

OBFS 2025 Candidates for Office

Terms begin January 1, 2026 and run for two years

President (unopposed)

On your ballot, please select either YES or NO: The Board of OBFS, upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, proposes the following candidate for President.

President – Conner Philson

Conner Philson is a field biologist committed to advancing field-based research, education, and the infrastructure that makes both possible. Conner is the Executive Director of the University of California Santa Barbara's (UCSB) Natural Reserve System, a network of seven field stations across California that support more than 12,000 researchers and students each year.

Conner's passion for field stations and marine laboratories (FSMLs) began at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, and over the past three years he has served on the OBFS Board of Directors, where he co-led the organization's advocacy efforts and helped establish a novel policy where major scientific journals require formal recognition of FSMLs in published research. Never letting a crisis go to waste, over the next two years OBFS can expand support for FSMLs worldwide by expanding access for researchers and students, strengthen the global FSML community, and streamline OBFS operations to ensure long-term resilience.



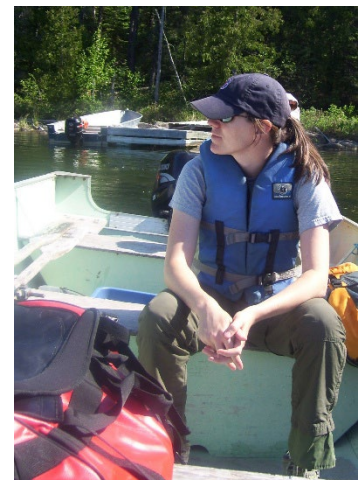
Secretary (unopposed)

On your ballot, please select either YES or NO: The Board of OBFS, upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, proposes the following candidate for Secretary.

Secretary – Beth Norman

I am the Director of Science and Research at Lacawac Sanctuary, a small, independent field station in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania and have served as the Secretary of OBFS for the past four years. Field stations have played a critical role throughout my career, starting with my PhD research with the Coweeta LTER. My first OBFS meeting was at Schoodic in 2018 and I have never felt so welcome at a meeting!

My appreciation for this amazing community has only grown since then. I am excited to be able to give back to the organization and to represent the perspective of small, independent field stations. Thank you for your consideration.



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Member-at-Large (vote for one of four; listed alphabetically)

MAL – Stephen Gibson



I work for the University of Texas at Austin. For the past two decades I have managed UT's Stengl "Lost Pines" Biological Field Station (SLP). My previous work, also at UT, was centered around invasive species and biological controls. Like many of us, my natural curiosity and general love of nature kept my interests broad and multi-disciplined. When the role of building and managing SLP opened up, I knew I had found my calling.

After over 20 years, I have learned much about how to grow and run a biological field station. This job does not come with an instruction manual and many of us are left to figure it out on the fly. My experience from the early days, working within a University system, and everything along the way gives me insight in field station management that I am eager to share with my fellow OBFS members. I am hopeful that by becoming Member-at-Large for OBFS, I can begin to help support some of those who find themselves where I was so many years ago, as well as tap into the expertise of OBFS members working within the larger multi-station type networks that the TFSN is becoming.

MAL – Suzanne Olyarnik



I'm the Director of the Bodega Marine Reserve for the University of California Davis, where for the past 15 years I've led a field station dedicated to terrestrial and marine research, immersive field-based education, and public outreach. I love the diversity of this work and creating an inclusive space where scientists, students, and the public can engage with the spectacular coastal lands and waters of the Reserve. Like many in this field, my path has been nonlinear. Before diving into ecology and stewardship, I spent eight years in marketing and communications with organizations like the National Wildlife Federation, Mother Jones Magazine, and the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. That blend of science, marketing, and knowing when to pivot has served me well, and I believe it would help me as a member of the OBFS board.

I was introduced to OBFS during my first week on the job and have been a member ever since. Hosting the 2011 annual meeting in Bodega Bay was an early and rewarding opportunity to engage with the community, and I've attended nearly every meeting since. OBFS has given me so much—ideas, support, connections, useless treasures from the auction and some new dance moves. I'd be honored to give back as a member-at-large, to learn more about how the board works, and finding new ways to contribute to this organization I truly care about.

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MAL – Michael Stevens

I'm the Director of Capitol Reef Field Station (CRFS). Our field station is run as a partnership between Utah Valley University (UVU) and Capitol Reef National Park. I've been a member of OBFS since 2012. I've learned so much from the OBFS community over the years and value you all as colleagues and friends. I'm looking forward to serving OBFS as a Member-at-Large. I'm especially interested in field station partnerships and how field stations can expand their influence through collaborations with other organizations.

To that end, I've studied partnerships between universities and national parks and hosted a conference at CRFS focused on the opportunities and challenges of field stations located inside national parks. Recently, I participated in the OBFS Station Exchange Program to visit UC Davis's field station in Lassen Volcanic National Park. In addition to directing CRFS since 2012, I'm a Biology Professor at UVU where I teach and do research on plant ecology and science education. I got my PhD in Botany from UW Madison. For fun, I enjoy skiing and trail running in the Wasatch Mountains.



MAL – Donovan Tye



Donovan Tye is an ecologist specialising in savanna ecology and conservation technology. He serves as Station Director for the Skukuza Research Station (SSLI Campus) in South Africa and Director of Conservation Technology at the Organisation for Tropical Studies (OTS). His work focuses on integrating emerging technologies, especially bioacoustics and sensor-based methods, into long-term ecological monitoring and field-based training. Drawing on experience from southern Africa's field station network, he works to strengthen collaboration across the region and promote innovation in field-based learning.

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Member-at-Large Early Career (vote for one of two; listed alphabetically)

MAL EC – Dustin Angell



Dustin Angell is a science interpreter, conservation photographer, and graduate student interested in enhancing the role of FSMLs as sites of convergence for education and outreach, research and conservation, and cultural heritage and production. Dustin has a Bachelor of Fine Arts and is established as an informal science educator at Archbold Biological Station; however, as a master's student at Athabasca University he is an early career social scientist interested in studying FSMLs.

Dustin is a founding member of OBFS's The Virtual Field and has presented at the last two OBFS annual meetings. If elected to the board, Dustin's fresh perspective and enthusiasm for FSMLs will contribute to the OBFS's ability to support the sustainability and value of place-based long-term research organizations.

MAL EC – Kerry Wininger

Kerry Wininger began her role as Director of the Center for Environmental Inquiry (CEI) at Sonoma State University this past July, after spending several years as CEI Educational Outreach & Program Development Lead. She leads initiatives that connect students, faculty, and community partners in hands-on learning at SSU's three field stations, and works closely with government, nonprofit, and business partners to develop academic programs linking research, creative inquiry, and real-world environmental challenges.

She has served in a leadership role for the OBFS sponsored The Virtual Field project since its inception in 2020, expanding access to field-based learning across disciplines and geographies. With degrees in Integrative Biology and Theater from UC Berkeley and an M.S. in Biology from SSU, she brings an interdisciplinary approach to fostering diverse, resilient learning communities. Kerry also serves on the Development Committee for OBFS.

