

STEAC MEETING REPORT

(01/21/2026)

The members of the STEAC met on January 21, 2026, with nine members attending (Kelly Aho, Ben Baiser, Jennifer Edmonds, John Kochendorfer, Sydne Record, Sam Roy, Dan Rubenstein, Adrienne Sponberg, and Xi Yang). Seven NEON-Battelle and ASU staff attended (Darcy Gora, Christine Laney, Paula Mabee, Chris McKay, Hojun Song, Chandra Earl, and Kate Thibault).

The meeting was virtual, and the following topics were discussed: I. Call to order, II. Finalization of spring in-person meeting, III. Preview of the newly integrated NEON and Biorepository portals, IV. Feedback from the STEAC on new NEON websites.

- I. Call to order, Approval of previous minutes**
 - A. Minutes approved for November and December
 - B. Document describing upcoming changes also approved.
- II. Updates from NEON**
 - A. Full funding for NEON operations from NSF through April has been provided, with all indications for FY26 funding from NSF positive.
 - B. Scope changes under finalization with NSF, and they will be released to the public within a few days. Now is the time to make suggestions regarding the change in 2026 services provided by NEON.
- III. Preview of the newly integrated NEON and Biorepository portals**
 - A. Biorepository portal revamp needed to increase the number of sample requests and address user feedback indicating challenges using the site. This is based on over 5 y of user feedback and 2 y of Biorepository conceptualization, development, and feedback. Overview of the proposed solutions to these issues provided:
 1. Data and Biorepository samples separated in the main navigation page. This helps highlight the Biorepository availability.
 2. Increased focus on the user experience, mirroring the fact the Biorepository is the same project as NEON science. Reduced the number of pages and redundancies between NEON science and the Biorepository.
 3. Aligned user bases with one login for the main NEON science data page and the Biorepository.
 4. Removed confusing jargon and reorganized the Biorepository page to improve accessibility.
 - B. Description of data portal integration provided
 1. Rearranged tabs and organization of the portal
 2. Reduced the amount of text
 - C. Metrics describing success of the redesign
 1. Increase the number of new projects and sample use inquiries by 4-5 per year
 - D. Feedback form introduced - to be provided to the STEAC

- E. Timeline for changes reviewed. The new website will launch Feb 10, with further opportunities for post-release feedback.
- F. Comment from STEAC to provide SOP readily available with data, and response from NEON staff that this can be done after Battelle approves SOPs.
- G. **Tasks** - please review the development site and fill in the feedback form, ideally by Feb 2 but as late as Feb 20.
 - 1. Link to development site: <https://www.develop-sr3snxi-di4alr4iwbwyg.us-2.platformsh.site/>
 - 2. Link to webform: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdJlcJCdFtnKRQrd7tkmnsue4g1wCVPXS4RLw8DKUIqihH_LQ/viewform
- H. NEON sample use question/feedback
 - 1. Sample use policy simplified and reduced to one page.
 - 2. Biorepository success measured by sample use. Some samples are abundantly available. Samples can be used consumptively, but some samples are much less abundant, and can be consumed by just one user, for example. In other cases, multiple people request the same samples, and NEON has to decide which user to support. The general rule is to seek external input if the consumptive use exceeds 1/3, but in some cases NEON staff need to decide case-by-case how to best support science long term.

IV. **Feedback from the STEAC on new NEON websites**

- A. Question from Ben Baiser about how universally/widely the consumptive use is. Hojun explained that it isn't clear who or how such decisions can be made. Jennifer Edmonds responded that we do indeed need to look at this more carefully. These decisions need to be codified. Kate explained that the Biorepository TWIG is called on for assistance in such case-by-case consumptive requests.
- B. Daniel Rubenstein proposed a different model where NEON provides analysis and keeps the sample.

V. **Finalization of spring in-person meeting**

- A. Final discussion and confirmation of the STEAC in-person meeting March 19 - midday March 20 in Boulder.