

Principles of Operation and Governance Plum Island Ecosystems Long-Term Ecological Research Program (PIE LTER)

Ratified on 7/17/2023

I. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the rules and procedures used for the operation and governance of the PIE LTER. The goal is to make the governance of the PIE LTER clear and transparent to everyone affiliated with the project and to codify mechanisms for input from members. This document does not cover every aspect of PIE LTER operations. For example, our values and expectations for everyone on the project are given in the PIE principles of community, and there are separate documents pertaining to harassment and field safety.

II. Affiliations

The PIE LTER is a site within the United States Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network funded by the National Science Foundation. The PIE LTER will follow rules and policies of both the LTER network and NSF. If a conflict arises, policies of the LTER Network and NSF shall take precedence over this document. PIE-LTER is administered through the Marine Biological Laboratory. Similarly, MBL policies shall take precedence over PIE LTER policies and procedures whenever they are in conflict.

III. Membership and definitions

The PIE LTER consists of: **1) Project Director** - also known as the lead Principle Investigator listed on the coversheet of the funded NSF proposal. During transition periods there may be Co-Project Directors. **2) Program Leads** – are those scientists leading one of the PIE research focus groups. This includes the other PIs listed on the cover page as well as some additional senior personnel. **3) Other Senior Scientific Personnel** - are scientists directing research directly connected to PIE goals and who have been listed in the proposal but who are not leading one of the research groups **4) Project Administrators** are people carrying out essential roles for other aspects of the program and includes the Information Manager and Education Coordinators as well as some senior member of the technical staff., **5) Other Personnel** include graduate students, postdocs, technicians, and undergraduates students connected to the research being carried out in the PIE LTER. **6) Affiliated Investigators** are people who were not listed in the proposal but who have asked to participate in the PIE LTER in some way. They are often given assistance with PIE resources such as housing or field sites. **7) Partners & Collaborators** are independent groups with whom the PIE LTER collaborates with on scientific, educational or outreach activities.

IV Roles and Responsibilities

Project Director The Project Director is responsible for the overall management of the project, and for providing budget oversight with the host institution. They, or their delegate, represents the PIE LTER to NSF and to the LTER Network Office. The Project Director has the prime responsibility of submitting annual progress reports to NSF and coordinating the 3 year review. The Project Director organizes an annual meeting of all PIE members and significant collaborators. The Project Director also approves all changes to subcontracts. At the end of a grant cycle, the current or in-coming Project Director is responsible for organizing/leading the writing and submission of the renewal proposal to NSF.

Program Leads – Each grant cycle, the scientific activities for the new PIE LTER project are divided into 4-6 program areas that encompass the entire research program. Each of these program areas has a designated lead scientist who assures coordination within the group and serves as a member of an Executive Committee (See below). Program leads coordinate research within their research area, facilitating collaborations and help assure the goals of the proposal in that area are being carried out. They facilitate the annual report by helping collect material from all group members in a timely way. They assist the data manager by making sure data from their research area is submitted in a timely way. They play a major role in planning for the 3 year review and in helping to shape the renewal proposal. They help coordinate collaborations with related projects with complimentary goals or shared research sites. They are expected to contribute to education, outreach and LTER network activities when appropriate.

Other Senior Personnel -Other senior personnel are responsible for their individual research contribution to the project. They are responsible for annual reports on their progress and for submitting data in a timely way. They may contribute to project management by membership on committees or through the annual meeting. All are encouraged to contribute to network and educational activities where appropriate and to participate in LTER network activities in their research area.

Project Administrators – Project administrators have defined roles within the project that facilitate and support the overall goals of the PIE LTER. The *Information Manager* plays a key role in assuring that PIE LTER data meets the standards of FAIR data (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability) and that data is routinely and correctly archived in the appropriate data repository. The *Education Coordinator* is responsible for the PIE K-12 schoolyard program and assists with other educational programs as appropriate. The *Outreach Coordinator* brings PIE science to the community, attends local community meetings on issues relating to PIE science and may participate in some monitoring and community science activities. The *Graduate Student Representative(s)* keeps other graduate students informed of PIE and LTER graduate student opportunities, and serves as a liaison between the graduate students and PIE management. *Senior Technical staff* oversee specific aspects of field and laboratory operation and may be members of standing committees.

Other Personnel - Other personnel are employees and students associated with the PIE LTER. They must abide by all PIE LTER rules and procedures and will credit the PIE-LTER grant number on publications as appropriate.

Affiliated Investigators – Affiliated Investigators are responsible for their own project and people but use PIE facilities, data or receive help from people associated with the LTER. They must abide

by all PIE LTER rules and procedures and will credit the PIE LTER grant number on publications when appropriate.

V. Organizational Structure Overview

Overall direction and management are provided by the Project Director and the Executive Committee (Fig 1). The Lead PI and Executive Committee are assisted in decision making and implementation through standing committees and receive scientific guidance from an Outside Advisory Committee (see below). The Executive Committee is consulted on financial matters, supplement requests, collects information for annual and final reports from other members of their program area, and facilitates transitions in leadership. They help the Project Director plan the annual meeting, the three-year review, and renewal proposal development.

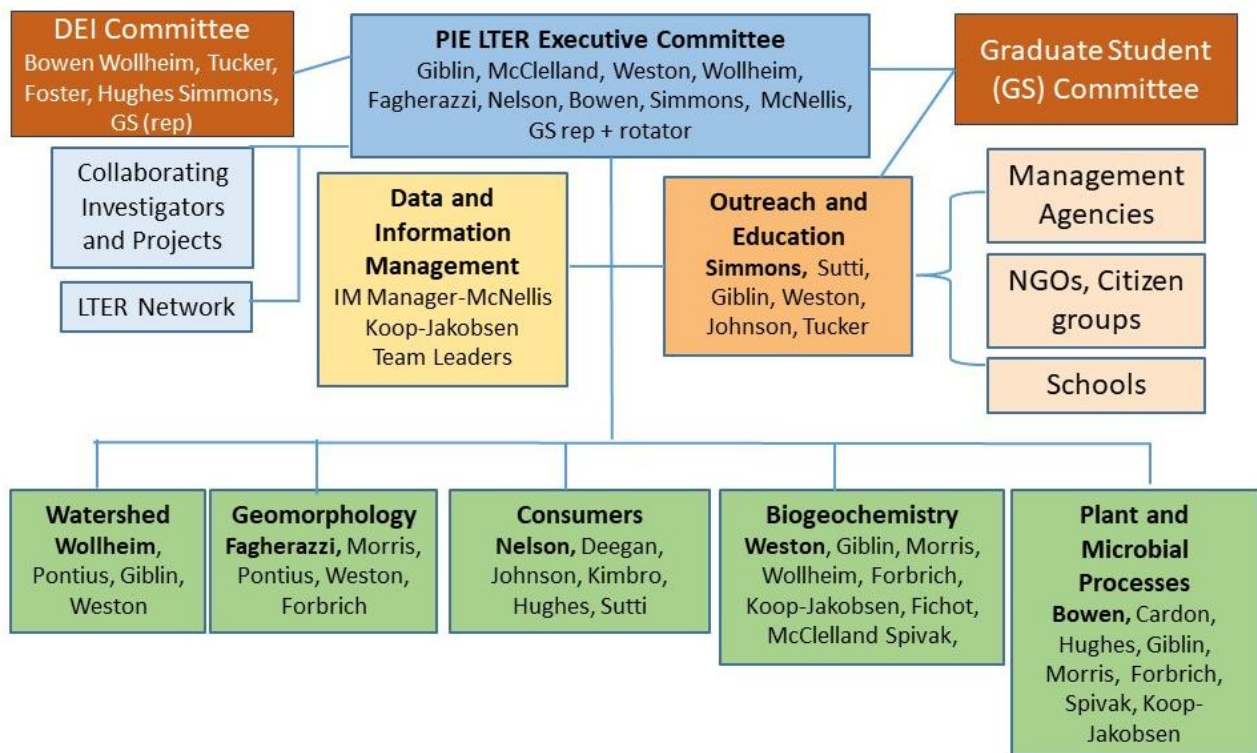


Figure 1 – PIE management structure as of July 2023.

Executive committee membership - The current and incoming Project Directors are members of the Ex. Committee along with the program leads, and representatives from the Standing committees (see below). In addition, each year, one additional member from Senior Personnel will be on the Ex. Comm as a rotator. The rotator will be chosen by the Ex. Comm. taking into consideration the need to have an inclusive committee that represents the project.

Standing Committees - There are currently 4 standing committees which report to the Ex. Comm. every 3-6 months: 1) Data and Information Management (IM), 2) Outreach and Education (O&E) and 3) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and 4) the Graduate Committee. Each committee will have representation on the Ex. Comm., either by having a program lead on the committee, or by having a member of the committee designated as an Ex. Comm. member.

The IM, O&E and DEI committees may recommend one of their members for Ex. Comm. membership but the appointment will be confirmed by the current Ex. Comm. members. In general, the PIE IM will represent the IM committee, the Education director will represent O&E, the chair of the DEI committee will represent DEI. All graduate students are asked to join the graduate student committee and will elect a representative who will represent graduate student interests and serve as a representative on the Ex. Comm. There will be 2 Grad student reps each serving for 2 year overlapping terms. The student in their second year will serve as the representative to the Ex. Comm.

The Executive Committee may create ad hoc committees as are deemed useful. The powers and terms of ad hoc committees shall be limited to those specifically designated by the Executive Comm. Ad Hoc committees will not have representation on the Ex. Comm. but will be asked to make presentations 1-4 times a year.

An External Advisory Committee shall consist of 3-4 scientists from a variety of disciplines relevant to PIE science. Advisory Committee members are confirmed by the Ex. Comm. Their role is to advise on scientific direction but they have no role in governance.

VI. Appointments and Removal

Project Director – The current Project Director will meet with the Ex. Comm. prior to the 3 year review and convey whether or not they are interested in remaining as Project Director for the next renewal. If the Project Director does not wish to continue into the next cycle they will work with the Ex. Comm. to find a successor. The Ex. Comm. will conduct a formal vote to endorse the decision of the Project Director to stay if that is their wish, or on the choice of the next Project Director. It is expected that if the Project Director does not wish to continue, they will have worked with the Ex. Comm. On a succession plan for the next round prior to the 3 year review. While moving institutions is possible it must be planned for well in advance.

In the event the Ex. Comm. Does not vote to endorse the Project Director to continue into the next cycle by a majority vote they may elect to hold a vote of “no confidence”. If the Ex. Comm., by a 2/3 majority, has no confidence in the current or proposed Project Director, a letter to that effect shall be sent to the home institution outlining the concerns of the Ex. Comm. Similarly, if at any point during the grant cycle the Ex. Comm. May call for a vote of “no confidence”. Again this letter would be sent to the home institutions.

In the event the Project Director cannot, or does not, wish to continue during the current grant cycle and no in-coming Project Director has been named, the Executive Committee will work with NSF and the home institution to assure the smooth transition of leadership.

Program Leaders – Program leaders for the next proposal will be determined by the Project Director and the current Ex. Comm. about a year before the proposal is due. Program leaders will be chosen based upon their experience with the LTER, their contribution to the science being proposed in the proposal cycle, and their leadership and mentoring accomplishments. Appointments will take effect with the new proposal and Program Leads are appointed for 6 year, the duration of the next proposal cycle.

Program Leads may be removed from their place on the Ex. Comm. by a 2/3 vote of the entire committee (*i.e.*, all must vote). Removal from the project will be done in consultation with the Project Director and the home institution. If a program lead resigns, or is removed, a new program lead will be chosen by the Ex. Comm. and if appropriate, the former Lead's home institution.

Other Senior Personnel are appointed by the Ex. Comm. for the duration of the proposal.

Senior Personnel can be removed from PIE specific duties by a 2/3 vote of the Ex. Comm., in consultation with the Project Director and the home institution.

Program Administrators - The Project Director is responsible for the hiring of an **Information Manager**. Normally, the Information Manager is a full time employee of the lead institution, although this is not required. The **Education Coordinator** is employed by the lead institution or one of its subcontractors. The hiring institution may choose the Education Coordinator but it is subject to approval by the Project Director and Ex. Comm. The **Outreach Coordinator** is a scientist who may be associated with any of the institutions but who is normally employed by the same institution as the Education Coordinator. The choice of outreach coordinator is also subject to approval by the Project Director and the Ex. Comm. The **Graduate Student Representatives** are elected by a majority vote of the graduate students and may be from any of the institutions associated with PIE. **Senior Technical staff** are employed by PIE scientists and chosen by their immediate supervisors.

The Executive Committee can recommend the removal of any Program Administrator from the Ex. Comm. by a 2/3 vote. Removal from the project will be done in consultation with the Project Director and when necessary, the home institution of the specific administrator.

Other Personnel - Other **Personnel** are brought into the project through their supervisors. They report to their supervisors and can be removed by their supervisors. In the event of issues arise with their conduct on the project they can be denied PIE resources by a 2/3 vote of the Ex Comm.

Affiliated Investigators – Investigators and students can request affiliated status from the Project Director. Affiliated Investigators can be removed by a 2/3 vote of the Ex. Comm.

Additional considerations – any member of the project who is accused of misconduct can be temporarily removed from participation in the project until the issue is resolved. Individuals will be removed in the event of a negative determination for serious cases of either harassment or scientific misconduct.

VII. Meetings of the Membership

Annual Membership meetings. The Membership of the PIE LTER shall meet at least once each year, at a date determined by the Executive Committee, but typically in spring. Notice of annual meetings shall be given by the Executive Committee at least 4 weeks in advance of the meeting, and meeting agendas shall be distributed at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.

Executive Committee meetings. Executive Committee meetings shall be held every

4-6 weeks. Meetings must have a quorum of 2/3 of the members for any votes. Votes of no-confidence in the lead PI, or votes for removal of any member, must have all members voting, but arrangements for remote votes can be made. Any member of the PIE LTER can bring issues to the Ex. Comm.

Committee Meeting - Standing Committees should meet no less than 2 times a year, either in person or via the internet.

VIII. Communication

A current copy of the Principles of Organization and Governance, along with the names of the committee members will be placed on the project web site.

IX. Amendments

This document shall be subject to amendment or repeal, and new amendments may be made by a vote of 2/3 of the Executive Committee at any regular or special meeting, or by electronic ballot. A notice that has specified or summarized the proposed amendment, repeal, or new addition must be circulated to the Executive Committee at least two weeks before the meeting or ballot takes place. It is expected that at the beginning of each new cycle the document will be thoroughly reviewed and revised to reflect the goals and structure of the new proposal.