

## **COLLABORATIONS AMONG ECOLOGISTS FROM LTER NETWORK SITES IN THE EAST ASIA-PACIFIC REGION-TOWARDS CROSS BOUNDARY LINKAGES**

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Managing our natural resources for sustainability requires knowledge based on information generated from a complex physical-chemical-biological-social-economical-politically-controlled atmosphere. Current approaches in ecological research have been considered inadequate or biased mainly due to not fully recognizing the biological complexity, dynamics, variability in space and time, interactions among assembly of species and abiotic components of landscape systems. Most studies are not able to incorporate the dimensions of human activities. The concepts and development of the long term ecological research (LTER) network are believed to be ways to redirect approaches of "traditional" ecological studies by using longer time frames, broader spatial scales, multi-disciplinary methods and integration among sites.

Broadening spatial scale encompasses not only increasing experimental plot size at a given site but also by conducting cross-sites comparable studies among diverse environments. By taking advantage of some existing ecological research sites in the East Asia-Pacific region, we believe that less effort will be required to study some ecological phenomena and processes at the regional scale to important larger spatial scale studies.

Collaborations among scientists from regional LTER sites will become one of the vital vehicles to fulfil this concept of broadening spatial scales of ecological research. International borders are frequently not ecological boundaries and key ecosystems often political borders. Collaborations by ecologists who have dealt with wide ecological settings across political borders must be conducted in order to have insight to ecological processes at regional levels.

The success of an international project lies in many interacting efforts of the collaborators. Among these are identifying mutually interested research topics, formulating major testable hypotheses, standardizing methodology, controlling data quality/assurance, building mechanisms of sharing data, securing stable funding and defining personal rewards. A team project would yield much greater dividends compared to individual projects. In this presentation proposed team projects will be illustrated. The complexity of conducting integrated collaborative research projects among LTER network sites in the region will be discussed. Suggestions will be made regarding solving some potential difficulties that may be faced.