Dear Bill,

Last Wednesday (Oct 17), the COS discussed your proposal. We had a good turnout (20 people) with additional members sharing comments via email. The debate was wide ranging, but there was universal agreement that you have taken the right approach for proposing and pursuing your research ideas at Hubbard Brook and we really appreciate it. We thank you for your early engagement with the Hubbard Brook community. Given the turnout, it is safe to say there is a great deal of interest in the ideas you presented and much excitement in pursuing new experiments at Hubbard Brook. However, there were some concerns brought up about your proposed work and we look forward to discussing them with you. Below we summarize the comments and then outline a potential process for moving forward. We welcome any questions you have and are happy to discuss the comments below with you.

**Comments**

1. It would help greatly if the extent and scale of the proposed manipulations were specified in more detail. While we understand that the current design is conceptual, there is still a lot of confusion surrounding exactly how large of an area would be disturbed and to what extent. How much land and stream would be affected? What are estimates for direct and indirect (infrastructure, equipment, roads, downstream reaches, labor of FS employees) impacts? How many valley wide plots and bird lines would be affected?

2. There was a general recommendation to think about how we can get the biggest scientific benefit from the investment in the experiment given that opportunities for manipulations in Hubbard Brook Valley are at a premium. For example, the idea of linking terrestrial and aquatic processes resonated with the COS. There was broad agreement that these ideas can be developed and explored in more detail. The COS strongly suggests that you bring together people working in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems who may be interested in being directly involved in this project so the group has a better idea of what collaborations could emerge. For example, can this proposed work be linked to people working on upland N and C dynamics, hydropedology, seedling and understory demography, animal studies? How about folks working with stream salamanders? We’re happy to help connect you to other people working at Hubbard Brook to facilitate this discussion.

3. One of the current goals for all USFS Experimental Forests is demonstrate their relevance to management. Thus, opportunities to inform pressing issues facing stakeholders and land managers in the White Mountain National Forest (e.g., oak regeneration, adapting to climate change) should be explored. For example, can the project be linked to adaptive silvicultural practices? How can local stakeholders be involved?

4. It is also essential that there be a compelling case of why the experiment needs to be done at Hubbard Brook. It would be helpful for the COS to learn more about this. Many people suggested that this experiment use Hubbard Brook as one of many sites in the proposed work.

5. The necessary NEPA permits to do this work could be very expensive. Is it possible to include the cost for NEPA in the budget of the proposal?

6. What happens after the lifetime of the grant? The proposed work could affect a large footprint at Hubbard Brook, are there plans for when it’s time to wind the project down?

**Process for moving forward**

1. Convene a more focused discussion among the terrestrial and aquatic scientists interested in this idea to draft a revised proposal in light of the comments from the COS.

2. Resubmit your proposal to the RAC and address the points above so that the committee has a better sense of the scale of the proposed work and how others in the community can be involved.

Again, we really appreciate your reaching out to the COS and sharing your ideas. We are all very excited about them and look forward to continuing our discussion. As we said above, please don’t hesitate to let us know how we can help with moving the process forward.

Sincerely,

John Battles and Pam Templer

SCC Co-Chairs