OBFS = Opportunities: President's Corner

— BY RHONDA STRUMINGER

Hello OBFS! The year ahead will no doubt bring its challenges, but OBFS is here and ready to help member stations meet them. Please reach out when you have a need, idea or proposal. Our talented and dedicated Board of Directors is here to support you.

This quarter I want to highlight two new OBFS partnerships that bring special benefits to our members. The first is the **2025 OBFS-Maxwell/ Hanrahan Research Experience Grant.** OBFS has $15,000 to give to field stations that need money to hire a graduate student field researcher for an established field-based program or supervised field-based research project.

The funds can be allocated in one of three ways: three grants of $5,000 each, two grants of $7,500 each, or a single $15,000 grant.

The number of grants awarded will depend on the quantity and quality of applications received. These funds must be used in 2025 and must go to support a graduate student or post-doctorate field researcher from a member station to do field-based research.

The deadline is ***February 12, 2025*** so there is still a little time! Apply today and don't hesitate to send me an email with any questions (president@obfs.org).

The second initiative is the partnership OBFS has formed with **The Climate Toolkit**. It is easy to join and see how well your station aligns with their **33 goals** that cross **nine focus** areas for addressing climate change. *(Continued on page 2)*

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Above: 2024 Awardee Toolik FS

2024 OBFS Annual Meeting attendees at Hobcaw Barony

OBFS — PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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If your station studies climate change or is itself committed to sustainable structures, the Toolkit is a great way to publicize your efforts and connect with other institutions (e.g., nature and science centers, botanical gardens, and museums) around the globe. The toolkit offers its members webinar series and working groups.

You can also get to know the Climate Toolkit better at an upcoming Virtual Café (which features real-time translation into Spanish). Stay tuned to the listserv and the Events section of the OBFS website for dates and login information.

If you haven't joined OBFS, you are missing out on these opportunities. I encourage you to join our efforts today to advance ecosystem health, field research, and education!

Rhonda Struminger, President@obfs.org

Left: President Rhonda Struminger at the OBFS Annual Meeting. Look for more 2024 OBFS meeting photos by Philippe Cohen in this issue!

, SC, USA. Photo credit: the fleet-footed Philippe Cohen.

2025 STATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM (SXP)

The SXP program provides mini travel awards to facilitate field station staff travel to other field stations in the OBFS network for shadowing, cross-training and mentoring opportunities. Recipients should seek to learn more about station management (i.e., programmatic offerings, infrastructure, land management, research coordination) applicable to their home station. OBFS is offering five travel awards of up to $1,000 each to facilitate multi-day experiences with host staff. Reciprocal (two-way) field station visits will receive priority. Don't have a reciprocal field station? Add yourself to the OBFS SXP list of interested FSMLs wanting to participate an exchange.

Applicants should complete the online 2025 OBFS Station Exchange Program Spring Application **by February 25, 2025**. The OBFS SXP Applications must include the following:

- Letter of support from the field station the applicant is visiting
- Short statement outlining and describing needs for cross training/shadowing experience
- Person/people the applicant will shadow
- Proposed travel dates, logistics and budget

Rules and Regulations

1. Both the awardee and the host station must be members of OBFS in good standing.
2. Awards are on a reimbursement basis only (i.e., no funds will be provided ahead of expenses).
3. Allowable travel expenses include economy airfare to host station, meals, lodging, car rental, host station fees. Original receipts will be required for reimbursement of allowable expenses.
4. Legible scanned copies of receipts can be emailed to the OBFS treasurer for reimbursement.
5. This opportunity is not intended to support travel to conferences or formal workshops.
6. Award recipients will be required to submit a short final report and evaluation to OBFS upon completion of their exchange experience.

(Continued on p. 5)

AIBS CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT VISITS PROGRAM
—BY CONNER PHILSON, MATT WILSON, AND RICHARD DURTSCHE

In 2024, OBFS was a named sponsor of the American Institute of Biological Sciences' (AIBS) District Visit Days program. This program brings local, state, or federal policymakers to OBFS member' field stations to learn about the important research, education, and conservation activities happing at the station and to and develop closer relationships and collaborations. Advocacy and relationship building of this kind is vital because field stations depend heavily on government funding and support and because policy impacts research flexibility and sustainable field station operations.

In 2024, seven OBFS members from across the U.S. participated in the program, including Susquehanna University's Center for Environmental Education & Research (CEER) Field Station. CEER hosted congressional staffers from Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman's office and then Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey's office. CEER Director Matt Wilson reported that both staffers were supportive of research and community engagement projects and looked for ways to collaborate in the future. Matt added that the staffers were also excited because the tour gave them a different perspective on applied research and was not the type of tour they are usually asked to participate.

Topics of discussion included conservation workforce development, restoration of wet meadows and native plants, beaver dam analogs at the field station, environmental education programs, and the value of experimental streams at CEER's Freshwater Research Institute to identify mechanisms that might make restoration more cost-effective. Deans, directors, and the Susquehanna University's President participated in the CEER Field Station's participation in this AIBS District Visit Days program – demonstrating that this program fosters positive internal and external field station engagement.

At another OBFS Member's District Visit Day, Northern Kentucky University's Research and Education Field Station (REFS) welcomed congressional staff from Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Rand Paul, and Representative Tom Massie's offices. This visit resulted in Senator McConnell following up with a letter endorsing a National Science Foundation proposal for climate change impacts on wetland plants and amphibian phenology in the REFS ecosystem.

Participation in the annual District Visit Days program is free for OBFS members. A solicitation for participation is posted on the OBFS website (www.obfs.org) and listserv in summer; field stations typically host policymakers and/or their staff from late summer through autumn. The District Visit Days program is a complement to

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AIBS DISTRICT VISITS

(Continued from p. 4)

Above, left to right: Siobhan Fathel, Earth and Environmental Sciences (SU); Matt Wilson, CEER and Freshwater Research Institute (SU); Liz Cooper, Senator Casey's office; Adrienne Hobbins, Chesapeake Conservancy; Elliot Copeland, Senator Fetterman's office; Shannon Thomas, Chesapeake Conservancy; Kathy Straub, Dean of Natural and Social Sciences (SU).

the AIBS Congressional Visits Day where OBFS members go to Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. every spring to communicate the value of federal funding and support for field stations and marine laboratories and the National Science Foundation.

Applications for OBFS members to receive registration and travel support for the 2025 Congressional Visits Day in D.C. is February 7. See more information in the "Call for participants to represent OBFS on Capitol Hill" column in this newsletter.

Conner Philson is Executive Director of the University of California Santa Barbara Natural Reserve System, Matt Wilson is Director of CEER for SU, and Richard Durtsche is Director of the NKU REFS.

SXP SPRING 2025

(Continued from p. 2)

Timeline	Spring 2025	Fall 2025
Application Deadline	February 25	August 1
Application Review	February 25 - March 11	August 1-15
Awardee Notification	March 14	August 17

LTER OPPORTUNITIES

The Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network shares two opportunities relevant to OBFS:

(1) Scientific Peers Advancing Research Collaborations (SPARC) Synthesis Proposals, 2025

SPARC awards fund travel expenses, logistical, and analytical support for a single in-person workshop, embedded in a series of virtual meetings. SPARC funding is most appropriate for development of early-stage synthesis ideas or wrap-up of an otherwise virtual project. We expect to fund 2-3 SPARC proposals in 2025.

LTER synthesis groups must include LTER data (found at the Environmental Data Initiative Repository) but may be proposed and led by researchers from outside the network.

Proposal Due Date: April 9, 2025 5:00 p.m. PST

June: Awards announced

September: Projects begin

(2) LTER Site Exchange

To facilitate site comparison and support the development of cross-site projects, the LTER Network Office is making eight travel fellowships available in 2025. Each fellowship will cover travel, lodging, and food expenses for a one-week trip to a different site. Site exchanges may be proposed by researchers outside the LTER network, but the proposal must explain how the exchange will benefit both the proposer and the network.

Due: March 28, 2025.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Is there a subject you wish you could discuss with other field stations but haven't made the time?

Is there a speaker you want to hear from but haven't had the opportunity?

Do you want other field stations to learn more about what is happening in your corner of the world?

Are you looking for help with a particular challenge?

Let the International Committee know and together we can organize a one-hour Virtual Café on the topic of your choice!

Send an email to david.maneli@mcgill.ca with your ideas or suggestions.

Above: Cliff Ecology Conference Artwork by Andrew Lyons-Gould. See page 7.

Photos, right: Zenobia Harper, Gullah Preservation Society and Coastal Carolina Univ.; Bill Strosnider, OBFS co-host, Univ. South Carolina; Amy Armstrong, SCELP; Skip Van Bloem, co-host, Clemson.

CALL: REPRESENT OBFS ON CAPITOL HILL

OBFS is pleased to announce the 2025 US Congressional Visits Day will return in person this year! The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) event will be held from April 28-30, 2025 in Washington, D.C. In addition, AIBS is offering a Communications Bootcamp for Scientists taking place on April 28-29.

The AIBS Congressional Visits Day program gives OBFS members the opportunity to meet with our members of Congress to help them understand the important role the federal government plays in supporting the biological sciences in general, and especially field stations and marine laboratories (FSMLs).

Participants will be provided with an in-person communications and advocacy training program by AIBS that prepares them to be effective advocates for their science. AIBS will provide participants with background information and materials, as well as arrange meetings with lawmakers on April 30. General information about the Congressional Visits Day can be found **here**.

OBFS will sponsor a limited number of participants to these events and cover costs including airfare, hotel, and registration. Awardees will be expected to prepare a summary of their experience for publication in the OBFS annual report. These activities are often cited as some of the most rewarding experiences for the OBFS community.

To participate in either event, please complete the **2025 OBFS AIBS CVD Application** by February 14th, 2025. Selection of participants will aim to represent the broadest possible geographic, demographic and field station factors. Contact Paul Foster (pfoster@bijagual.org), OBFS Liaison to AIBS, Conner Philson (philson@ucsb.edu), OBFS Outreach and Communications Committee Chair, and Itchung Cheung (itchung.cheung@oregonstate.edu), OBFS Collaborations Committee Chair with any questions.

Please see the OBFS Advocacy Webpage for more information on OBFS advocacy efforts!

INAUGURAL CLIFF ECOLOGY CONFERENCE—BY BREEZY JACKSON

The 1st Cliff Ecology Conference (that we know of) was held September 23-25, 2024 at the University of California, Merced Yosemite Field Station in Yosemite National Park, USA. Representatives from Yosemite and Sequoia Field Stations, Climbers for Bat Conservation, Yosemite Climbing Management, and Truckee Meadows Community College planned the event.

The program consisted of one day of field trips (either Cliff-Access Methods or Cliff Biodiversity), two days of talks, conversation, and shared meals. Presenters introduced topics such as geology, plant diversity, lichenology, evolution, bat, raptor and condor conservation, field safety, cliff pedagogy, climber impacts, sociology, and more. Dr. Rob Roy Ramey II gave a plenary talk on the history of cliff ecology which largely began with the near-extinction of cliff-roosting raptors such as the peregrine falcon. At that time, biologists worked with climbers to go to extraordinary measures to save the species.

Participants were supported via travel awards from the OBFS mini grant and other sources.

Above: Sampling the cliff face. Photo credit: Dr. Michael Drake.

Fifty attendees hailed from CA, NV, WA, UT, CO, NM, MT, WV, and VI, representing higher education, land management agencies, biological consulting, and the community. Registration costs were kept low, and travel awards made possible by the OBFS mini grant as well as support from the Access Fund, American Alpine Club, and The Redwoods in Yosemite. Locally-sourced sustainable meals were provided with the help of Farm to Crag and Raw Roots Farm. Patagonia, Edelrid, Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Company and Diane Schorr also made donations to support the conference.

Field stations provide opportunities for transdisciplinary collaborations, as this example shows. The small conference size, low-cost field station housing within walking distance to programming, and an agenda with plenty of free time helped facilitate a rich collaborative experience. Participants said this was the best conference they ever attended. For more information and to access the full agenda with abstracts, please visit our website https://yfs.ucmerced.edu/2024-cliff-ecology-meeting.

Contact: Breezy Jackson (bjackson10@ucmerced.edu).

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT PIERCE CEDAR CREEK INSTITUTE —BY KATIE KELLY

After 23 years of service as executive director of Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Michelle Skedgell retired from the Institute on December 31, 2024. Following an extensive search, the Institute's Board of Directors announces hiring a new executive director, Virginia Bolshakova.

Pierce Cedar Creek Institute is a biological field station, nature center and environmental education center in Michigan located on 850 acres with nine miles of hiking trails. The Institute's mission is to inspire appreciation and stewardship of our environment.

Above: Virginia Bolshakova.

"Joining Pierce Cedar Creek Institute is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'm incredibly grateful to return home and help steward this remarkable resource alongside so many dedicated partners," said Bolshakova. "It's amazing to think that when I graduated high school, this place was just an idea, and now, 25 years later, it's a thriving center for learning, research, and natural resource management—thanks to the vision and dedication of the community. I'm excited by the immense potential to enrich the Institute's offerings further while staying true to the mission and values that make this community so special."

Bolshakova is dedicated to environmental stewardship and community engagement. From 2016-2024, she was Executive Director for Purdue University's Indiana GEAR UP program to help close the education gap for underserved communities, overseeing the largest grant ever awarded to Purdue's College of Education.

Additionally, Bolshakova's experience includes being Executive Director and Associate Advisor at the University of California, Elkus Ranch Environmental Education Center from 2012–2016, where she managed urban 4-H farms, volunteers, and a coastal ranch. Bolshakova holds a B.S. in Biology and Biology Teaching Composite from the University of Buffalo (SUNY) and Utah State University, a Master of Education in Science Curriculum & Instruction from the University of Toledo, and a Ph.D. in Biology & Ecology from Utah State University.

Above: Michelle Skedgell, past Executive Director at the Institute.

Contact: kkelly@cedarcreekinstitute.org

CITIZEN SCIENCE TOOLKIT NOW AVAILABLE —BY HANNAH WEBBER

Engaging more people in science is exciting and fun, especially when they come from diverse backgrounds. But setting up and running a citizen science (or "participatory science") effort requires lots of different skills and knowledge in research, communication, community building, and project management – as well as curiosity, patience, and enthusiasm. Establishing common scientific and engagement goals can be challenging; it doesn't have to be, especially if there is training to guide us.

Since Schoodic Institute in Acadia, Maine USA was founded 25 years ago, it has been part of our mission to engage people of all ages in science. In recent years, we assisted hundreds of people and organizations interested in starting or improving citizen science programs and projects across the United States. As citizen, or participatory, science has grown as a tool for rigorous data collection and science engagement, the need for training on the basic principles and effective implementation has grown.

Above: Using a cell phone to take a photo for iNaturalist. Credit: Schoodic Institute.

The demand for information led us to develop a toolkit and associated training materials. Produced in partnership with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the *Interagency Citizen Science Toolkit* is now available to stimulate and guide public engagement with science in national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, grasslands, rangelands, and deserts. Often, this science is in direct service to those charged with managing these lands and waters on behalf of all citizens.

The toolkit covers topics ranging from establishing a basic understanding of citizen science, to building a project team and identifying the audience for a project, to collecting and managing data, to sharing project results and evaluating success. Presentation materials and pre-recorded training modules are available with the toolkit, supporting both independent learning as well as instructor-led trainings.

The positive impact of citizen science on the federal agencies is evident in the numerous ways people can participate in science in national parks, as well as support for citizen science provided via the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. With this toolkit, it is our hope that agency staff and partners will confidently initiate new projects and programs that engage the public, but also sustain them and have positive experiences. To access the *Interagency Citizen Science Toolkit* and associated training materials, visit **schoodicinstitute.org/citizen-science-toolkit**.

Hannah Webber (hwebber@schoodicinstitute.org) is Marine Ecology Director at Schoodic Institute.

TIPUTINI BIODIVERSITY STATION TURNS 30 - BY KELLY SWING

Wow! Thirty years have flown by for the Tiputini Biodiversity Station operated by the Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador. We've been cataloging the world's greatest concentration of species at the equator while monitoring conditions in western lowland Amazonia.

Since 1994, we've worked with hundreds of researchers to produce an abundance of scientific publications. Direct engagement with local ancestral cultures (Kichwa and Waorani) continues to be integral to our understanding of the past and present toward the conservation and sustainability of an estimated 10% of all species on the planet. More than 13,000 students have been exposed to the region's exuberant nature as well as environmental concerns that unfortunately are reaching even remote places like the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve.

Tiputini's terrestrial and aquatic fauna include over 450 species of fishes, 140 amphibians, 120 reptiles, 530 birds and 190 mammals (including 10 primates, 5 felines, and almost 100 bats). Local flora includes over 600 tree species/ha and 2,200 tree species in the region. Insect richness is estimated as high as 1 million for the entire Yasuní (~100,000 species/ha).

Tiputini's achievements represent substantial foundations for collaborations in biodiversity, ecosystem ecology, evolutionary biology, ethology, systematics and conservation. Our three decades of success include well-established databases, dependable science support, and smooth logistical operations for student groups. Profound gratitude goes out to all those involved in making Tiputini's endeavors possible as we look forward to the next decades of tropical explorations and discoveries.

Contact: Kelly Swing, kswing@usfq.edu.ec.

Photos: top: the canopy observation tower; lower left: searching leaf litter for organisms; lower right: student discovery abounds at Tiputini.

A CENTURY AT TROUT LAKE STATION — BY ADAM HINTERTHUER

Above: TLS alumni gathered on the shores of Trout Lake during "LimnoCentennial" celebration, credit Adam Hinterthuer.

In 1925, when Chancey Juday and E.A Birge first set up shop on Trout Lake and began researching northern Wisconsin lakes, they couldn't have foreseen the legacy they were creating. But, earlier this summer, more than 120 Trout Lake Station (TLS) alumni gathered in the Boulder Junction Community Center to celebrate a century of limnology in the Northwoods.

Several generations of "Trout Lakers" – as folks who have spent a summer at the Center for Limnology's field station are affectionately called – came from as far away as Ireland and Canada. There were retirees on hand to reflect on distinguished careers and undergraduate students up north for their first summer experience as scientists-in-training. Despite these differences, the group shared a bond. No matter when they had been "on Station," they shared memories – baking in the sun in aluminum boats, swatting at mosquitoes, braving bad weather to collect data, and spending downtime with chilly lake swims and evening campfires.

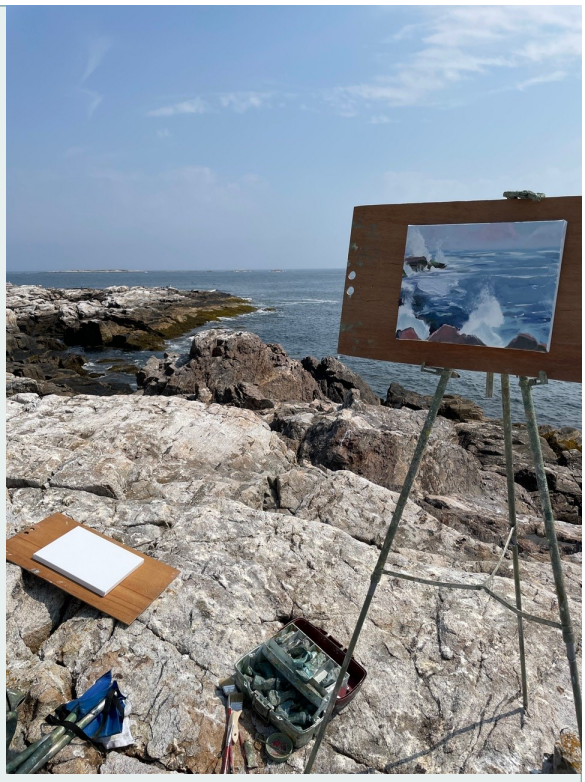
"Trout Lake was an amazing experience and completely determined the course of my professional career," says John Lyons, who served as a fisheries research scientist and supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for decades. The station was much smaller in the 1980's, Lyons recalled, and the lack of Internet or cell phones fostered a strong sense of community. "For better or worse, everybody knew everybody else pretty well by the end of the summer and did lots of activities together," he says.

Linden Taylor, a PhD candidate at UW-Madison's Department of Botany, reports that the sense-of-community vibe still continues. Taylor developed her interest in plant ecology during surveys of aquatic plant communities as a Trout Lake summer field technician. She credits the experience for preparing her for teaching, research and mentoring other students - as well as making life-long friends and memories. "Trout Lake Station is a special place that I always look forward to visiting again," she says. With any luck, it will continue to be that kind of place for the next 100 years!

Bottom right: Linden Taylor and Carol Warden conduct aquatic plant surveys.

Contact: Adam Hinterthuer, hinterthuer@wisc.edu.

ASSESSING OUTCOMES OF AND BARRIERS TO ART RESIDENCIES AT FIELD STATIONS AND MARINE LABS —BY JENNA LILLY



Above: Plein air painting at Shoals Marine Lab on Appledore Island, ME.
Credit: 2024 Artist-in-Residence Eric Aho.

Calling all artists, scientists, and FSML administrators! Have you participated in or helped facilitate an art residency at a FSML in the last 10 years? Then we need your opinion!

There are several ways to engage in this research. The first two options will help inform the final survey to be sent out this fall, for the bulk of the data collection.

If you are an artist, scientist, or site administrator involved with an art residency at any scientific institution, you can:

- Join a focus group this spring (end of March/early April)
- Be a survey respondent for an open format survey this summer (around June/July)

If you are an artist, scientist, or site administrator involved with an art residency at a field station or marine lab, you can also:

- Be a survey respondent for the final closed format survey this fall (around October, after the main field season)

If you want to get involved in any step of this research, fill out the form here, and we will be in touch.

If you have any questions, please email Jenna Lilly at jkl228@cornell.edu. Feel free to share this information with anyone you know who may be interested.

Above: Attendees at the 2024 OBFS annual meeting.

TOOLIK FIELD STATION: 2024 OBFS ADVANCING EQUITY AWARD WINNER—HAYLEY DUNLEAVY

Remote, vast and seemingly timeless, the Arctic can serve as a powerful setting for positive transformational experiences in field science — from youth to emerging undergraduate scientists to tenured professors. Yet, who is given the opportunity to participate in Arctic science is marred by injustices of the past and present.

Above: Enthused Upward Bound high school students. Credit Erin Towns.

As Toolik Field Station enters its 50th year as a research site, we strive to advance equity at our station and beyond by dismantling barriers to participation and building policies, infrastructure and programs that bolster IDEA+. It's a commitment embedded in our daily function.

When we become aware of barriers to supporting the diverse identities at Toolik, we take immediate and distinct actions to address them, such as holding genderqueer sauna hours; creating a free community gear closet; and publishing our Naturalist Journal in Spanish. Last year, our maintenance crew led the repurposing of a worn-down building space to support wellbeing.

While immediate actions beget quick change, we also play the long game to build a more inclusive culture. Walk around and you'll find resources on field safety, bystander intervention and reporting pathways. Staff and residents take annual trainings on prevention. Anecdotally, these created long-term change. But to be sure, we're tracking efficacy via an annual demographic and climate survey.

Above: Tundra Awardees, Manpreet Kohli and Anna Eichert. Credit Manpreet Kohli.

We also foster career development. Our Tundra Award provides station access to early career researchers and a partnership with Upward Bound, funded by Battelle, to bring underserved high schoolers to the Arctic. Most recently, we connected with the Nunamiut School in Anaktuvuk Pass, our nearest neighbors. There, we hope to co-develop an environmental science curriculum that's culturally relevant for the school's Iñupiat students with teachers.

While some of these programs rely on funding from non-profits, donations, or external grants, many cost little to nothing. Instead, our developments towards equity result from staff and community dedication to bringing IDEA+ into action, continuous self-reflection, and — like all field stations — getting creative with resources and partners we already have. Learn more about our activities on our webpage or by contacting the Toolik management team, uaf-iab-toolik@alaska.edu.

Thank you to OBFS for recognizing our commitment to build equity at our station. Onward!

Contact: Haley Dunleavy (hdunleavy@alaska.edu).

HOW TO FIND US

www.obfs.org/

@joinobfs

@obfs_org

YouTube

The Virtual Field

Above: 2024 OBFS annual meeting field trip participants discover the rich natural and cultural history of the Low Country of South Carolina. Middle left: Toolik Field Station staff celebrating Polar Pride Day in 2021. Credit Manny Centeno.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Click the link to access

- Esparza, D., L. Reilly-Sanchez, and M. Smith. 2024. How do Students' Science, Social, and Personal Identities Influence their Experiences in Undergraduate Field Biology Courses? CBE—Life Sciences Education 23:4 https://www.lifescied.org/doi/10.1187/cbe.24-02-0046
- Chitty, E.G., Hesp, P.A., 2024. The value of field studies in earth and environmental sciences: A review. Natural Sciences Education 53, e70004. https://doi.org/10.1002/nse2.70004
- Arcila Hernández, L.M., Mittan-Moreau, C.S., Lamb, T., Holmes, K.D., McDonald, C.A., Zamudio, K.R., Ballen, C.J., 2023. A Half Century of Student Data Reveals the Professional Impacts of a Biology Field Course. BioScience 73, 59–67. https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biac103
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- White, H.C., O'Connell, et al. 2025. ESA 2024 Meeting Review: Belonging and Identity in Ecology. Bulletin Ecological Society of America e2228. https://doi.org/10.1002/bes2.2228

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