

Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network – NCRIS Committee decision

At its meeting held on 27 October 2008, the NCRIS Committee considered the Investment Plan for the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) research capability as prepared by the Facilitator, Dr Trevor Powell, in consultation with the TERN community.

The Committee agreed that the Investment Plan presented a sound case for initiating the development of TERN, and would promote collaboration and strategic planning. Whilst noting the complexities associated with developing a strategic way forward in relation to meeting the needs of terrestrial ecosystem research and natural resource management in Australia, the Committee was of the view that the proposed infrastructure investments would enable improved research outcomes in support of these national needs. It congratulated the efforts of Dr Powell and those who contributed to the development of the Investment Plan.

The Committee agreed to:

- Endorse the draft Investment Plan, and specifically the investment of NCRIS funds to establish the following facilities:
 - A TERN Office and the Australian Centre for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (to be operated by a Host-Synthesis consortium comprising the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water, and CSIRO).
Total NCRIS funds - \$4.0 million

The TERN Office will manage the TERN program under the terms of a funding agreement with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR). The ACEAS will be a virtual and physical environment for inter-disciplinary integration, synthesis planning and modelling.

- An Eco-Informatics capability (to be operated by the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage).
Total NCRIS funds - \$4.5 million

This activity will build upon a range of investments made by governments at all levels and aims to provide, through a distributed model, a single framework for data and information management and discovery for Australian ecosystems data.

- A Distributed Archive and Access Capability (multiple operators, coordinated by CSIRO).
Total NCRIS funds - \$6 million

This investment will provide a nationally consistent approach to delivery and calibration of key past, current and future satellite datasets, and the production of ecosystem science data products designed for Australian conditions.

- A National Scientific Reference Site Network – Australian Rangeland Ecosystems (coordinated by the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, with a collaboration consortium).
Total NCRIS funds - \$3 million

This investment, which builds upon a pre-existing inter-jurisdictional collaborative structure, will establish reference sites across the Australian interior for assessment of rangeland ecosystem changes. The focus of this investment is to trial coordinated, systematic and nationally consistent data collection methodologies for subsequent establishment and operation of reference sites for all Australian ecosystems.

- An Australian Flux Network (multiple operators, coordinated by CSIRO).
Total NCRIS funds - \$2.5 million

This proposal builds upon the current Ozflux network and aims to commence the establishment of a national network of flux sites that can provide nationally consistent observations.

- Recommend the development of a Funding Agreement based on the Investment Plan, noting the following:
 - That to ensure effective implementation of the Investment Plan, continued engagement with Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies and with key research institutions takes place.
 - In relation to data management activities, continued collaboration and linkages with relevant NCRIS capabilities (Platforms for Collaboration, Atlas of Living Australia, and Integrated Marine Observing System) be undertaken.
 - That the proposed Board have primary responsibility for the overall strategic direction, management and performance of TERN, and that appointment of its Independent Chair and members is made with the agreement of DIISR.
 - Confirmation is provided of cash and in-kind co-investments from participating Commonwealth and State agencies and research institutions.