

# NIWOT RIDGE LTER FIELD WORK RETURN TO WORK PLAN

(Version 5/01/21)

- A. **RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH RETURNING TO FIELD WORK AS PART OF NWT LTER:** risks include those associated with COVID, including to individual field personnel, those they work with, and the community as a whole; risks associated with working in remote field conditions, including terrain, wildlife, and weather, risks associated with unacceptable behavior that violates our code of conduct, including demeaning, discriminatory or harassing behavior or exclusion from activities without reasonable accommodations, and the potential for these latter two types of risks being amplified by COVID-related risk mitigation.
- B. **RISK MITIGATION PLAN.** Our plan to manage the risks described above adheres to six key components:
1. **Field sampling will only be done if it can be safely carried out:**
    - a. by a cohort (we consider a cohort as a small group of at least 2 and no more than 4-5 working together throughout the season),
    - b. of individuals that feel comfortable to work as outlined without undue pressure or concern of reprisal,
    - c. that do not need to share equipment with other cohorts (or optimally, within the cohort group),
    - d. and with open and clear avenues for which concerns and request for accommodations can be brought up in confidence to the group leader, lab PI, and/or LTER co-PIs.
  2. **COVID-related precautions to reduce contact and spread are in place**, including:
    - a. use of a face mask when in close proximity (8ft) of others, supplied by the researcher and cleaned daily,
    - b. social distancing at all times, including when training others and in transport to sites,
    - c. disinfection procedures prior to and following use to include shared tools, equipment, vehicle interiors, work and infrastructure surfaces,
    - d. plans if a cohort team member gets sick, including stopping work immediately, return to the MRS, and seek medical help.
    - e. completing the daily health assessment, as required by campus.
  3. **Field safety-related precautions, noting the increased need in precaution and planning, are followed:**
    - a. Field safety guidelines remain in place as detailed in the LTER and MRS guidelines. LTER field safety guidelines are outlined in detail here (<https://nwt.lternet.edu/guidelines-for-researchers>).
    - b. Know the weather forecast and keep an eye on the weather.
    - c. Establish workflows at the start of each day to avoid equipment sharing and discuss safety plans.
    - d. Have reliable communication devices (depending on location, this might mean a PLB). Know important points of contact: MRS (303-492-8841, 303-492-8840); Boulder County Emergency Services (Search and Rescue, Fire: 303-441-3646, 303-441-4444); Trama Center and Hospital: Boulder Community Health (303-415-7000); Urgent Care Clinic: Boulder Medical (303-440-3200)
    - e. Have a full first aid kit (see list in field safety documentation), including COVID-related supplies such as additional gloves, masks, and sanitizer.
    - f. With frequent check ins, cohorts can split for periods within a day but avoid isolated solo work.
  4. **Access to emergency equipment, shelters and transportation will be available in emergencies**, given that:

- a. Only access the tundra lab in a life or limb emergency to retrieve emergency supplies (AED/Epi-Pen/Oxygen) or to shelter in place. Only access the LTER field vehicles to shelter in place or for self-evacuation to seek medical aid.
- b. If entry during an emergency: limit the number of people that enter, wear masks and gloves at all times, and alert the LTER as soon as possible (1-2 hours) afterward.
- c. No other person will be allowed to enter the Tundra Lab for 48 hours following emergency use to protect the few personnel that require occasional access to critical research equipment.
- d. Entry will trigger a throughout cleaning with disinfectant involving all touched surfaces and increased ventilation as possible (windows, doors).
- e. The second emergency use of the tundra lab or LTER vehicle will trigger a review of the field safety protocols of the group and may result in loss of field research approval.

**5. Niwot Code of Conduct remains in place under all circumstances.**

- a. Don't ignore it! If someone's actions infringe on our ability to provide a safe, welcoming and productive research environment, take appropriate action as outlined in our code of conduct (<https://nwt.lternet.edu/orientation-harassment-policy>).
- b. All return to work research is voluntary. If you or anyone in your group feels uncomfortable with any part of these risk mitigation guidelines or how they are implemented, contact LTER PIs Katie Suding or Nancy Emery. We will try to accommodate all concerns or circumstances in confidence.

**6. All other University requirements are met, including (but not limited to):**

- a. Demonstrated criticality of research and cost if delayed.
- b. Approved travel and other unit authorization as required.
- c. MRS permit submitted and process followed.

**C. SPECIFIC RISK GUIDELINES FOR LTER VEHICLE USE**

- 1. LTER shuttles will run when in concordance with CU, local, state and CDC guidelines.
  - a. Different numbers of riders may be required throughout the field season
  - b. Vaccinated researchers may use the shuttle for transport to MRS
  - c. Unvaccinated researchers may use personal vehicles for transport to MRS
- 2. You must meet CU driver guidelines and be able to adhere to safe driving 4WD practices.
- 3. No more than one individual should travel in a vehicle at a time unless 6 feet of separation between persons can be maintained.
- 4. Persons in vehicles should wear a face mask, wash hands before entering and after exiting vehicle, should refrain from touching their faces while driving, and operate vehicles with the windows open.
- 5. Vehicles should be cleaned before and after use with a disinfectant. Surfaces to clean include dash, steering wheel, gear shift, door handles (inside and out), seat, seatbelt, keys, and any other commonly touched surfaces.
- 6. Driving a personal vehicle between the Marr Lab and Cable Gate is discouraged, but if necessary, reach out to Bill Bowman and Kris Hess to request permission and coordinate with other users.
- 7. To request to be part of the approved driver/passenger plan, please contact [lternwt@colorado.edu](mailto:lternwt@colorado.edu).

**D. SPECIFIC RISK GUIDELINES FOR LTER WATERCRAFT USE**

- 1. Only pre-approved members of the LTER limnology team will be allowed to do lake-based work.
- 2. No more than one individual should travel in a boat at a time unless 6 feet of separation between persons can be maintained.

3. Personal flotation devices (PFD) must be securely worn by each individual at all times while aboard any watercraft.
4. When possible, boat based surveys will be conducted using a guideline for additional two points of contact on opposing shorelines, in order to increase speed and stability of watercraft operations.
5. If only one person can be in a boat at one time, that person must operate the boat with: (1) a personal anchor from their PFD to the boat that will prevent the researcher from being separated from the boat while on the water; (2) an additional guideline attached from the boat's back carry handle (a load bearing ring) to shore where it is ground-secured and held by a second person on the shore to allow for the emergency retrieval of the solo boat operator.