

SITE MANAGEMENT

Considerable effort goes into maintaining open channels of communication and maximizing the input of all participants in the Plum Island Ecosystems LTER. Charles Hopkinson provides overall direction, management and coordination. Hopkinson has served in this capacity from the beginning of the LTER and previously with the LMER. Research direction, strategic scheduling of major initiatives and budgetary matters are discussed collegially amongst all PIs and decisions reached by consensus.

The Ecosystems Center at the Marine Biological Laboratory is the “home” of the PIE LTER. Six of the 11 PIs work at the Ecosystems Center. PIs and other staff at MBL meet once or twice a month (except during the summer field season) for presentation of results, information discussion and planning sessions. Summaries of these meetings are distributed by e-mail to all personnel. We hold an intensive 2-day workshop of all researchers each spring to synthesize results across programmatic areas and to plan research and/or educational activities for the coming year. Communication within PIE LTER is very high and pretty much assured as 6 of the 11 PIs have offices within 10 m of each other and Vörösmarty, Wollheim and Buchsbaum regularly visit MBL and vice versa. All the post-docs and research assistants supported on the LTER are housed in the same building. Hopkinson and Peterson are jointly funded with Vörösmarty and Wollheim on a separate project and Hopkinson has and is jointly funded with Morris, Pontius, Wollheim and Vörösmarty on additional separate projects related to the LTER. Having LTER leadership involved in most of the related, separately funded projects further integrates scientists outside MBL, which contributes to LTER cohesiveness.

Research in each programmatic area is directed by one of the principal investigators.

Programmatic Area	Director
1) Watersheds	Vörösmarty/Wollheim
2) Marshes	Morris
3) Planktonic	Hobbie/Peterson
4) Benthic	Giblin
5) Higher Trophic Levels	Deegan
6) Synthesis & Modeling	Vallino

Each programmatic area typically consists of 2 to 5 other principal investigators, plus post-docs, research assistants, and graduate students. These groups get together at regular intervals that vary from year to year as research focus is moved from one programmatic area to another. It is within these groups that most collaboration with non-LTER scientists occurs. We have also established working groups for discussing meteorological/atmospheric deposition issues, Data and Information Management, and Long-Term Experiments.

The PIE LTER makes use of two field stations: Marshview Farms and the Rowley House. Marshview Farms was purchased by MBL about 5 years ago in support of LTER and related MBL research. Deegan is lead PI on a facilities planning grant from NSF, which we have used to determine our (and local community) field station needs, and to hire an architect to provide us with building plans that would enable us to meet expected needs. The estimated cost of Marshview expansion and renovation is about \$7M with an additional \$1M endowment fund to

support long-term operation and maintenance. We are now working with the MBL Development Office to raise funds.

The Rowley House is rented from the Essex County Greenbelt Association, a local land preservation organization. While this facility is small it provides excellent logistical support via its walking proximity to many of our marsh research sites, its proximity to a railroad station to Boston and its waterfront dock space. The Rowley House is typically used by “expedition mode” scientists (1-4 or 5 day visits), while Marshview Farms is used by those staying for extended periods (e.g., the entire summer). To date, facility occupancy is arranged via a web signup protocol: first come - first serve. To date we have not had scheduling issues of any concern, with everyone being accommodated pretty much as desired. There are no field station charges – to LTER or non-LTER scientist users. There are no field station “managers”. PIs (i.e., Deegan and Hopkinson) sometimes have to remind visitors of the “scout” motto to insure facilities remain comfortable and functional. We expect that a new “model” will be required once Marshview Farms is renovated to house 24 people (living and research space) and have small workshop and meeting facilities.