

STEAC MEETING REPORT

(05/21/2025)

The members of the STEAC met on May 21, 2025, with a quorum of eight members attending (Meghan Avolio, Henry Bart Jr, Jennifer Edmonds, John Kochendorfer, Sydne Record, Samapriya Roy, Daniel Rubenstein, and Adrienne Sponberg). Three NEON-Battelle staff attended (Darcy Gora, Paula Mabee, and Tanya Maslak).

The meeting was virtual, and the following topics were discussed: I. Call to order, II. Discussion of NEON's response to our spring in-person meeting report, III. Recruitment of new STEAC members.

- I. **Approval of previous minutes for 03/19/2025:** Minutes from prior meeting were approved by STEAC by voice vote, but more time is needed for in-person spring meeting note and report review.
- II. **Discussion of NEON's response to our spring in-person meeting.**
NEON went through each of the STEAC's recommendations and made thoughtful responses to them. This exchange sets a stage for next steps in the observatory and provides fodder for future STEAC meetings. The STEAC requested an update on the Catalyst Team's work. Tanya Maslak of NEON said that the Catalyst Team completed interviews and is now evaluating them to identify key terminology for clarification given the STEAC's request to have terms used by the assessment team better defined. Additionally, Catalyst has been working to identify protocols and sources for supplementary data gathering (e.g, talking with NEON partners, data users - both active and those who have struggled with using the data). The STEAC overall appreciated the thorough and positive responses to the STEAC recommendations.
- III. **Recruitment of new STEAC members.**
Five STEAC members are cycling off 9/30/2025 (Shawn Serbin, Meghan Avolio, Hank Bart, Rich Fiorella, Shannon LaDeau). Three members will add an additional year to their three-year term (Sydne Record, Daniel Rubenstein, Adrienne Sponberg) with new terms to end 9/30/26. Three members who joined more recently have terms ending 9/30/27 (Jennifer Edmonds, John Kochendorfer, and Sam Roy).

The STEAC needs to recruit 5 new members to begin on 10/1/25 composed of people who would ensure that the STEAC membership has full coverage of relevant topical areas. NEON staff recommended the following topical areas: aquatic sciences (e.g., NOAA Water Center), ecological applications of AI, ecological data applications in the private sector, biodiversity/collections, omics, remote sensing, curriculum/training, and agriculture bioeconomy. There was also a discussion of how these topical areas fit into NSF given the foundation's recent organization around new directorates: AI, biotechnology, translational science, quantum, and nuclear.

STEAC members were encouraged by NEON to help with recruitment. NEON noted that even if someone does not seem like a good fit, but they would be a good member of the STEAC, then encourage them to apply or nominate them. There are no restrictions on private vs. academic vs. federal, etc. Conflicts of interest will be considered. There was some discussion of whether members of philanthropic foundations could serve on the STEAC or not. There may be good people from NSF advisory committees that have

been recently disbanded. The STEAC also wondered how STEAC expertise transfers to NEON expertise.