Minutes from WInSAR EC Telecon
Jan 21, 2011 and Jan 25, 2011

Attendance: Eric Fielding, Rob Mellors, Rowena Lohman, Shimon Wdowinski, David Schmidt, Falk Amelung, Fran Boler, Dan Dzurisin (1/25), and Zhong Lu (1/25)
Minutes Prepared By: David Schmidt

Agenda:
1) prioritize tasks to spend remaining funds
2) discuss response to funding agencies
3) discuss changes to bylaws

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Perfunctory Issues

Rowena posed a question as to whether Matt Pritchard should be in attendance. Given that Matt is the UNAVCO board member liaison to the WInSAR EC, his presence at the EC committee meeting is expected, as stated in the WInSAR charter. The EC also discussed whether it was appropriate to invite a representative from the USGS given that the agency is both a funding agency and a data user. The committee felt that both Matt and a USGS rep (e.g., Zhong Lu or Mike Poland) should be formally informed of and invited to future meetings. Dan Dzurisin and Zhong Lu were able to participate on the second telecon (1/25). Matt was unavailable.

Before continuing on to the primary agenda, the committee discussed several data issues involving the space agencies. In regards to ALOS data, Eric plans to inform the membership of upcoming changes in the data agreement between ASF and JAXA. He will encourage the membership to order granules that are missing from the L1 data pool before the data agreement expires (likely in March). Howard Zebker has volunteered to cross check the L1 data pool with the JAXA archive. With ESA, Fran will contact ESA to clarify whether we should expect a bill for past tasking. Currently, we are tasking (at no charge) for Beam 6, HH polarization (deemed more coherent) for ENVISAT following the orbit change last fall.

Agenda Item 1: Prioritization of remaining funds

The opening of the ERS/ENVISAT catalog has had major implications for the WInSAR catalog and future expenses. ESA will no longer charge WInSAR for future tasking or data orders. Given that a significant fraction of recent grant support was allocated for data purchase and tasking, these funds are now unassigned (as much as $400k through 2013). The funding agencies have asked the EC to present a revised spending plan, especially for unused funds set to expire later this year. Falk recommends that the EC use this opportunity to write a new intermediate-term strategic plan, which was last updated in 2008.

Discussion on the topic continued with committee members proposing different strategic objectives that target specific needs. Fran presented a prepared report to the committee where she proposed infrastructure upgrades. Rob suggested better documentation of what data is available for new users. Some of the funds could be used to complete the merger of the GeoEarthscope/WInSAR catalogs (both in terms of searching and download functionality). For example, Geoearthscope is in a strip format, whereas WInSAR is in frame mode. The on-the-fly conversion from strip to frame is awkward for some users. One potential task would be to convert the strips back to frames so that both archives can be more easily integrated. An API would help expedite data download for data-intensive users. Perhaps Scott could collaborate with UNAVCO staff in expanding getSAR. The enlistment of an L3 server was also discussed.

Discussion on the topic continued at the second telecon on 1/25. Committee members reiterated support for infrastructure upgrades (software, hardware) with the objective to make the various archives seamless. Rowena identified the integration of the GeoEarthScope/WInSAR archive as a high-priority objective. Falk emphasized that infrastructure upgrades and expansion could help to promote an open data policy for Sentinel and other systems.

David voiced the opinion that SAR data purchases should be the highest priority, followed by infrastructure upgrades that make data more accessible. The committee discussed various opportunities to purchase SAR data. Radarsat2 is too expensive at the moment; but Eric anticipates that a lower price might be negotiated by NASA in the future, if this is deemed worthwhile. The EC would need to explore what data is available within the N.A. mask, and whether this data would be useful to the membership. DLR currently has a closed data policy when it comes to WInSAR. Currently, only individual PI teams can request imagery. There is general consensus among the EC that this is a desirable dataset for the membership, and they would like to seek some common ground with DLR on a data sharing policy. Shimon hopes to engage DLR representatives at a workshop later this winter. The USGS also voiced their interest in TerraSAR-X data, especially if a broader data sharing arrangement could be negotiated with DLR. Sentinel will likely have an open data policy where the data would be freely distributed with no tasking. The data sharing policy for Cosmo-SkyMed is currently undefined.

An additional option for the unspent funds would be to purchase a ground-based SAR system for the membership. Shimon made the point that UNAVCO may purchase a system as a separate endeavor, and that current WInSAR funds should be focused on space-based platforms. A typical ground-based system costs ~$200k.

In summary, the general consensus among the EC was that unallocated funds should be targeted towards infrastructure upgrades and database development. The EC hopes to develop a broader strategic plan in the next year once data policies have crystallized.

<u>Agenda Item 2:</u> Prepare spending plan and response for funding agencies

The immediate response to the funding agencies should address how WInSAR will spend unallocated funds associated with grants set to expire within the next year (NSF and NASA).  Rob suggested that the spending plan should list specific, attainable expenditures.  Given the ongoing negotiations between NASA and various space agencies over data sharing, the potential for future data purchases is uncertain.  Thus, infrastucture upgrades (including hardware, software, staffing) provide the best use of funds at this time.

Fran will prepare a formal budget plan within the next week and circulate it to the EC.  The EC will provide additional text that outlines the objectives and rationale for the spending plan.  Rob will solicit and organize feedback on API functionality.

<u>Agenda Item 3:</u> Changes to bylaws

This topic was tabled for the next telecon.