



United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural  
Research  
Service

Technical  
Bulletin  
Number 1931

September 2013

# Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems: A Basis for Understanding Responses to Global Change



## **Contents**

Contributors .....	VIII
Technical Consultants .....	X

### ***Introduction to Cross-Site Comparisons and History and Organization of the EcoTrends Project***

Chapter 1: Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems: An Introduction to Cross-Site Comparisons and Relevance to Global Change Studies .....	1
Chapter 2: History and Organization of the EcoTrends Project .....	21

### ***Cross-Site Comparisons of Ecological Responses to Global Change Drivers***

Chapter 3: Cross-Site Comparisons of Ecological Responses to Climate and Climate-Related Drivers .....	28
Chapter 4: Cross-Site Comparisons of State-Change Dynamics .....	36
Chapter 5: Patterns of Net Primary Production Across Sites .....	42
Chapter 6: Cross-Site Comparisons of Precipitation and Surface Water Chemistry .....	46
Chapter 7: Cross-Site Comparisons of Ecological Responses to Long-Term Nitrogen Fertilization .....	51
Chapter 8: Long-Term Trends in Human Population Growth and Economy Across Sites .....	54
Chapter 9: Disturbance Regimes and Ecological Responses Across Sites .....	58
Chapter 10: Cross-Site Studies “By Design”: Experiments and Observations That Provide New Insights .....	72

### ***Long-Term Trends in Global Change Drivers and Responses at Site and Continental Scales***

Chapter 11: Long-Term Trends in Climate and Climate-Related Drivers .....	81
Chapter 12: Long-Term Trends in Precipitation and Surface Water Chemistry .....	115
Chapter 13: Long-Term Trends in Human Demography and Economy Across Sites .....	162
Chapter 14: Long-Term Trends in Production, Abundance, and Richness of Plants and Animals .....	191
Chapter 15: Management and Policy Implications of Cross- and Within-Site Long-Term Studies .....	206
Chapter 16: Recommendations for Data Accessibility .....	216
Chapter 17: Long-Term Research Across Sites, Ecosystems, and Disciplines: Synthesis and Research Needs .....	226

### ***Appendices***

Appendix 1: Site Descriptions .....	234
Appendix 2: Average (Standard Error) Maximum, Mean, and Minimum Air Temperature and Annual Precipitation at Each Site .....	312

Appendix 3: Average (Standard Error) Ice Duration, Sea Level, Streamflow, Water Clarity, and Water Temperature for Sites With Data .....	314
Appendix 4: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Nine Climatic Variables for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	316
Appendix 5: Annual Average (Standard Error) Nitrogen (as Nitrate) From Various Sources at Sites With Data .....	319
Appendix 6: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Nitrogen (as Nitrate) From Various Sources for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	321
Appendix 7: Annual Average (Standard Error) Nitrogen (as Ammonium) From Various Sources at Sites With Data .....	323
Appendix 8: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Nitrogen (as Ammonium) From Various Sources for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	325
Appendix 9: Annual Average (Standard Error) Sulfur (as Sulfate) From Various Sources at Sites With Data .....	326
Appendix 10: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Sulfur (Sulfate) From Various Sources for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	328
Appendix 11: Annual Average (Standard Error) Chloride From Various Sources at Sites With Data ..	330
Appendix 12: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Chloride From Various Sources for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	332
Appendix 13: Annual Average (Standard Error) Calcium From Various Sources at Sites With Data ...	334
Appendix 14: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Calcium From Various Sources for Which Linear Regression Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) .....	336
Appendix 15: Human Population and Economy Variables in 2000 for the Focal County of Each Site, as Grouped by Ecosystem Type .....	338
Appendix 16: Annual Average (Standard Error) Aboveground Net Primary Production (ANPP) at Sites With Data .....	341
Appendix 17: Other Measures of Average (Standard Error) Terrestrial Production at Sites With Data..	343
Appendix 18: Average (Standard Error) Aquatic Production at Sites With Data .....	344
Appendix 19: Average (Standard Error) Biomass of Primary Producers (Plants, Algae) for Sites With Data .....	345
Appendix 20: Average (Standard Error) Plant Species Richness for Sites With Data .....	347
Appendix 21: Average (Standard Error) Animal Abundance for Sites With Data .....	349
Appendix 22: Average (Standard Error) Animal Species Richness for Sites With Data .....	352
Appendix 23: Regression Coefficients and R <sup>2</sup> Values for Plant and Animal Variables for Which Linear Regression of Each Variable Against Time Is Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the Trend Appears Linear .....	353
Appendix 24: Lead Principal Investigator(s) (PI), Information Managers (IM), and Administrative Program of the LTER Programs .....	355
Appendix 25: Researchers Involved in the EcoTrends Project at Non-LTER Sites .....	359

Appendix 26: List of Stations and Length of Record for Each Climate Variable by Site .....	362
Appendix 27: List of Stations and Length of Record for Each Precipitation or Surface Water Chemistry Variable by Site .....	367
Appendix 28: List of Stations and Length of Record for Each Plant and Animal Variable by Site, as Grouped by Ecosystem Type .....	371
Index .....	i

**Appendix 28.** Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
<b>Alpine and arctic</b>				
ARC	Aboveground net primary production	Control ANPP plots	1982	2000
	Chlorophyll a	Nitrogen-fertilized ANPP plots	1983	2000
		Fertilized reach of Kuparuk River	1983	2004
		Reference reach of Kuparuk River	1983	2004
		Toolik Lake	1985	2004
	Plant biomass	Tussock Tundra 1981 Plots, control	1982	2000
	<i>Betula nana</i> (dwarf birch)		1982	2000
	<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i> (tussock cottongrass)		1982	2000
	<i>Ledum palustre</i> (marsh Labrador tea)		1982	2000
	<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i> (lingonberry)		1982	2000
	<i>B. nana</i>	Tussock Tundra 1981 Plots, fertilized	1983	2000
	<i>E. vaginatum</i>		1983	2000
	<i>L. palustre</i>		1983	2000
	<i>V. vitis-idaea</i>		1983	2000
MCM	Primary production, measured as carbon	East Lake Bonney	1989	2007
NWT	Aboveground net primary production	West Lake Bonney	1992	2007
		Dry meadow plots at Saddle Location	1982	1997
		Moist meadow plots at Saddle Location	1982	1997
		Wet meadow plots at Saddle Location	1982	1997
<b>Aridlands</b>				
JRN	Aboveground net primary production	Creosote Study Sites	1990	2008
	Plant species richness		1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Grassland Study Sites	1990	2008
	Plant species richness		1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Mesquite Study Sites	1990	2008
	Plant species richness		1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Playa Study Sites	1990	2008
	Plant species richness		1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Tarbush Study Sites	1990	2008
	Plant species richness		1989	2008

**Appendix 28.** Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End	
SEV	Animal abundance, Leporidae	Rabbit survey route in creosote vegetation zone	1996	2008	
	Animal abundance, Rodentia	Rabbit survey route in grassland vegetation zone	1996	2008	
	Aboveground net primary production	Rodent trapping web in creosote vegetation zone	1995	2007	
	Plant species richness	Rodent trapping web in grassland vegetation zone	1995	2007	
	Aboveground net primary production	Blue Grama Study Site	2002	2008	
	Plant species richness	Five-Points Grass Study Site	2002	2008	
	Aboveground net primary production	Five-Points Larrea Study Site	1999	2008	
	Animal abundance, Rodentia	1989	2008		
	Plant species richness	1999	2008		
	Aboveground net primary production	1999	2008		
SRE	Animal abundance, Rodentia	1989	2008		
	Plant species richness	Burned treatment: pasture 21	1972	2006	
	Plant species richness	Control treatment: pastures 8 and 22	1972	2006	
	Plant species richness	Pastures that were grazed and burned: pastures 2N and 6A	1972	2006	
	Plant species richness	Pastures where the existing mesquite were killed and were grazed: pastures 3, 5N, 5S, 6B and 12B	1972	2006	
WGE	Plant species richness	Pastures where the mesquite were killed and were burned: pasture 2S	1972	2006	
	Plant species richness	Grass and scattered shrub vegetation zone	1967	2005	
	Plant species richness	Grass vegetation zone	1967	2007	
	Plant species richness	Shrubs and sparse grass vegetation zone	1967	2007	
	Plant species richness	Shrubs with grass vegetation zone	1967	2005	
Coastal	CCE	Chlorophyll a	Ohman Region: subset of CalCOFI stations inshore and nearshore in the Southern California Bight region; CalCOFI lines 80-93, stations from shore offshore to station 70	1984	2005
	FCE	Primary production (carbon)		1984	2005
		Animal species richness, Osteichthyes		1996	2005
		Biomass, periphyton		1996	2005
		Shark Slough		2001	2007
		Taylor Slough			
		Shark River Slough sites 1, 2, and 3, Epiphyton substrate			

**Appendix 28. Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued**

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
GCE	Net primary production (carbon)	Shark River Slough sites 1, 2, and 3, Mat substrate	2001	2007
	Biomass, periphyton		2002	2007
	Net primary production (carbon)		2002	2007
	Biomass, periphyton		2002	2007
	Net primary production (carbon)		2002	2007
MCR	Animal abundance, Orthoptera	Study Site 1, Eulonia, GA	2000	2008
	Plant biomass	Study Site 3, North Sapelo, Sapelo Island, GA	2000	2008
		Study Site 6, Dean Creek, Sapelo Island, GA	2000	2008
		High Marsh site	2000	2007
		Zone 1, Creek Bank	2000	2007
PAL	Animal abundance, fish	MRB Lagoon research site	2000	2008
	Animal species richness, fish	North Shore region (7 research sites)	2000	2008
	Chlorophyll a	SeaWiFS data for Moorea Coral Reef Vicinity, area for chlorophyll and SST data	1998	2008
	Animal abundance, <i>Pygoscelis adeliae</i>	Palmer Station	1975	2008
	Animal abundance, <i>P. antarcticus</i>		1976	2008
PIE	Animal abundance, <i>P. papua</i>		1994	2008
	Primary production (carbon)		1991	2006
	Chlorophyll a	Palmer Station B	1991	2006
	Aboveground net primary production	<i>Spartina alterniflora</i> -dominated salt marsh at Goat Island, North Inlet, Georgetown, SC	1985	2005
	Plant biomass		1984	2005
SBC	Aboveground net primary production	<i>S. alterniflora</i> -dominated salt marsh at Law's Point, Rowley River, Plum Island Ecosystem, MA	1999	2005
	Plant biomass	<i>S. patens</i> -dominated salt marsh at Law's Point, Rowley River, Plum Island Ecosystem, MA	2001	2005
	Aboveground net primary production		2001	2005
	Plant biomass	Arroyo Burro Reef, Santa Barbara Channel	2002	2008
	Biomass, <i>Macrocytis pyrifera</i> (Kelp)	Arroyo Quemado Reef, Santa Barbara Channel	2002	2008
		Mohawk Reef, Santa Barbara Channel	2002	2008

**Appendix 28.** Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
VCR	Animal abundance, Muridae	Hog Island Rodent Trapping Transect 1 Hog Island Rodent Trapping Transect 4 Hog Island Rodent Trapping Transect 5 Randomly selected, destructively sampled, non-treated plots at Frank Day Well Location R2, Hog Island at Frank Day Well Location R3, Hog Island at Frank Day Well Location R4, Hog Island	1989 1989 1989 1993 1993 1993	2004 2004 2004 2006 2006 2006
	Plant biomass			
BEN	Diameter at breast height of trees	Mixed hardwood plots Yellow Poplar plots Unknown	1975 1961 1980	2000 2001 2004
CRO	Production of seeds, pine	Clearcut logging stands	1948	1996
	Production volume, pine	Diameter limit logging stands	1948	1996
		Heavy seedtree logging stands	1948	1996
		Selection logging stands	1948	1996
		North plantation	1960	2000
HAR	Diameter at breast height, <i>Pinus palustris</i> (longleaf pine)	Height, <i>P. palustris</i> Diameter at breast height, <i>P. palustris</i>	1960	2000
		South plantation	1960	2000
HBR	Height, <i>P. palustris</i>	Unknown	1960	2000
	Aboveground net primary production	10-hectare bird count plot	1987	1996
	Animal abundance, Aves		1969	2004
	Animal species richness, Aves	on <i>Acer saccharum</i> on <i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	1969	2004
	Animal abundance, Lepidoptera	Vegetation zone 1 at watershed 6	1986	1997
	Diameter at breast height of trees		1965	2002
	Plant biomass	Vegetation zones 2 and 3 at watershed 6	1965	2002
	Diameter at breast height of trees	Plant biomass	1965	2002
	Plant biomass	Diameter at breast height of trees	1965	2002
	Plant biomass	Plant biomass	1965	2002

## Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems:

**Appendix 28. Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued**

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
HFR	Diameter at breast height of trees	Vegetation zone 5 at watershed 6	1965	2002
	Plant biomass		1965	2002
	Aboveground net primary production of trees	Little Prospect Hill	2002	2006
	Diameter at breast height of trees	Lyford Blocks within the Prospect Hill Tract	1969	2001
	Animal abundance, Aves	El Verde	1989	2008
LUQ	Animal abundance, Caridea	El Verde Study Area, Pool 0, Quebrada Prieta	1988	2008
	Animal abundance, Eleutherodactylus coqui	Pool 15 in Quebrada Prieta (upstream pool)	1988	2008
	Animal abundance, El Verde New Plot	Pool 8 in Quebrada Prieta	1988	2008
	Animal abundance, Gastropoda	El Verde Old Plot	1987	1997
	Animal abundance, Orconectes	Luquillo Forest Dynamics Plot at El Verde	1987	1997
NTL	Animal abundance, Big Muskelunge Lake	Big Muskelunge Lake	1991	2007
	Animal abundance, Lake Mendota	Lake Mendota	1981	2008
	Animal abundance, Sparkling Lake	Sparkling Lake	1981	2008
	Animal abundance, fish		1981	2008
	Animal species richness, fish	Trout Lake	1981	2008
	Animal abundance, Orconectes		1981	2008
	Animal abundance, fish		1981	2008
	Animal species richness, fish		1981	2008
	Plant biomass	Trout Lake	1981	2008
	Plant species richness	Crystal Lake	1983	2008
	Animal abundance, fish		1981	2008
	Animal species richness, fish		1981	2008
	Plant species richness		1983	2008
	Primary production, hypsometrically weighted	Site 31, Channel Mouth Island	1983	2008
		Site 50, Southwest Bay of South Trout Lake	1983	2008
		Site 56, Mouth of Mann Creek	1983	2008
		Site 7, Rocky Reef Bay	1983	2008
		Crystal Lake, epilimnion	1987	2007
		Sparkling Lake, epilimnion	1987	2007
		Trout Lake, epilimnion	1987	2007

**Appendix 28. Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued**

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
Temperate grasslands and savannas CDR	Aboveground net primary production	Unknown	1982	1998
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera	Cedar Creek	1989	2004
	Animal species richness, Orthoptera		1989	2004
	Plant biomass	Old Fields 4, 24, 28, 41	1988	2003
	Plant species richness	Old Fields 5, 35, 45, 72	1988	2006
	Plant biomass	Old Fields 26, 53, 70, 77	1988	2003
	Plant species richness	Lysimeter 1	1988	2003
	Plant biomass	Lysimeter 8	1988	2006
	Plant species richness	Treatment 7, native successional treatment, abandoned after spring plowing in 1989	1991	2008
	Aboveground net primary production			
FTK	Plant species richness	Treatment 8, never plowed, 200 meters (m) south of the others, that serves as an historical control for soil organic matter studies	1991	2008
	Animal abundance, Neoptera		1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production		1991	2008
	Plant species richness			
	Aboveground net primary production	Treatment SF, old field successional community, never tilled	1991	2008
KBS	Plant species richness	Treatment 1, standard levels of chemical inputs, conventional chisel plowed tillage	1993	2008
	Animal abundance, Neoptera	Treatment 2, standard levels of chemical inputs, no tillage	1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Treatment 3, organic-based low chemical input (banded herbicide, starter N), winter leguminous crop, annual tillage and post-planting cultivation	1989	2008
	Plant species richness	Treatment 4, certified organic, no chemical inputs, annual tillage, rotary-hoed to control weeds	1989	2008
	Animal abundance, Neoptera	Treatment 5, Poplar trees (fallow 2008), planted on a 10-year rotation cycle	1989	2008

**Appendix 28. Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued**

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
KBS	Animal abundance, Neoptera	Treatment 6, Continuous alfalfa (wheat 2008)	1989	2008
	Aboveground net primary production	Watershed 020b, burned every 20 years, on deep Tully soils	1984	2005
		Watershed 020b, burned every 20 years, on shallow Florence soils	1984	2005
	Animal abundance, Mammalia	Watershed 001d	1981	1997
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera		1982	2004
	Animal species richness, Orthoptera		1982	2004
	Animal abundance, Mammalia	Watershed 004b	1981	1997
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera		1982	2004
	Animal species richness, Orthoptera		1982	2004
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera	Watershed 020b	1996	2004
KNZ	Animal species richness, Orthoptera	ESA Control 1	1996	2004
	Aboveground net primary production	Owl Creek, coarse texture soil	1983	2007
		Sec 25, fine texture soil	1991	2007
	Animal abundance, Aves	USGS Bird Breeding Survey area 17901, Rockport, CO	1991	2007
	Animal species richness, Aves		1995	2008
	Animal abundance, Aves	USGS Breeding Bird Survey Route 17305, Nunn, CO	1994	2008
	Animal species richness, Aves		1995	2008
	Plant biomass, forbs	Watershed 1	1984	2005
	Plant biomass, grass		1984	2005
SGS				
SPR				
Urban				
CAP	Animal abundance, Araneae (spiders)	Agricultural study sites	1998	2004
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera		1998	2003
	Animal abundance, Araneae (spiders)	Desert study sites	1998	2004
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera		1998	2004
	Animal abundance, Araneae (spiders)	Urban study sites	1998	2004
	Animal abundance, Orthoptera		1998	2004

**Appendix 28.** Stations and length of record for each plant and animal variable by site, as grouped by ecosystem type—Continued

## Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems:

Site code	Variable	Station	Start	End
<b>Western forests</b>				
AND	Aboveground net primary production, tree boles	Reference Stand 2	1988	2005
	Plant biomass, tree boles		1988	2005
	Aboveground net primary production, tree boles	Reference Stand 29	1983	2001
	Plant biomass, tree boles		1988	2005
	Animal abundance, <i>Oncorhynchus clarkii</i>	Clearcut section of Mack Creek	1987	2007
		Old growth section of Mack Creek	1987	2007
	Plant species richness	Watershed 1	1962	2008
		Watershed 3	1962	2008
		Unknown	1991	1998
		HSGY Study Plots		
BNZ	Aboveground net primary production			
CHE	Diameter at breast height			
	<i>Picea sitchensis</i> (Sitka spruce)			
	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> (Douglas fir)			
	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> (Western hemlock)			