

Guidelines for Conducting Research at the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest Under Reduced Operations Due to COVID-19

revised April 9, 2020

The following guidelines for conducting research at the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest during the 2020 Field Season are in place while the State of New Hampshire is under COVID-19 Stay-at-Home orders. These are currently in effect through May 4, 2020. In accordance, the USDA Forest Service facilities and the gate to the Hubbard Brook road are closed to the public, at least through this same time period. These guidelines will be updated as the COVID-19 situation evolves.

The guidelines have been developed, and will be updated, by the Hubbard Brook COVID-19 Task Force, consisting of representatives from the USDA Forest Service, the Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study, The Hubbard Brook LTER, the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation, and a member of the graduate student community. The guiding principles are to (1) insure the safety of staff, researchers, students and neighbors, as well as their families and communities; (2) abide by all state and federal COVID-19 orders and recommendations (the letter of the laws and the *intent* of the laws); and (3) maintain, *as much as possible*, the continuity and integrity of critical research.

Critical research is defined as (1) ongoing long-term research and field experiments that will be significantly less valuable if temporarily discontinued, (2) ongoing long-term research and field experiments that will provide insights into the impact of a global pandemic on ecosystems and the services they provide to society; and (3) ongoing graduate student and post-doctoral research which, if interrupted, would create loss of critical data delaying graduation for a year or more.

If you believe your research is critical, please fill out the Critical Research Form [here](#). This information will be used to prioritize research based on the policies of the State of NH and the US Forest Service. Wait for confirmation of approval before you travel to Hubbard Brook.

The Research Advisory Committee will not accept applications for new research until further notice.

What to know before going to Hubbard Brook:

- Check with your home institution's guidelines for conducting field research.
- Check for updates to New Hampshire's Stay-at-Home orders.
- Check for updates to New Hampshire's lodging guidelines. As of 4/6/20 and per the Governor's order, all New Hampshire accommodations are currently closed to people not considered essential workers.
- Check for updates on road and gate access at Hubbard Brook, which follows policies set by the White Mountain National Forest.

- Fill out the Critical Research form [here](#) and wait for confirmation of approval before you travel to Hubbard Brook.
- Identify housing before you go, if needed. HBRF housing will be made available in accordance with state guidelines. When state guidelines change, HBRF may offer housing at its facilities later this field season. Space is limited, and priority will be given to season-long rentals. Tenting is not currently permitted on HBRF property.
- Develop a personal safety plan before you leave (buddy system in the woods, safety phone checks on entering and leaving the forest, etc.).
- Plan to bring food and other personal items so as not to put strain on local businesses.

What to know when you are at Hubbard Brook:

- The Forest Service Headquarters Buildings are all closed to the public.
- There are currently no public restroom facilities available at Forest Service or HBRF sites.
- If you have an essential need to enter the USFS Headquarters buildings, please contact Ian Halm, and he can arrange for an escort, as per USDA policy guidance. ian.halm@usda.gov or 603 397 7966. No one is allowed in the buildings without an escort. Wear a face mask if you enter the building.
- Do not expect Forest Service staff support when at the forest. Forest Service personnel are all teleworking, with the exception of Ian Halm, who is at the forest only on an as-needed basis.
- The main gate to the Hubbard Brook road is currently locked. The three research gates (Cant Dog, South Facing Watersheds, North Facing Watersheds) are also locked and combinations have been changed. You must have permission through the Critical Research Form to go through these gates as strict sanitation procedures are required for touching locks, gates, and research structures.
- Leave no trace. Pack out what you pack in!

Required Protocols to Promote Social Distancing and Healthy Work Environments:

- Stay home and do not work when sick.
- Avoid close contact, staying at least six feet away from others, and avoid working downwind of others.
- Maintain personal hygiene, including washing hands, using hand sanitizers/wipes, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, and any surface that might be touched by others (e.g., gates, locks, research structures).
- Avoid sharing tools and equipment, when possible and safe. Do not share vehicles.
- Wear gloves and a face mask if working with others.