

STEAC MEETING MINUTES
17 June 2020 meeting
(Approved 15 July 2020)

The STEAC met on June 17, 2020 with a quorum of 8 members (Davis, Dietze, Dukes, Giblin, Groffman, Malone, Matthes, Novick) and 5 NEON-Battelle staff (Kuhlman, Mabee, Gora, Ruiz, Thibault). The meeting was virtual and the following topics were discussed: I. NEON COVID-19 status updates; II. NEON priorities; III. NEON engagement activities; and IV. STEAC self-assessment.

I. NEON COVID-19 status updates (Discussion lead: Kristen Ruiz): In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, domain offices have limited operations (see neonscience.org ‘Observatory Status’). Field crews are required to wear masks and to practice social distancing. The field crew is only permitted to remove their masks when they can maintain a distance of 5 meters outdoors. Field crews avoid travel through public areas and sampling is on hold at sites where there is a high risk of interacting with the public. All employees are monitoring their own health. AOP operations are continuing in Domains 9 and 10. AOP Crews are required to wear masks. Due to commercial air travel restrictions, pilots are driving by car. KS (D6) is next on the schedule, followed by WY (D12). Due to high COVID-19 cases in the state, Domain offices in TX (D11), AZ (D14), UT (D13) are closed. Air travel remains restricted and therefore there is no travel to Barrow. NEON-Battelle staff are currently working on how to modify operations in closed offices.

NEON-Battelle is working on a COVID-19 testing strategy. Initially they are focusing on small groups. Testing will be done by visiting a nurse or local clinic.

STEAC Suggestions: Ensure that employees are comfortable working under the current conditions. Universities are beginning to use apps to record the health conditions of all employees (self-reported). NEON-Battelle should consider a similar application.

II. NEON priorities (Discussion lead: Kate Thibault):

High Research Priority	Update
Fuel cell repairs	Moving forward
OSKR data transmission upgrades	STEAC supports an increase in the priority as a result of travel restrictions.
2D Anemometer	Moving forward
Vegetation structure protocol	Moving forward
OSKR supplemental power to upgrade	The STEAC recognizes that the current ranking does not reflect the importance of the upgrade. It was not clear that essential data was not being collected. The STEAC recommends an increase in priority.

Chlorophyll analysis	Moving forward
Container Camp	Will be held virtually.
LiDAR	Looking for a replacement now
NCEAS contract	The STEAC recognizes that the Investment for a working group is high. Consider an initial in person meeting at NCEAS and additional virtual meetings (VMs). Ensure VMs include a great moderator.
DNA barcoding and pathogens	Optimizing sample analysis
AIS Efficiency	Moving forward

III. NEON engagement activities (Discussion lead: Paula Mabee): The STEAC drafted an open letter to NSF. NSF suggests that the issue of limited opportunities for early career researchers should be separate from the need for optimized NEON data products.

Consider focusing on cross training and machine learning to support NEON and the development of optimized data products. Focus less on supporting early career individuals as this is being addressed. Computer Science has created funding lines to support early career researchers ([Solicitation](#)). The STEAC should complete the letter by the end of June.

FYI: The NEON re-competition has been delayed until the fall of 2021.

IV. STEAC self assessment (Discussion lead: Kim Novick):

Mike Dietze will speak with NEON-Battelle to determine how to move forward.