

Molluscan Ecology program: Lab operating procedures in response to COVID (draft 2.0 dated 20200626)

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Herein I offer commentary on procedures we will employ in the Molluscan Ecology Lab spaces in Andrews Hall in response to COVID.

General cautionary procedures on cleaning/disinfection procedures, sanitizing and social distancing in common spaces (corridors, classrooms where appropriate, stairways, etc.) have been covered in prior institutional documents originating from or referenced by Joe Martinez. I will not repeat them here. Herein I address office and work areas in Andrews 425 (Roger Mann office), Andrews 314 (Melissa Southworth office), Andrews 313 (shared office, Theresa Redmond and Alexis Hollander), lab room numbers Andrews 315 (chemistry/physiology), Andrews 316 (microscopy), Andrews 317 (archive and teaching collections), field lab and processing support in Andrews 123 and 125, and field archive museum in Andrews 116 (formerly GeoPelican support storage).

In addition to Mann, Southworth, Redmond and Hollander we have additional program members. These are Alexandria (Alex) Marquardt (new student, yet to be assigned office/desk space in Andrews), Nathan Otto (part time), Joshua “Jay” Carnaghi (NSF Veteran intern). Neither Otto nor Carnaghi have assigned office space or desks. They work in Andrews 123, 125, and 316.

Location specific protocols and limitations are given below. The program has initiated a shared space and time plan in Outlook for all lab spaces to minimize in person interaction. The directive from Mann to all program personnel is to maintain remote operation unless lab use is required and until institutional guidelines support a return to general on campus operations with set working hours.

Andrews 425 (Roger Mann) and 314 (Melissa Southworth) are single occupant offices. These will, until further notice, be limited to two person occupancy at any one time with social distancing minimum required. The primary occupant is responsible for cleaning/disinfecting their office space.

Andrews 313 (Theresa Redmond and Alexis Hollander) is a small shared office. Social distancing is difficult. Masks are required when both occupants are present. Within practical limitations we will schedule office and computer use with single person occupancy at any one time as the continuing goal. Each occupant is responsible for cleaning/disinfecting their office space after use.

Andrews 316, 317 and 318 are used by all lab members. Occupancy will be limited to two persons at any one time with social distancing minimum required. Occupants will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting the space on completion of tasks. Project employing a “production line“

approach with 3 or 4 participants will no longer be allowed in Andrews 317. These tasks will now be performed in Andrews 123 and 125 (see below).

Andrews 123 and 125 are used for field support (preparation to go the field, sample examination after return from the field) and sample preparation. A two person occupancy limit with social distancing will be applied in each lab. Where “production line“ processing of samples is required both labs can be used in sequence with appropriate distancing. Occupants will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting the space on completion of tasks.

Andrews 116 (formerly GeoPelican support storage) is a field archive museum for offshore programs. Theresa Redmond is the archivist. Access to this space will be limited to Redmond and Mann. Social distancing will apply. Redmond or Mann will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting the space on completion of tasks.

Should the above procedures require modification any such actions will be discussed at weekly ZOOM lab meetings and submitted to appropriate VIMS administrators for review.

Any members of the lab group (staff, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, undergraduate students, and volunteers) that have concerns about the prescribed protocols or their effective implementation should discuss these concerns with Roger Mann and/or the Associate Dean of Research & Advisory Service, and/or the Associate Dean for Academic Studies or graduate students may meet with a Graduate Program Ombuds or Peer Advisor.

All visiting scientists, staff and/or students (from both within and outside of VIMS) who require use of Molluscan Ecology assigned space will read, acknowledge and be bound by the above guidelines.

Entrance doors to all Molluscan Ecology Lab spaces (A316, A317, A318, A 116, A123, A125) will be labeled as follows:

ACCESS TO MOLLUSCAN ECOLOGY LAB SPACE IS LIMITED TO PROGRAM PERSONNEL. COVID GUIDELINES LIMIT OCCUPANCY TO TWO PERSONS WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ANY ONE TIME. OCCUPANTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEANING OF LAB SPACE BEFORE THEY LEAVE.

Field operations by Molluscan Ecology Staff are not covered in this statement. Separate guidelines have been developed in consultation with VIMS Associate Dean of Research & Advisory Service and Vessels (Stewart Lamerdin). These guidelines are project specific. At the time of writing of this document (June 26, 2020) a working protocol is in place for oyster recruitment monitoring (shellstring survey). Yet to be developed and approved are working protocols for collaborative surveys with Virginia Marine Resources Commission personnel and projects using industry platforms or offshore work.