Safe & Inclusive Work Environment Plan

Field Setting & Unique Challenges: We will conduct fieldwork in subalpine meadows near the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL, Colorado). Each year of the project, the core team will consist of two research assistants (RA) and three PIs. Researchers will be working on RMBL property, off main roads and public trail access, so that the only people with whom researchers will interact while performing fieldwork will be other RMBL researchers.

All researchers will be housed at the RMBL, in rustic cabins with an associated outhouse. For most non-PI team members, this will likely be a novel, high elevation environment, removed from friends and family. However, researchers will be immersed in a residential community of 180 people, including families and scientists across various career stages from undergraduate students through full professors. Research teams are intermingled in housing, which further reduces isolation. RMBL also has multiple staff and Board members living onsite to provide support to the research community. PI Iler will communicate with the RAs about the housing situation prior to each field season so that expectations for housing conditions are clear. Cabins are segregated by gender unless requests are made otherwise by agreed upon parties. The RMBL asks for gender information on the housing request form that all researchers must fill out before each field season, and this includes information on preferred gender for cabinmates. We will work with researchers and RMBL staff to ensure appropriate accommodations, especially for gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transgendered researchers. PIs will never share a cabin with RAs. All members of the team will be expected to attend the annual safety meeting in early June at the RMBL, where RMBL staff and local police officers detail the risks of local fieldwork and mitigation strategies.

In terms of physical challenges, the field sites are a short walk from the field station: 380 m for one site, and 600 m for the second site. The walk involves walking up steep hills to get to the sites. Before travel to the RMBL, PI Iler will communicate with the postdoc and RA about safely adjusting to living at high-elevation: resting more than usual for the first two days, drinking a lot of fluids, taking breaks while walking uphill, and potential dietary adjustments for anemic individuals. PI Iler will also communicate to the postdoc and RA about appropriate protection from the sun, because UV rays are intense at 2,900 m above sea level. Other physical risks include exposure to thunderstorms and wildlife. If thunder is heard nearby, researchers are instructed to leave the meadow quickly and return to cabins. Ticks that can carry disease such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever are increasing in abundance at the RMBL. Researchers will be encouraged to perform daily tick checks, and tick spoons are available for safely removing ticks in the RMBL Admin Office. There are no venomous snakes or insects at the field sites, but there are black bears, moose, and mountain lions in the area. Encounters with these animals should be incredibly rare, especially given the close proximity to the field station, but researchers will be instructed on how to respond if they do encounter one of these animals. Researchers will also be made aware of the location of important emergency care equipment: epi pens and AED machines.

Steps to Nurture an Inclusive Working Environment: It will be communicated that researchers should exit the field site if they ever feel unsafe, for any reason. Emotional and physical safety are first priorities, and data collection is second priority. We will build on our existing lab safety plan to establish a set of group norms for the field team with regard to inclusion and belonging. The norms include: clear and honest communication; inclusion of researchers in making decisions about fieldwork; respecting personal boundaries; respecting and celebrating individual identities; picking up all field supplies daily; support of team members; being aware of power differentials and how that might affect interactions; being aware of privilege; and expectations for working hours (see Communication Processes below). In addition to desired behaviors, the group norms document will also include behaviors that are unacceptable. This includes: harassment, physical or verbal abuse, assault, bullying, threats, any form of discrimination, retaliation against someone who files a report, use of drugs or alcohol during work hours, and falsification of data. The research team will meet on Zoom prior to the beginning of fieldwork to build upon our starting list of group norms, so that everyone feels included in setting the tone of our team interactions, and we end with a set of group norms that is co-created.

We ultimately want everyone not only to feel included but also like they *belong* at the field station. RMBL is a primarily white institution, although that is improving, and the nearest town of Crested Butte is also predominantly white. This will be communicated to researchers prior to their first field season so that they are not caught off guard upon arrival. The PIs have completed implicit bias training, active bystander

training, and other DEI coursework and are aware of the challenges faced by researchers from historically excluded groups, especially as these relate to performing field work (including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other marginalized groups). Additionally, RMBL requires online sexual harassment training for anyone working or living onsite, which is documented and tracked. There is an active DEI committee at RMBL that holds many events and offers several opportunities for participation for those interested. For example, there is a safe space for students from underrepresented groups, a gear closet with outdoor gear that can be checked out, summer trainings on inclusion and being an active bystander, and a socio-emotional mentor program where more senior graduate students mentor more junior graduate students. Researchers will be given paid time off to attend trainings at the RMBL as appropriate; for example, this summer all research assistants were encouraged to take an hour of work to attend a hands-on training on navigating the importance of personal identities (all participated).

Communication Processes: The two field sites for this project are within a short walking distance to the field station (380 m and 600 m away). Each pair of research assistants will have one walkie talkie to communicate with PIs Iler and CaraDonna and any other team members (graduate students, RAs on other projects, etc.). Researchers will never be in the field alone, and never without a walkie talkie. In the case of emergency, PIs will be contacted via walkie talkie. Depending on everyone's location, the nearest person will run to the field station to call 911, as there is no cell phone service at the field station or the field sites. We are never far from the field station and will be able to get to a landline within 5 minutes.

In the case that researchers have children, childcare providers will be given a walkie talkie if providing care on-site. If childcare occurs off-site, providers will be given the phone number of the RMBL admin office, who will know how to contact researchers on the walkie talkies.

Working hours will be clearly communicated as part of the group norms mentioned above, so that expectations are clear (8 hours per day, Monday-Friday), and team members will be allowed to take a three-day weekend of their choice as long as PI Iler is notified at least two weeks in advance. Paid holidays with no fieldwork include Memorial Day, Juneteenth, and the 4th of July.

Mechanisms for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment: We will adhere to RMBL's policies for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment. RMBL has a Title IX Coordinator, to which all Title IX issues are reported, regardless of what other institutions are involved. Reporting lines are communicated through required online training before arrival, provided online through the RMBL website, in written materials in cabins, and discussed during orientation in June. All team members will be required to attend this orientation, and we will also provide information on to whom to make a report and what to expect after a report is made during our pre-fieldwork Zoom meeting. We will communicate that all PIs are mandatory reporters and what that means. We will also make it clear that harassment does not only occur during work hours; it can occur any time while living and working at the RMBL. Although we are mandatory reporters, the PIs hope to establish a culture of support, so that researchers feel comfortable coming to them with any issues that might arise.

The best option is to report directly to RMBL's Title IX coordinator. If researchers are uncomfortable with this option, they can report to any staff person or PI, and as a last resort we include directly contacting the police (911). All RMBL staff are required to disclose anything they experience, see, or hear to RMBL's Title IX coordinator. The next step in this process is that the Title IX Coordinator will conduct outreach to the individual who was harmed, which includes providing resources for support. They will then ask this individual if they want the office to move forward with an investigation. The person affected is in control of the process. If they do not want an investigation to move forward, it will not. The only way that an investigation will move forward without the support of the individual affected is if: the incident was part of a larger pattern at RMBL, there is a history of violence, sexual violence, arrest, or the incident was committed by multiple perpetrators, the incident was perpetrated with a weapon, included physical violence (such as hitting, restraint, pushing, or kicking), or the threat of violence, or the affected individual is a minor. The options for an investigation are: (i) an informal investigation, where the Title IX coordinator works with the Affected person and possibly with the Accused person to find an internal solution, (ii) a full investigation, where the Title IX Coordinator will bring in impartial and trained Title IX investigators to research the case, and (iii) involvement of law enforcement (e.g., in the case of sexual misconduct).