



DUCKS9



Plenary 2: Considering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of waterfowl ecology and conservation

Field safety strategies

to support at-risk researchers

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Izembek Lagoon - Izembek NWR, AK (2017)

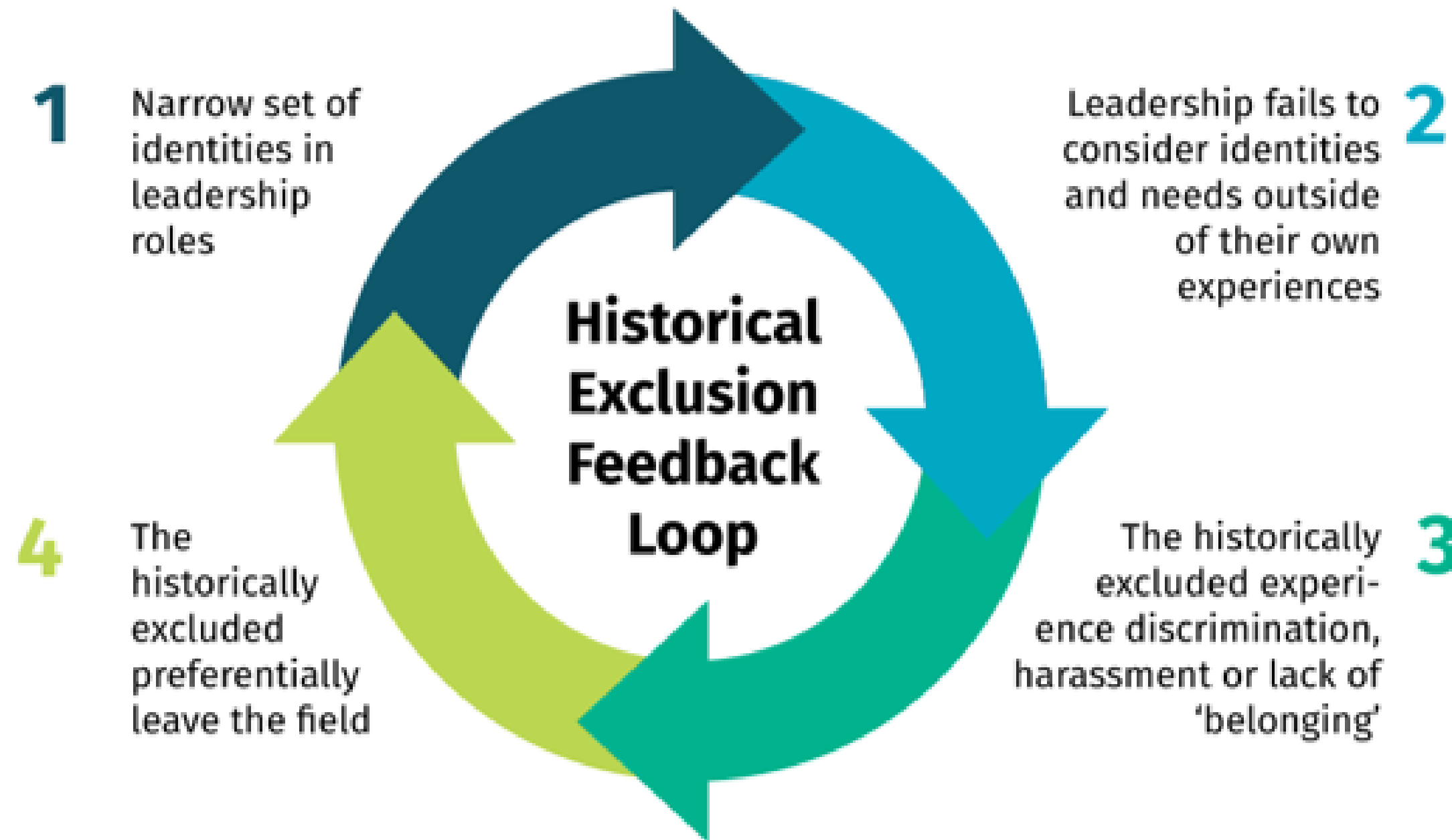


Abandoned Airfield - Atlantic City, NJ (2023)



Field ecology tradition and legacy





Field ecology and inclusivity

“**Sense of belonging** is an important social psychological mechanism through which features of institutional environments may lead to inequitable STEM outcomes including **underrepresentation.**”

~ O’Brien et al. 2020

Greene, S.E., G.S. Antell, J. Atterby, et al. (2021). Preprint



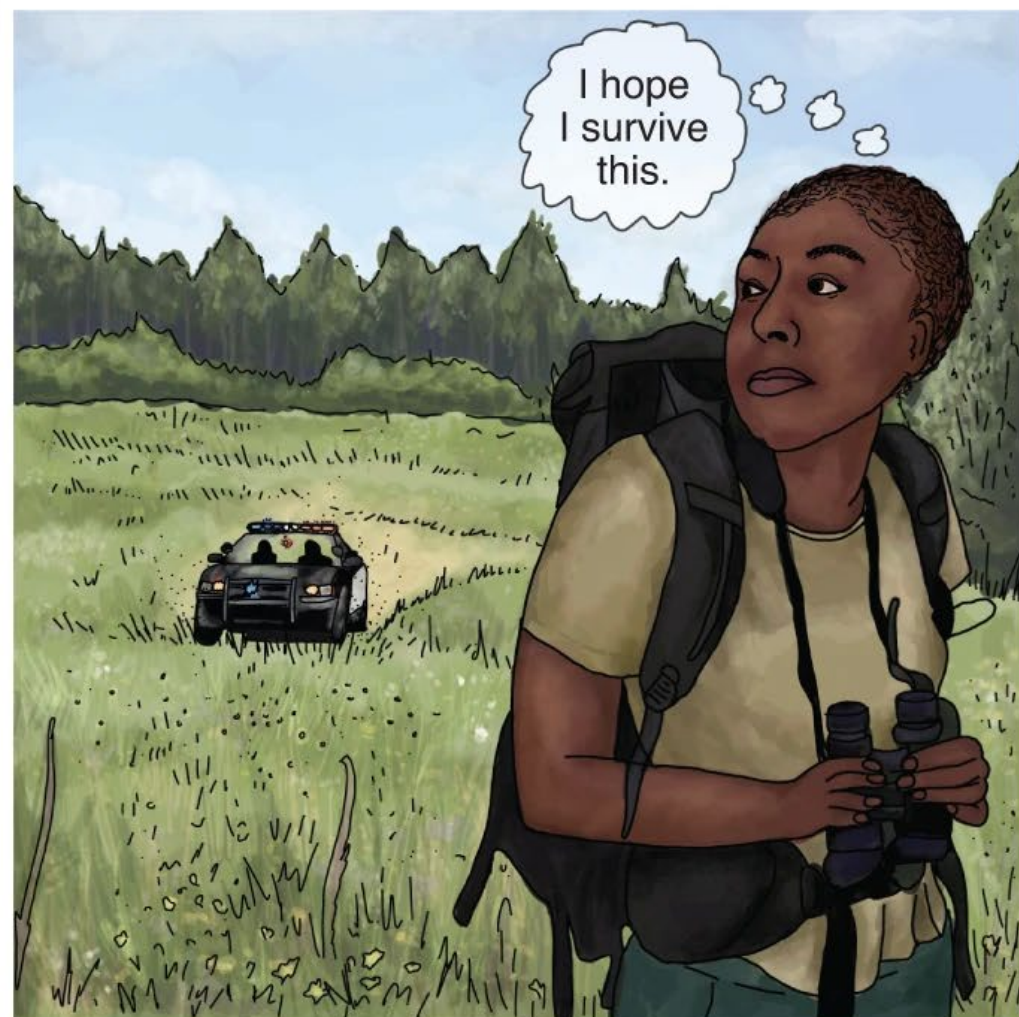
Who is “at-risk?”



Those expressing visible signs of their race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and religion.

*Any identity that is viewed as different from the local community in which the research is being conducted (a majority identity at their home institution can be the minority identity at the field site).

a



b



c



d



Example Scenarios

Figure from:
Demery, A.J.C., Pipkin, M.A. Nat Ecol Evol 5, 5–9 (2021).



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Actionable Steps



Culture Change —  **Policy Development** —  **Training**



Equipment  — **Reporting**  — **Accountability**

Actionable steps

**Culture
Change**

Project goals are not restricted to scientific objectives

Who: Funders, institutions/agencies, PIs/supervisors

When:  mid-term objective

How: Emphasize safety as a project goal.

Do not demand more scientific output in a manner that sacrifices safety, equity, or inclusion.

Actionable steps

Culture Change

Normalize and implement giving and receiving constructive feedback

Who: Pls/supervisors, field leads

When: 

How: Conversations rather than punitive, targeted criticism

Constructive feedback strategies

Call-in vs call-out



Actionable steps

Policy Development



Create a code of conduct that all field participants must read, understand, and sign

Who: Institutions/agencies, PIs, field leads

When: 

How: Include shared norms and values

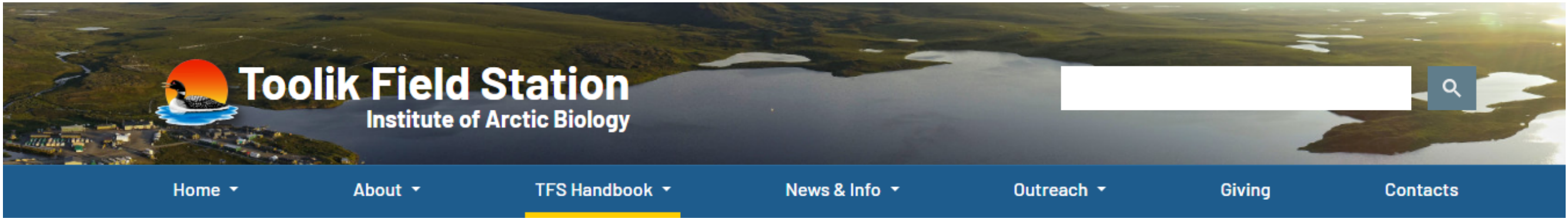
- Acknowledge differential challenges

- Detail expected and prohibited behavior

- Define consequences for non-compliance


- Provide reporting pathways

Code of Conduct Example




TFS / Handbook / Creating a Community of Respect


Creating a Community of Respect



Code of Conduct



Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Policy



Additional Resources

Toolik Field Station is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive environment for all who visit and work here. We believe that field experiences should be a positive, transformative experience and everyone should have equal access to the tools and resources necessary for fieldwork. However, we acknowledge that the geographically and socially isolated setting and the often times high pressure, “summer camp” culture of field stations like Toolik can serve as amplifying forces for the marginalization of under-represented groups while allowing for discrimination and harassment to go undetected and unchecked.

Because of this, Toolik strives to actively create a community of respect and prevent discrimination and harassment. Everyone at Toolik is required to adhere to our Code of Conduct (detailed below) and [TFS policies](#) surrounding Title IX and non-discrimination, [COVID-19](#), alcohol and drugs, firearms, and unmanned aerial systems operations, extreme weather, and dependents at camp. Additionally, Toolik residents must also follow the [National Science Foundation’s Polar Code of Conduct](#) and [University of Alaska and University of Alaska Fairbanks Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment policies](#). The following Code of Conduct details expected and prohibited behaviors of our community members, reporting options, and disciplinary procedures. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the Toolik Code of Conduct, please contact the Communication & DEI Manager, Haley Dunleavy at hdunleavy@alaska.edu or (907) 474-6407.

Expected behavior

Toolik expects all visitors, staff, and users to:

- Treat everyone with respect

All residents of Toolik Field Station (TFS) must complete the Toolik Field Station Code of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct Training. Housing reservations at Toolik Field Station will not be honored without the completing the training, passing an associated quiz, and approving two NSF waivers. It is highly advised that this is done as soon as housing reservations are made or shortly thereafter.

Training

This short training provides a brief overview of TFS’s Code of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct and Title IX

<https://www.uaf.edu/toolik/handbook/title-ix.php>



Actionable steps

Policy Development



Involve participants in policy development

Who: Institutions/agencies, PIs/supervisors, field leads, field participants

When:  ongoing objective

How: Tailor policy to specific field sites, participants, goals

Gain perspectives from participants with identities and experiences that may differ from PI/field lead



Actionable steps

Policy Development



Develop community-based resources

Who: Professional societies, institutions/agencies, Pls/supervisors

When:  long-term objective

How: Cross-institutional knowledge sharing of codes of conduct, procedures to investigate harassment
Reduce frequency of “pass the harasser”

Actionable steps

Training



Implement bystander intervention, de-escalation training

Who: Institutions/agencies, Pls/supervisors, field leads

When:  short-term objective

How: Distribute responsibility for safety of minoritized groups to everyone in the group
Improve confidence in ability to respond “in the moment”



Actionable steps

Training



Conduct scenario-based risk assessment and safety trainings

Who: Institutions/agencies, Pls/supervisors, field leads, field participants

When: 

How: Work through potential emergency scenarios before traveling to the field.

Identify individual obligations, including reporting and resources for witnesses of misconduct or emergency incidents.

Scenario-based risk assessment example



Racial Risk Assessment of Toolik Field Station & Research Sites

Toolik Field Station is located in an extremely isolated part of Alaska, adjacent to the Dalton Highway, but hundreds of miles from the nearest permanent community. The community of people at Toolik Field Station is highly seasonal: individuals come for durations ranging from a couple days to several months, sometimes with on/off week schedules. Researchers, students, and staff interact within the Toolik Field Station community itself as well as other Dalton Highway users. This section aims to address the racial risk of interacting with other Dalton users.

While overall encounters are rare, the most common include truckers servicing Prudhoe Bay, Alaska DOT workers maintaining the highway, pipeline and pump station workers, and hunters who camp out near the road from mid August to mid September. These groups tend to be predominantly white and male. In particular, hunters are often visibly armed with crossbows and guns for the caribou hunt. The fact that hunters are armed can present a safety concern and risk, particularly for researchers of color and non-male identifying or presenting researchers. The following points address the most common forms of interaction between researchers and other Dalton users and suggest ways to mitigate risk, specifically to BIPOC researchers.

1. **Vehicle Breakdowns.** Flat tires, cracked windshield, and other vehicle issues are common problems on the Dalton. It is common for Dalton travelers to pull over to assist broken down vehicles, but this situation can be uncomfortable and unsafe, especially for researchers of color and non-male presenting researchers.
 - a. To mitigate risk, all trucks that leave camp should have a working satellite phone with a charged battery, so researchers can call camp for help in case of a breakdown. Researchers are encouraged to drive to and from field sites in groups of at least two.
 - b. In the event of a breakdown, field teams should notify the on-duty camp manager via satphone. They should not attempt to perform any repairs unless they are fully trained and confident in doing so. Teams should also be aware of the physical hazards of conducting vehicle repairs on the side of the highway (soft shoulders, flying rocks).

Actionable steps

Accountability

Hold PIs and institutional leadership accountable for creating safe, equitable, and inclusive work environments.

Who: Funders, institutions/agencies

When:



How: NSF implementation of Safe and Inclusive Fieldwork Plan for some BIO/GEO solicitations
(External accountability)

Internal institutional policies, reinforcement system

Choose your collaborators carefully

Actionable steps



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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding Preparation and Submission of Safe and Inclusive Fieldwork (SAIF) Plans under the BIO/GEO Pilot

WHAT IS A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE FIELDWORK (SAIF) PLAN AND WHAT'S OFF-CAMPUS/OFF-SITE?

1. What is the Safe and Inclusive Fieldwork (SAIF) Plan?
2. What directorates and programs are participating in the pilot that require a SAIF Plan for all off-campus or off-site research?
3. When does the requirement to submit the SAIF Plan become effective?
4. Does the SAIF Plan differ from the plan required by the organization as explained in the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG), Chapter II.E.9?

Accountability





Actionable steps

Reporting



Designate a diverse set of people to report to in the field.

Who: Institutions/agencies, Pls/supervisors, field leads

When: 

How: Designate (and train) people of varied identities, levels of seniority to serve as approachable points of contact for concerns/reporting



Actionable steps

Equipment



Provide branded clothing, removable vehicle decals, field vehicle information packet when appropriate.

Who: PIs, field leads

When:



How: Provide affiliation-identifying equipment and organized documentation to increase “legitimacy” and reduce likelihood of negative public/law-enforcement interactions



Actionable steps

Equipment



Make communication devices and emergency transportation available to all staff.

Who: PIs, field leads

When: 

How: Access to communication devices should be free of charge, unrestricted and private
Free access to transportation to remove themselves from an unsafe situation



For field-workers:

Rapid-fire recommendations



1. Ask questions about safety in advance of accepting a new position
2. Work in pairs
3. Implement a check-in system
4. Wear high-visibility clothing
5. Get supervisors/field leads/previous students to introduce new field staff to landowners/managers when beginning work in a new area
6. Keep relevant contact information (local law enforcement, nearest hospital, supervisors, emergency contact) on hand
7. Always carry credentials
8. Take advantage of any training opportunities provided by your employer
9. Speak up if you are uncomfortable in a situation
10. Report even minor instances of abuse or harassment

Panel question submission:



Slides available at
github.com/LGCarlson



THANK YOU

Thank you to the Women in Waterfowl Leadership
And friends who make fieldwork so much more fun

