MBL-Ecosystems Center Pod
Session 6: Racism and Inclusivity

Deliverable: Safety Plan

The MBL and Ecosystems Center are committed to providing a diverse, inclusive and equitable research and work environment that includes safety for all people whether they work in a laboratory or field research setting.

General Guidance for Field and Lab Work
Each project is responsible for determining risks associated with conditions of field work whether it be environmental or social. Racial risk assessments should be known, transparent and alleviated for any individuals working at research sites. We strive to understand our community and ward off any potential conflicts that could arise. Field teams routinely meet to discuss the nature of the field work and anticipate and plan for unexpected circumstances. Researchers should carry credentials verifying who they are and their association with the research institution leading the research. Emergency plans and contacts should be readily available to all researchers. Work is conducted on MBL's campus and various local and remote field sites including international locations.

Ecosystems Center and projects Code of Conduct
- The MBL has posted on their web site an Unlawful Harassment Policy and Code of Conduct Policy. PIE LTER has Principles of Community and MBL Covid-19 policy documents that all associated researchers acknowledge when registering to conduct research at PIE LTER facilities.

Reporting of incidents
Violation reporting as covered in our Complaints and Reporting Policy deliverable from Session 2:
- The individual (or a representative) can directly report to Human Resources, the EEO Coordinator, the individual’s supervisor, or any person in management with whom the individual feels comfortable: Ann Egan – Director of Human Resources: (508) 289-7622▪Ann Sweck – EEO Coordinator: (508) 289-7378. It should be noted that HR as well as anyone acting in the individual’s supervisory role are considered obligate reporters and are legally required to bring these issues forward to Human Resources.
- MBL Security officers or Police can be involved (if requested or safety is involved) or contacted directly: MBL Security (for emergencies): (508) 289-7911. Falmouth Police (for emergencies): 911. Reports may also be filed at an individual’s home institution, if that is not MBL. At the beginning of the reporting
process, it is explained to a Complainant that they may have an advocate; however, this is not currently stated in the formal policy. There is currently no mechanism for anonymous reporting; our pod plans to recommend that MBL add this option.

Strategies and recommendations
The following list includes strategies and recommendations for researchers, supervisors and institutions to minimize risk for at-risk individuals during fieldwork. The list of recommendations is not intended to be exhaustive, but should be considered as a work-in-progress, and new items could (and should) be added or modified in the future. The list is based on Demery and Pipkin, 2020, and has been adapted to the specific conditions of work at MBL:

Strategies for individuals and supervisors:

1. All team members should have conversations about the risks, preparations to minimize risk, available resources and reporting mechanisms. These conversations should take place also throughout the season to address new concerns. If at any time researchers feel unsafe, they should contact their supervisor to discuss ways to modify the project. The MBL Diversity and Inclusion Committee is also available to answer questions and concerns you may have.

2. Create a field risk management plan that discusses risk at established field sites. A checklist should be available for researchers heading into the field that can be used in emergency situations. For example, University of California Irvine has made available a similar field checklist https://ecoevo.bio.uci.edu/fieldwork-travel-checklist/. The scale of risk can depend on the country in which the fieldwork is conducted.

3. Contact others (especially those who share an at-risk identity) that have previously used a field site at a location where there is a history of risk. It is recommended that researchers document all known cases of risk at that location.

4. Researchers should be aware of the resources and the managers at the field sites. The resources should have contact information about field site personnel relevant to research, emergencies, and safety.

5. Familiarize yourself with the neighborhood of the research site and engage in fieldwork with another person, when possible. Also, have a point of contact (preferably the supervisor) who is aware of your whereabouts and expected schedule on a given day.

6. Always carry credentials in case someone challenges why you are at the field site. These include photo identification (driver’s license, passports, MBL’s ID-card) and relevant permits. Any additional form of identification that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution can also be helpful (that is, university apparel, MBL’s bumper stickers, and so on).

Strategies at the department and institution levels

1. Make a general field safety, harassment training and first aid course available for all researchers. Also, provide training to supervisors on how to be an effective mentor to diverse individuals. MBL already provides a mandatory harassment training course every 2-3 years.
and a chemical safety course annually. We recommend that MBL also provides DEI information during orientation sessions provided to new employees. University of Chicago offers a webinar in DEI training. We suggest that MBL also offer DEI trainings. Researchers should take advantage of training opportunities to increase field safety and promote awareness.

2. We are working on adding a list of resources about diversity in the sciences, barriers to entry in the sciences and safety concerns that will be available through our MBL and Ecosystems Center websites.

3. We recommend that all current MBL’s DEI policies and practices are regularly re-evaluated to address shortfalls.

4. Ensure remote field locations and housing are appropriate, safe and equitable for all identities. Solicit regular, anonymized feedback from field researchers to determine the climate and safety of field sites and accommodations, and engage supervisors in responding to this feedback.

5. Ensure that all MBL-managed field sites are clearly labelled as a part of the institution.

6. An official letter of support should be available for researchers doing fieldwork, including contact information. This provides additional credibility to the researcher, if and when they are approached and challenged.

7. We recommend that MBL provide guidance and points of contact for researchers in remote locations on receiving assistance in emergency situations when immediate help is necessary, and also develop a plan for potential extraction process.

References
Demery, A.J.C., Pipkin, M.A. Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions. *Nat Ecol Evol* 5, 5–9 (2021). [https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-01328-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-01328-5)