Field Stations: Connecting Communities with Their Natural Environments

OBFS MEETING AND CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 22-25, 2016
SITKA, ALASKA

DR. RHONDA STRUMINGER
DR. JILL ZARESTKY
DR. MICHELLE LAWING
Research on Field Station Outreach

Goal 1:

To show that outreach programming at field stations provides important informal learning opportunities to members of local, non-scientific communities.
CICHAZ, A.C., co-hosts a Day of Science and a Sustainable Development conference

Featuring round table discussions with scientists and local community members
Goal 2:

To show how field stations connect local communities with their natural environment in unique ways.
CICHAZ, A.C. – Calnali, Hidalgo Mexico

- Informational hikes featuring learning stations
HYPOTHESIS:

Community education levels, environmental awareness, and environmental protection will increase from having more frequent, high quality, and diverse informal learning opportunities at field stations.
Informal Learning at Field Stations

- BUT field stations are often NOT recognized as informal learning environments

- And field stations have yet to be funded by the NSF AISL grant (Advancing Informal STEM Learning)
Informal Learning at Field Stations

• Why? Field stations primarily serve
  ○ Scientists/Researchers
  ○ Students/Training
  ○ Universities
  ○ Governments
  ○ NGOs
Outreach Survey

So what IS going on at field stations?
To find out ...
  - Sent survey solicitation to OBFS listserv
  - Received 15 responses (THANK YOU)
Getting some idea of the breadth of activities
Informal Learning Activities at Field Stations

- Highly variable
  - Presentations
  - Hikes
  - Citizen Science Projects
  - Public Workshops
  - Cruises
  - Tours
How do you define Outreach?
Preliminary Survey of Outreach at Field Stations

- How much outreach programming takes place at your field station?

- How many participants have you had in your programming?

- Does your station have staff dedicated to outreach? If yes, how many?
Preliminary Survey Results – 15 stations

- On average, 34% of programming is dedicated to outreach activities

- Most field stations surveyed (11 out of 15) have staff dedicated to outreach programming

- In the aggregate, there have been over a million learning experiences at our surveyed field stations since the field stations have been around (>100 years!)
Develop an Outreach Ontology

- Complete profile of field station outreach
  - Activity details
  - Targeted populations
  - Intended outcomes
Evaluate Programming

- Are field stations evaluating their outreach impacts?
  - On participants
  - On the environment
  - On the scientists
Conclusion

- Field Stations have dedicated resources to outreach or informal learning – but what are the activities?

- People are participating – but who are they and what do they gain from the learning experience?

- Is informal learning uniquely engaging and meaningful to the local community? Why or why not?
Take our Survey!

- We will send another solicitation for the survey to the OBFS listserv
- If you are interested in working with us on this research we would like to get letters of collaboration from you.
- We are having a round table discussion on Saturday morning from 6:30 to 7:30 AM in Sweetland Hall. Please join us.