



THE GERALD L. BALILES CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



AT HULL SPRINGS

NEWS FROM THE BALILES CENTER

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Research Ramps Up at the Baliles Center



Student researchers Danielle Clarke-Bradley '24 and Grace Smith '25 conduct research on Aimes Creek.

Longwood biologist and Baliles Center research lab manager, Dr. Dina M. Leech, and her student researchers Danielle Clarke-Bradley '24 and Grace Smith '25 are using high frequency environmental sensors to monitor oxygen levels and “dead zone” formation in Aimes Creek, a small, brackish tributary of the Chesapeake Bay adjacent to the Baliles Center for Environmental Education at Hull Springs.

Every 15 minutes, a water quality sonde mounted to the dock in Aimes Creek measures the oxygen level as well as water temperature, salinity, pH, organic matter concentration, and algal abundance. Dr. Leech and her students visit the site monthly to retrieve the data and to clean and calibrate the sensors for redeployment.

As part of the Longwood Environmental Observatory (LEO), the sonde has

been collecting data since 2015. The research team is now beginning to use this long-term dataset to investigate past and present oxygen levels in Aimes Creek, comparing patterns in the day vs. night as well as monthly and yearly averages from 2015 to the present.

Small tidal creeks, like Aimes, are important habitats to many ecologically and economically valuable species in the Chesapeake Bay, such as blue crabs and oysters. This study provides important information about the sustainability of fisheries and aquatic life in the Bay, while Longwood students gain valuable, hands-on experience working with environmental sensor technology and long-term datasets. Congratulations to Clarke-Bradley and Smith, who recently were awarded a \$1,000 grant from Longwood's Office of Student Research to help fund their work.

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SCENES FROM OUR FIRST ANNUAL OAKS 'N' OYSTERS



1. Keynote speakers for the Oaks 'N' Oysters celebration (from left) were President W. Taylor Reveley IV, the Honorable Jon Baliles and the Honorable John W. Daniel, II. 2. Members of the Baliles family planted a Southern Red Oak in front of the Ames House. 3. Dr. Ken Perkins, Longwood Provost emeritus, crafted one-of-a-kind bowls from the fallen 400-year old oak for the live auction. 4. Mrs. Gerald L. (Robin) Baliles teamed up with award-winning oyster shucker, Stanley West, to reveal the day's star delicacy, fresh Chesapeake Bay oysters. 5. A perfect day by the water was enjoyed by good friends and supporters of the Gerald L. Baliles Center for Environmental Education at Hull Springs.

Construction Continues

Local contractor, J. M. Hayden Construction, has been selected to oversee the additional facilities project, which includes building two student units, a new faculty quarters, and a screened pavilion dedicated as a teaching/meeting/event space. Construction is to begin around April 1 with completion by late fall.

In addition to the new construction, the two existing bunkhouses will be renovated to include heating and air, kitchenettes and lavatories. Beautifully

situated on Aimes Creek, the cottages will allow incredible views of the water, while in close proximity to the research lab, a new dock with boat lift, and other site amenities.

A grant of \$55,300 from the Elmon B. Duff, Charitable Lead Trust, was awarded to cover the renovation costs of one of the two bunkhouses. Our sincere thanks to The EB Duff CLAT, for its continued support of the development of the Baliles Center at Hull Springs.

Ames House Refreshed

The Ames House, affectionately known as the Big House, has received new flooring on the entire first floor, new lighting and furnishings, bathroom updates, and interior painting throughout the entire house.

Dr. Mark Fink's ornithology class will be among the first students to visit the refurbished house. The class will spend a weekend in April at the property surveying, recording and reporting on bird activity in their natural habitat.



An Annual Appeal to Show Support for Our Mission

Longwood's Annual Day of Giving is Wednesday 22 March.

Please join our exciting mission to complete the build-out of the Baliles Center research lab site. The new facilities will provide additional lodging and teaching spaces for our students and faculty, allowing increased visitation and extended stays. This link below goes live at 12 a.m. on Wednesday 22 March and remains active for 24 hours.

<https://love.longwood.edu/organizations/hullspringsfarm>

No gift is too small, so please consider showing a sign of support by clicking the link above and making a donation toward our site-changing initiative.