson Validation Site.
- d. A request for \$4,500 to expand the nematode project to include variations in microbial biomass.
- e. A request from John Skujins for money to sample the southern sites in his nitrogen study.
- f. A request from Walt Whitford for \$1,500 to help meet the over-expenditure on the Jornada Validation Site budget.
- g. A request from Jim MacMahon for several thousand dollars for litter traps on the validation sites.

## 7. Modelling

Ben outlined the latest developments in the modelling program. George Innis had become involved with the animal modelling work since his arrival in September. It was agreed when he joined the Biome that he would not be saddled with any administrative responsibilities but he has, nevertheless, been organizing the development of the animal component in the 1974 modelling program. The general supervision and direction of modelling activity has been assumed largely by Fred Wagner, Jim and Ben. They are concerned in particular with the animal, soil/abiotic and plant models respectively. The 1974 modelling objective is to complete a whole-system model which simulates the response of vegetation on the validation sites to increases or decreases in the median annual precipitation. Flow diagrams for the various submodel components have been drawn up and will be presented at this March Biome conference. The workshops at the conference provide an opportunity for the modellers to obtain some feedback from the biologists in the program as to the biological validity of the flow diagrams. Following the conference, the modelling team will plan a schedule of operations which will lead to the completion of a working model by the end of 1974. In 1975, it is expected that the modelling work will concentrate on special areas such as response of the ecosystem to grazing by domestic herbivores, the dynamics of nitrogen in the system with particular emphasis on concentrations of ammonium and nitrate ions, and carbon input and the allocations of photosynthate in the primary production facet of carbon cycling. Also during 1975, at least one of the post-doctoral modelling positions will be terminated.

## 8. Synthesis publications

In terms of the planning of synthesis volumes, the Desert Biome is behind the other Biomes. The desert nitrogen volume is the only one being put together so far. Walt suggested that synthesis at this stage is premature and thought that publication in peer-reviewed journals and the output of monographs should be emphasized. He suggested that there should be more pressure from the central office to get data polished up and into the open literature.

## 9. Next meeting

Fred Wagner foreshadowed a meeting of the Executive in late summer to finalize proposals for 1975.