

# Field Stations: Connecting Communities with Their Natural Environments



**OBFS MEETING AND  
CONFERENCE**

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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.

# Centro de Investigaciones Científicas de las Huastecas “Aguazarca”, A.C. (CICHAZ)



- CICHAZ, A.C., co-hosts a Day of Science and a Sustainable Development conference
- Featuring round table discussions with scientists and local community members



# Research on Field Station Outreach



## 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



# Research on Field Station Outreach



## 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)

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ▼

Public Programs (971)

Museum and Science Center Programs (332)

Community Outreach Programs (317)

Citizen Science Programs (189)

Afterschool Programs (129)

Library Programs (76)

Summer and Extended Camps (63)

Public Events and Festivals (58)

Park, Outdoor, and Garden Programs (54)

Laboratory Programs (40)

Making and Tinkering Programs (30)

Aquarium and Zoo Programs (24)

Theater Programs (24)

Media and Technology (855)

Broadcast Media (416)

Websites, Mobile Apps, and Online Media (388)

# Informal Learning at Field Stations



- Why? Field stations primarily serve
  - Scientists/Researchers
  - Students/Training
  - Universities
  - Governments
  - NGOs





# Outreach Survey



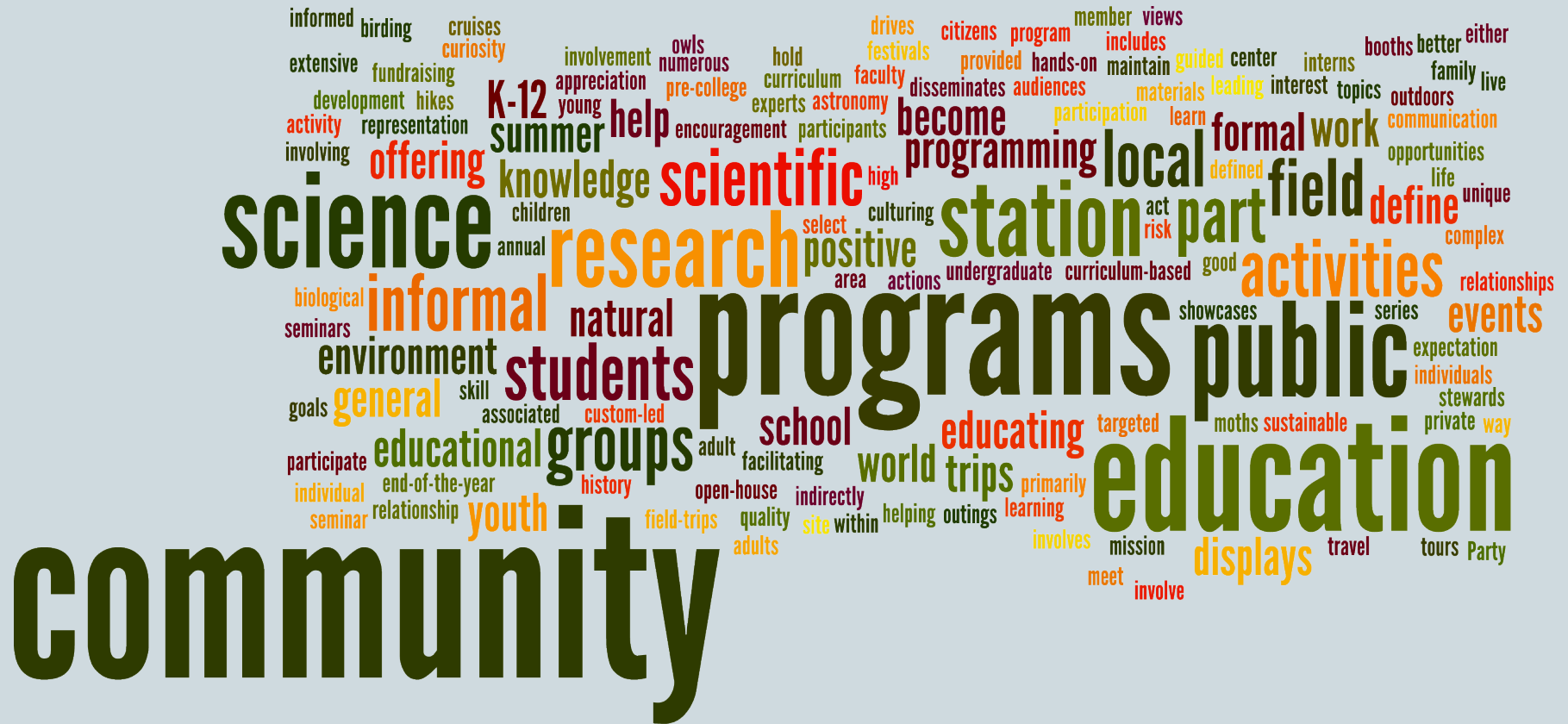
- So what IS going on at field stations?
- To find out ...
  - Sent survey solicitation to OBFS listserv
  - Recieved 15 responses (THANK YOU)
- Getting some idea of the breadth of activities

# 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.