

## **STEAC MEETING REPORT**

### **(12/18/2024)**

The members of the STEAC met on December 18, 2024, with a quorum of ten members attending (Meghan Avolio, Henry Bart Jr, Jennifer Edmonds, Rich Fiorella, John Kochendorfer, Sydne Record, Samapriya Roy, Daniel Rubenstein, Shawn Serbin, and Adrienne Sponberg). Nine NEON-Battelle staff attended (Darcy Gora, Tristan Goulden, Christine Laney, Claire Lunch, Paula Mabee, Tanya Maslak, Chris McKay, Cove Sturtevant, and Kate Thibault).

The meeting was virtual, and the following topics were discussed: I. Approval of the minutes, II. Continuation of the Data Product Revision Planning discussion from the November meeting, and III. a proposed Data Licensing Change.

- I. **Approval of previous minutes for 11/20/2024:** Minutes from prior meeting were approved by STEAC by voice vote.
- II. **Continuation of Data Product Revision Planning discussion.** NEON presented their strategies regarding communication of data product revisions to users. NEON currently issues data notifications that are posted on the NEON website and emailed to users who have opted-in to these notifications. In addition, each data product contains an issue log that is included in the readme file distributed with data portal and neonUtilities R package downloads.

NEON also raised the issue of communicating around if data from a previous revision of a data product should still be used by the community and concluded that the communication strategy should depend on the nature of the revision. For example, the rodent pathogen data product revision changed only what pathogens were being investigated, but both data before and after the change are to be considered valid with respect to the relevant pathogens. In contrast, data revisions with an algorithm upgrade or change to a sensor where data before the revision is expected to be of lower quality or no longer can be considered part of the same time series users will be cautioned that the older revision should no longer be used. Moreover, future data releases will not contain the outdated revision.

- III. **Data Licensing Proposal.** NEON currently releases its data through a CC0 license that allows unrestricted use and requests but does not necessarily require citation of their data in derived data products or commercial uses. As NEON sees increased use of their data, as well as derived data or model products being shared through platforms such as EDI, Hugging Face, or various academic databases, concerns about NEON data attribution and reporting were raised. Concerns surrounded both reporting impacts and use of NEON data to NSF as well as impacts unattributed data use by external users may have on the Observatory. NEON staff reported on alternate license options for future data releases, and ultimately requested the STEAC consider a change in licensing to CC-BY, which requires attribution.

The STEAC supported this licensing change request. If adopted, changes will extend to future data releases only as a more restrictive license cannot be applied to releases already carrying a CC0 license. STEAC also raised a few potential concerns that should be addressed in considering future licensing changes, including any potential privacy, security, or export control issues that may arise, language surrounding the use of NEON data in training or applying AI/ML models, as well as potential impacts that commercial use may have on the Observatory.