



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 ² 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 ² 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 ² 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 ² 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 ² 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 ² 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 ² 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

Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems:

Appendix 4. Regression coefficients and R² values for nine climatic variables for which linear regression against time is significant (p < 0.05)

(Sites are grouped by ecosystem type. See Appendix 26 for length of record for each station at a site.)

Site code	Variable	Slope	Y-intercept ¹	R ²
Alpine and arctic				
GLA	Maximum air temperature	0.07	1.6	0.3
	Mean air temperature	0.07	-1.4	0.3
LVW	Maximum air temperature	-0.07	7.5	0.3
MCM	Minimum air temperature	-0.11	-20.1	0.3
	Precipitation	0.21	-0.01	0.4
NWT	Maximum air temperature	0.04	6.5	0.3
	Mean air temperature	0.02	1.2	0.1
	Precipitation	-0.49	86.4	0.2
Aridlands				
EOA	Mean air temperature	0.01	7.3	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	-0.4	0.2
RCE	Maximum air temperature	0.03	15.7	0.2
	Mean air temperature	0.03	8.2	0.3
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	0.7	0.3
SEV	Mean air temperature	-0.01	14.5	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	-0.01	5.3	0.04
WGE	Maximum air temperature	0.01	24.8	0.05
	Mean air temperature	0.01	16.9	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.01	9.0	0.3
Coastal				
CCE	Mean air temperature	0.02	16.8	0.3
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	12.7	0.4
	Sea level	0.002	-0.2	0.8
	Water clarity	-0.11	17.0	0.3
	Water temperature	0.01	16.6	0.2
FCE	Mean air temperature	0.02	23.2	0.4
	Minimum air temperature	0.04	17.1	0.3
	Sea level	0.002	-0.2	0.9
	Streamflow	110.58	564.7	0.2
	Water temperature	-0.03	26.5	0.4
GCE	Sea level	0.003	-0.2	0.8
MCR	Mean air temperature	0.08	24.7	0.6
	Sea level	0.003	-0.04	0.5
PAL	Mean air temperature	0.06	-3.2	0.3
	Minimum air temperature	0.08	-4.9	0.3

A Basis for Understanding Responses to Global Change

Appendix 4. Regression coefficients and R² values for nine climatic variables for which linear regression against time is significant (p < 0.05)—Continued

Site code	Variable	Slope	Y-intercept ¹	R ²
PIE	Mean air temperature	-0.01	10.2	0.05
	Minimum air temperature	-0.01	5.0	0.2
	Precipitation	0.36	87.6	0.3
	Sea level	0.003	-0.2	0.9
SBC	Mean air temperature	0.01	15.2	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	8.7	0.4
	Sea level	0.001	-0.1	0.3
	Water temperature	0.02	15.5	0.2
VCR	Maximum air temperature	0.02	19.2	0.2
	Mean air temperature	0.03	13.7	0.4
	Minimum air temperature	0.04	8.3	0.5
	Sea level	0.004	-0.3	0.9
Eastern forests				
BEN	Mean air temperature	0.01	12.6	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	5.3	0.3
CRO	Maximum air temperature	-0.02	25.2	0.3
	Mean air temperature	-0.02	18.2	0.4
	Minimum air temperature	-0.02	11.2	0.2
CWT	Mean air temperature	0.01	12.3	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	4.9	0.2
FER	Maximum air temperature	-0.02	17.8	0.2
	Mean air temperature	-0.01	10.6	0.1
HAR	Mean air temperature	0.01	19.4	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	13.3	0.2
HBR	Ice duration	-0.45	140.6	0.2
	Maximum air temperature	0.02	11.5	0.1
	Mean air temperature	0.03	5.8	0.3
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	0.2	0.4
HFR	Maximum air temperature	0.03	12.5	0.3
	Mean air temperature	0.03	6.7	0.4
	Minimum air temperature	0.04	0.8	0.4
	Precipitation	0.59	97.8	0.1
LUQ	Sea level	0.002	-0.1	0.4
MAR	Mean air temperature	0.02	3.4	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	-3.6	0.3
	Precipitation	0.20	57.0	0.2
NTL	Ice duration	-0.19	117.9	0.2
	Streamflow	2.29	102.7	0.2
	Water temperature	0.06	13.0	0.4
SAN	Maximum air temperature	-0.01	25.7	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	-0.01	11.9	0.1
	Streamflow	4.89	13.5	0.7

Long-Term Trends in Ecological Systems:

Appendix 4. Regression coefficients and R² values for nine climatic variables for which linear regression against time is significant (p < 0.05)—Continued

Site code	Variable	Slope	Y-intercept ¹	R ²
TAL	Mean air temperature	-0.01	17.3	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	-0.02	11.6	0.2
	Precipitation	0.24	123.2	0.1
WBW	Maximum air temperature	0.02	20.0	0.1
	Mean air temperature	0.01	14.0	0.1
Temperate grasslands and savannas				
CDR	Precipitation	0.05	65.1	0.03
FTK	Mean air temperature	0.01	7.3	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	0.4	0.1
GRL	Maximum air temperature	-0.01	23.1	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	8.0	0.2
	Precipitation	0.19	68.8	0.1
GSW	Precipitation	0.30	79.9	0.1
KBS	Maximum air temperature	0.02	14.4	0.2
	Mean air temperature	0.02	8.7	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.02	3.0	0.2
	Precipitation	0.38	75.2	0.2
SGS	Streamflow	122.12	20,810.5	0.2
	Mean air temperature	0.02	8.3	0.2
	Minimum air temperature	0.04	-0.6	0.3
SPR	Minimum air temperature	0.01	7.1	0.1
Urban				
BES	Maximum air temperature	0.01	18.2	0.1
	Sea level	0.003	-0.3	0.9
CAP	Maximum air temperature	0.01	30.3	0.2
	Mean air temperature	0.02	20.0	0.5
	Minimum air temperature	0.03	9.7	0.5
Western forests				
CHE	Maximum air temperature	0.01	14.7	0.1
	Mean air temperature	0.01	10.1	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.01	5.5	0.2
FRA	Minimum air temperature	-0.03	0.01	0.4
PRI	Mean air temperature	0.01	6.4	0.05
	Minimum air temperature	0.01	-0.7	0.2
WIN	Maximum air temperature	-0.02	15.9	0.1
	Minimum air temperature	0.01	2.3	0.1

¹ Y-intercept was calculated for the first year of a dataset, which contains records of one variable over time for one site.