

Yosemite and Sequoia Field Stations Notice of Policies

Dear Yosemite and Sequoia Field Stations Researchers, Students, and Educators,

Welcome to spring/summer 2021! YSFS and UC Merced have adopted operating procedures to protect the health of staff, participants, and our community while minimizing disruptions to research and education. Please read this letter carefully prior to your visit as it contains important information for what to expect and what to bring.

The resurgence of COVID-19 is a very real possibility. Our ability to gradually and sustainably return research and scholarly activities to 'normal' will depend on everyone's commitment to physical distancing and other safety measures at work and in our personal lives. All individuals are expected to adhere to UC Merced's [Universal Requirements for Physical Mitigation and Reduction of the Transmission of COVID-19](#)¹ ("Universal Requirements"). We ask that you carefully read the Universal Requirements and agree to abide by the expectations and procedures below.

Please note that these expectations are *in addition to* the normal guidelines for field research and access to UC Merced Natural Reserve System facilities, such as development of field safety plans.

Field Station Risk Reduction Practices

1. Reduced housing density.
2. Provision of hand soap and cleaning supplies.
3. Requirement of all users to read and sign this form prior to arrival.
4. See our SOP for additional practices

Please expect the following:

- Face coverings will be required in common areas and should be worn when walking around the community.
- Frequent hand washing and sanitizing will be required.
- Non-essential travel is discouraged.
- Daily symptom and fever checks are required.
- Group size will not exceed 10 people and building/room capacity will be limited.
- In-person staff assistance will be limited.
- Isolation or quarantine must be completed offsite at the home institution's expense.

Items to procure now and bring with you:

- Face coverings. Home-made or non-medical masks are okay. Tightly woven, double layer, washable fabric preferred.
- Thermometer for daily symptoms monitoring. Any kind is acceptable and will not be provided.
- All necessary groceries and supplies including toilet paper and medications. The field station will provide hand soap and cleaning/disinfection supplies.
- Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

- The UC Merced NRS team

*All visitors are required to read this form and acknowledge this form **within the 5-day window prior to arriving at the field station.** These protocols are subject to change and will be updated based upon our perceived levels of public exposure risk.*

Reservation policy

Use of the field station is at the discretion of UC Merced, the UC Merced Natural Reserve System administration, and the National Park Service. Use may be denied, revoked, or cancelled at any time as conditions change with no penalty for COVID-19 related cancellations.

Criteria Prohibiting Visitation of UC Merced Field Stations

1. Individuals experiencing key symptoms of the virus, or who have been in close contact with people with these symptoms within 14 days prior to their reservation, are not permitted to visit the field station. These symptoms include but are not limited to fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.
2. Individuals who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, who have been exposed to someone who has tested positive, or who have been contacted through contact tracing, shall follow CDC guidelines for [quarantine/isolation](#) prior to arrival at the field station.

No Guests

Guests are not allowed at the field station properties at any time.

Face Coverings

Face coverings must be worn in all common areas and outside if there is a reasonable expectation of passing within 6 feet of other individuals. Non-medical face coverings are acceptable, ideally double layered, tightly woven, and washable fabric. Face coverings must cover the mouth and nose. Ideally, face coverings should be discarded or washed after each day of use. All field station users are responsible for providing their own face coverings.

Physical Distancing

Individuals shall maintain at least six-foot distance from other individuals, unless protocols require closer contact, and additional appropriate measures for safety are used (e.g., PPE). Individuals will cover coughs or sneezes into the sleeve or elbow, not hands. Individuals will not shake hands.

Personal Hygiene

All individuals should carry their own personal supply of hand sanitizer for field use. Hand sanitize prior to entering any building or retrieving the key from the key boxes. Hand sanitizer will be provided to refill your personal supply. Hand soap will be provided at all sinks within field station facilities. Individuals should immediately wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds every time they enter a building, after using the restroom, before using common areas like kitchens, and prior to putting on a face covering. Avoid touching the mouth, nose, eyes, or ears with unwashed hands.

Daily Health Screening

Participants will complete and record a daily symptom check starting the day prior to their arrival. Before conducting research each day, participants should measure their body temperatures and monitor for COVID-19 related symptoms. No one should participate in any field work if they are feeling ill or have a temperature of >100°F. It is recommended that no one over the age of 65 or anyone who has serious underlying medical conditions should participate in any field station activities.

Contact Tracing

Participants will log each day's activities. This log should include locations sampled, public or private venues accessed or visited, personnel and participants in attendance, and any operational anomalies that may have occurred

requiring assistance from persons outside the field crew (e.g., mechanical issues). The log should also include, to the best of the participants' ability, the name and contact information of individuals contacted during the research or daily activities.

Contingency Planning

Each group leader is responsible for creating a field safety plan that includes an evacuation plan in case a group member becomes sick that will be reviewed by the UC Merced NRS staff for completeness and feasibility. If a participant becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, or is exposed to someone who is ill, they will immediately isolate in a bedroom and call their health care provider. All personnel will follow their evacuation plan, notify the Field Station Director of any housing needs or changes, and comply with all instructions provided by public health officials and / or the Field Station Director. All other individuals in the house/group as the affected individual should consider themselves "exposed". If possible, the remaining participants in the group will be evacuated at their own expense from the field station within 24 hours. A stay at home order conferred in the middle of a reservation will trigger evacuation of the entire reservation unless the affected parties are doing essential work or have a previously scheduled 'long-term' (15 days or more) reservation at the field station.

Special Instructions for Pods

In some cases, groups comprised of multiple households may form a pod onsite of no more than 10 individuals. A **pod** is a group of individuals who intentionally form a cohort to accomplish a specific objective (e.g., research, learning, other work). Once a pod is formed, they function as a household by limiting interactions outside their residence to essential activities. Groups larger than 10 may split into sub-pods² that remain distinct throughout their visit (i.e., they do not cohabitate, share meals, share vehicles, or congregate indoors with members outside their sub-pod). Pods and sub-pods may meet as a cohort for approved activities outside, wearing masks, and maintaining physical distance. To enter a pod or sub-pod, individuals must not travel outside their home, except for essential activities, for *fourteen days prior to arrival* and acquire a PCR-based SARS-CoV-2 test within 72 hours prior to arrival. We recommend a second PCR-based SARS-CoV-2 test be obtained five days or more after arrival.

If an individual exhibits any COVID-19 symptoms following arrival, they will isolate in a designated room separate from others and evacuate within 24 hours. If more than one individual in a pod exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms following arrival, the pod will evacuate within 24 hours. If individuals from multiple sub-pods within one reservation exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, the entire reservation will evacuate. The same guidance applies if an individual or multiple individuals are exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Isolation and/or quarantine must take place off-site at the home institution's expense, following recommended CDC guidance on the length of the [quarantine](#) or [isolation](#) period. Once the isolation/quarantine period is past, participants may return to the field station.

Protecting the Community

Participants must bring all food and supplies with them. **This includes Toilet Paper!!!** Do not plan to shop in Wawona, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa, or Oakhurst because these communities are small, and supplies have been extremely limited. If shopping is necessary, or for long-term users, plan to limit the number of trips to the store. Consider electing a single individual from the group to shop for everyone. Wash your hands before entering any store or business and wear a mask. These measures will help protect vulnerable shoulder communities from external introduction of COVID-19.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Participants will clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces in the house daily. Surfaces include faucets, door handles, light switches, thermostats, telephones, sinks, countertops, toilets, and railings. Cleaning supplies will be provided in each building for this purpose. Participants will thoroughly clean and disinfect the house at the end of their stay, including the frequently used surfaces mentioned above. At the Yosemite facilities, all linens and mattress covers will either be placed in the washing machine within the house or in a provided garbage bag. All used dishes will be cleaned in the dishwasher (if available) except where this would cause damage. In this case, wash dishes

²A **sub-pod** is a group of individuals who form a household by limiting interactions outside their on-site residence to essential activities. Sub-pods are embedded in larger pods comprised of a cohort formed to accomplish specific work.

with soap and hot water and leave in dish rack. All garbage and recycling will be removed from the house and placed in the appropriate dumpsters (located near the Wawona Fire Station at Yosemite or in the parking lot adjacent to the cabin at Sequoia). Users should turn on fans when they depart if the cabin has them.

As an additional safety measure, cabins at Yosemite Field Station will be cleaned and disinfected periodically throughout the summer. All users may be assessed a cabin cleaning fee to help pay for these increased costs. The exact amount will vary depending on the cabin but is expected to be \$50-200 per cabin per stay. We will seek to place all users in the smallest cabin that fits their needs, but due to our operational requirements and constraints, some small groups may be placed in larger cabins that will require a larger cleaning fee.

At the Sequoia Field Station cabin, due to the remote nature of the site, users should take special care to clean the cabin regularly during their stay and at the end of their visit. All users must fill out and send the cabin cleaning form to the Field Station Director within 1 day of the end of their stay, or risk being assessed a cabin cleaning fee of \$250. The cabin will remain unoccupied for at least 24 hours between visits as an additional precaution.

On-site assistance and operations

In an emergency, call emergency personnel first and if the situation allows it, follow up with the Director. For non-emergencies, staff assistance during a stay will be limited. Should you experience an issue that requires staff assistance, first call the Maintenance Steward or Director to discuss the issue. If the issue involves a minor resupply of essential items such as cleaning products, etc., field station staff will coordinate to safely transmit the items to the participant in a manner that ensures social distancing and wildlife safety. Maintenance issues will be resolved remotely if possible. If an issue cannot be solved remotely, but the issue is minor and can be safely ignored until the group has left the field station, it will be addressed when the building is empty and once disinfection has occurred. If an issue creates a safety hazard for users, it may be possible in rare cases for the Director, maintenance steward, or other personnel to solve the safety hazard while maintaining their own safety and compliance with UC Merced guidelines regulating interactions with participants. In most cases where there is a safety hazard in a house, participants will be asked to relocate to a different house, or if no additional facilities are available, to leave the field station.

Name of Group Leader: _____

I acknowledge that I have read the Notice of Policies and Pre-Screen in full and will comply with all provisions.

Printed Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant