

Memorandum

Date: 29 September 2017

To: Michael Donihue and Whitney King, co-chairs of Colby College Collaboration with Maine Huts and Trails

From: Denise Bruesewitz, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

Subject: Reflection on ES494 Maine Huts and Trails trip, Fall 2017

I was fortunate to be able to bring my students enrolled in ES494 (Problems in Environmental Science) along with ES faculty Justin Becknell and Biology staff April Chiriboga for an overnight stay to the Flagstaff Hut of Maine Huts and Trails.

Of the 16 students enrolled in my class, 14 students were able to attend this trip. The addition of Justin and April, both forest ecologists, was a great way to get our senior students to get to know them better and an opportunity to have conversations about their research projects with environmental scientists besides me.

My goals for this trip were: 1) to work on both field data collection techniques on the shore of Flagstaff Lake, and 2) for each student research team to develop a core set of principles that will establish their team dynamic for the semester of collaborative research. I also wanted the students to participate in the energy tour of the hut, because part of our class project is to make carbon and nutrient budgets of the farm we are studying in our class this year. Finally, I wanted to ensure the students had some unscheduled time to be together away from campus to build community and have broad conversations about our project with each other and with me, Justin and April. We were able to touch upon each of these things, but it was quite a lot to pack into a 24-hour period. I believe that the unplugged day away from campus was an ideal opportunity for the students to commit to a plan of action for their research teams (see Appendix 2). The nature of our project for this semester was such that the student teams (teams of 2) all have very different field methods, and this made demonstration of field methods difficult to accomplish in the timeframe. We were able to deploy and test all of our different logging data sensors, and that was a fun and useful way for each team to understand this aspect of our data collection before deployment at the farm. An additional benefit was that each team saw the other sensors being used in action prior to use on the farm, so they had a better sense of these different data streams.

Logistically, the trip went smoothly. The ongoing assistance of Chemistry administrative assistant Kimberley LaPointe ensured communication with the Maine Huts and Trails staff and rental of the needed vehicles. I was easily able to borrow needed sleeping bags from Campus Life. It was very useful to have additional faculty present, not just for the community building aspects, but also to make sure we could have faculty in place at the end of our group to ensure no students lagged behind on the trail. The ME Huts and Trails staff also were also fantastic in making sure we were well fed and had everything we needed to explore the area (life jackets, etc). When a group of 2 students in a canoe got turned around in their canoe on the lake on Saturday morning, the Maine Huts and Trails staff were able to get out on the water to help them find their way back to the hut in short order. We left campus at 2:00, arrived at the trailhead at 4:00 and we were to the hut by about 5:30. (Full schedule is listed in Appendix 1). We were able to make it to the hut in plenty of time for dinner and before dark. To expand on the task of

learning field data collection techniques, it would be nice to be able to arrive 1-2 hours earlier in the evening if at all possible.

A big thank you to Colby College, Whitney King, Michael Donihue, Kimberley LaPointe, Ryan Linehan, and the staff of Maine Huts and Trails for making our trip a reality!

Appendix 1: Planning notes

ME Huts and Trails ES494 Fall 2017 Trip Planning

ME Huts and Trails (207) 265-2400

Flagstaff Hut— (207) 699-8394

Attendees:

Denise Bruesewitz

Thom Klepach

Roa Klepach

Isla Klepach

Justin Becknell

Mariama Bah

Katy Donchik

Sophie Gould

Marcus Jones

Tom Kiffney

Brian Kim

Alyssa Kullberg

Kathleen Mason

Molly McGavick

Riley Miedell

Maddie Partridge

Julia Saul

Lydia Wasmer

Carmen Wu

Joelle Young

20 Total (15 students)

Itinerary:

Friday early afternoon: Denise will make sure gas is in SUVs, and get equipment loaded into vehicles

2:30-3:00 students load personal gear and gather behind Olin

3:00 sharp- leave for trailhead

4:30 arrive at trailhead for 2.2 mile walk to the hut

no later than 6:30 - arrive at hut

Evening: Deploy programmed sondes/data loggers, have dinner. Discuss the research team partnership planning exercises. Tour of hut. Time for games & conversation

Saturday morning: 7:30-9:30 Breakfast, Check out of Hut, gather all gear and bag lunches.

10:00-12:00 AM Demo sampling on streams/lake shore. Pick up all data loggers & sondes, explore the area.

Hike to trailhead 12-2

Drive back to campus; arrive by 3:30

What students should bring:

-checklist provided by ME Huts and Trails and bathing suits

Extra items I will bring:

Paper copy of directions to trailhead for all vehicles

Copy of reservation confirmation & materials from ME Huts and Trails

First-Aid kit

Copy of trail maps for everyone- contact info on map for everyone

Extra sleeping bag

Trail snacks

Headlamps & flashlight

List of group phone numbers

Camera

Cash

Sunscreen

Insect repellent

Whistle

Tea candles

Lighter

Waterproof matches

Other safety precautions:

We will do a headcount coming in and coming out

One of the faculty will be the last on the trail making sure everyone is accounted for.

Appendix 2: Reflection assignment prompt for the students

Please write about a half a page on any of the following prompts that speak to you, and include a picture on the page if possible. Please only address 1-2 of the following in your writing, and please self-edit your text before sending it along to me. If possible, it would be great to trade with another student in the class and edit each other's writing, too.

Note the picture may be used for a ME huts and trails blog post, so make sure it is something you wouldn't mind going out into the world.

Please use a first-person, active voice and start the post by briefly introducing yourself and your interests in environmental science (and/or computation).

Prompts:

What did you take away from this trip in terms of your learning about: (*address 1-2 of the following*)

- building an effective collaborative research team?
- sustainability and eco-tourism in Maine?
- Carbon budgeting of an off-the grid hut?
- Importance of planning and careful thought that goes into planning a large-scale research project such as your work on Wild Folk Farm? (did time away from classes and other obligations help you to focus on your project)
- Importance of community and time for recreation with your fellow researchers

and finally

-were you inspired to spend more time out on the Huts and Trails system, or out in the Maine woods generally?