

GUIDELINES CONCERNING FIELD METHODS AND TAKING OF ORGANISMS

Huron Mts. Wildlife Foundation
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General statement

No research is without the potential for affecting the system being studied. The Huron Mountain Wildlife Foundation (HMWF) accepts that research at the Huron Mountains can be of such value as to warrant accepting some impacts. However, one of the greatest values of the Huron Mountains as a research site lies in the area's 'reference ecosystem' status – its relative freedom from direct effects of human manipulation. Furthermore, use of the research area is by permission of the Huron Mt. Club, whose members value the natural status and appearance of the landscape. For these reasons, research sponsored by HMWF should be designed to minimize both functional and visual impacts on the research area. All research proposals will be reviewed with this standard in mind, and may be denied due to a judgment of unacceptable impact, even if scientific merit is high.

The following guidelines are intended to help researchers in developing acceptable research design. In instances where questions about impact might be raised, proposals should specifically address these concerns in terms of 1) the scientific value of the work as proposed, and 2) possible alternate approaches to the research problem. Questions about these issues should be addressed to the Director of Research at HMWF (kwoods@bennington.edu).

Specific Guidelines

1. *'Taking' of organisms for research purposes:*

A. Research resulting directly in the death of study organisms is permissible only if such mortality is judged very unlikely to affect the status and dynamics of the population (this may not apply in the case of non-native species). It is the researcher's obligation to make this case.

B. If the first guideline is met, removal/killing of organisms may be warranted (for example, for purposes of scientific documentation, experimental manipulations, genetic studies, etc.). However, such takings should be minimized. For example, photographic documentation should be used when possible, samples for genetic study should be taken non-lethally, experimental organisms should be reintroduced to habitat when feasible, etc.

C. Proposals should be explicit about numbers of organisms to be taken and sample areas from which individuals are to be removed.

D. Disposal of any permanent specimens (vouchers, etc.) should be documented in annual or final reports to HMWF. Documentary collections should be deposited in secure repositories accessible to researchers (e.g., university or museum collections or herbaria).

2. *Installation of field marks and apparatus:* The HMWF encourages long-term research, and this may require installations of sampling apparatus, sensors, or markers that will remain in the field between visits by researchers.

A. Such installations should be visually unobtrusive so far as is consistent with research requirements. Avoid immediate neighborhood of trails, roads, boat-houses, etc. when possible.

B. Threat of vandalism or tampering is very low, but HMWF may not be held responsible for damage due to these or natural causes.

C. When possible, general locations of installed equipment or markers should be indicated in proposals. For installations that will be in place for more than one field season, locations should be given in annual reports (UTM coordinates are preferable). Researchers should consult with the Director of Research concerning placement of such long-term installations.

D. In most cases, researchers are required to remove all equipment, installations, or field-marks at the termination of their study (or sooner). In some instances, where relocation of study-sites could be valuable to future researchers, it may be appropriate to leave location markers in place. This possibility, and appropriate means of marking such sites, should be addressed with the Director of Research.

E. All visible sampling apparatus, sensors, etc., if left in place when researcher is not present, should be labeled with research and project name, and indication of association with Huron Mt. Wildlife Foundation sponsored research.

3. *Experimental manipulation:* Large-scale, manipulative experimentation is not within the mission of HMWF. However, experimental approaches are encouraged if the impact of manipulation is modest, temporary, and appropriate to the research question.

A. Proposals should be explicit about any experimental methods that may alter habitat, manipulate populations or ecosystem function, or otherwise alter the study area. Researchers may wish to consult with the Director of Research before final submission of a proposal.

B. Proposals should address the importance of such manipulations in the context of available alternatives.

C. Researchers will be responsible, upon completion of experiments, for restoring the experimental system, so far as possible, to pre-experiment status.

4. *Incidental impacts:* Research should be designed to minimize 'casual' impact due to traffic to and from field sites and any other consequences of the researchers' presence in the field.