TO: RMBL scientists, students, staff and other stakeholders
FROM: Ian Billick, Kelly Sudderth, Jennie Reithel, Gesa Michel and Steve Jennison
RE: Review of 2019 Operations
DATE: October 22, 2019

Thank you for another great year of science and education at RMBL! Each year, we ask for your feedback and formally assess operations at the close of the summer season. We do this so we can: 1) identify changes that would be beneficial, and 2) prioritize those changes, balancing financial and staffing constraints. This memo communicates:

1) Our synthesis of the feedback we received this year,
2) Goals for improving future operations (both in 2020 and longer term), and
3) Our progress on the goals we set after the 2018 season.

What did the evaluation process look like this year?
As in other years, we sent a "flash" survey to RMBL users in late June so we could get a quick take from you on how the summer was going. This year, we left the flash survey open throughout the summer, and included a field for community members to give anonymous feedback on any topic. (Thanks to the diversity committee for this recommendation!) We conducted an online exit survey at the end of the summer (16 responses, down from 54 responses in 2018) and Gesa, Kelly and Ian conducted in-person exit interviews with 18 members of the community. We also relied on staff observations and informal feedback.

How do we use your feedback and responses?
You are the RMBL users – so your feedback is important to us. You see things that we don't or won't see because of how you interact with what RMBL offers. We compiled the results of the online surveys, exit interviews and other information feedback, which we used to inform our planning and budgeting for 2020.

Operational goals for 2020
Implementation of the items below is contingent upon the 2020 budget and availability of staff time. These items were selected because they were mentioned numerous times in our survey and they are actionable within our financial means (i.e. specific enough to design a solution).

1. Update Remington cabin.
2. If resources permit, install a new outhouse. Options for locations include: (1) a public outhouse near Town Hall (to reduce visitor traffic up by the shower house and Barclay classrooms) and (2) near Richards cabin.
3. Facilitate better bike management in Gothic.
4. Improve security during winter and shoulder seasons for lab spaces. (A few items went missing, so we want to make sure it doesn't become a larger issue.)
5. Stronger consideration of how to diversify the seminar series.
6. Explore ways to continue to diversify the scientific community.
7. Find ways to reduce public impacts in Happy Valley and near the bbcc. (i.e. reduce instances of the general public "wandering" in.)

Updates on long-term goals for operations

The strategic plan includes important long-term goals for operations. We made significant progress on these goals in 2019:
- **Addressing deferred maintenance at Gothic.**

- The "new" Crystal cabin previously called the ADA cabin) will open in November 2019, which provides more flexibility for housing in Gothic. This should allow us to accommodate more families and to reduce occupancies in some cabins. We tore down the old Crystal cabin.
- We are pursuing funding for a new, smaller four-season cabin.
- We deep-cleaned many cabins in early season 2019. We received lots of positive feedback that the cabins were cleaner this year.
- We replaced the electrical wiring in Doctor's cabin and Doctor's Annex.
- **Improving (or replacing) Wi-Fi.** We installed new, better quality wi-fi equipment in over 1/3 of the campus, and in early fall we upgraded our internet service to Gigabit-speed fiber. We will continue to actively seek out those research teams who require significant upload capacity so they can successfully upload their data without usurping the capacity of our network.
- **Expanding RMBL's data infrastructure.** We have made considerable progress on identifying the components for a cloud-based portal for administering research and the project plan for such an effort. In the next year we expect to design and implement the system. We believe this will reduce the administrative burden for scientists, students and staff. Additionally, we are developing plans for enhancing RMBL's data services for scientists. This includes streamlining data archiving and improving metadata.
- **Improving navigation and information flows on the RMBL website.** As part of the portal project discussed above, we will overhaul the RMBL website, relocating useful information to the portal where appropriate.
- **Developing and realizing a sustainable financial model which adequately supports building, lab, equipment and IT infrastructure for the RMBL community.** In 2019 we designed an excel-based financial model which is a critical tool for evaluating the financial impact of various investments, such as facilities in Mt. Crested Butte and improving facilities in Gothic. Additionally, we completed a fundraising feasibility study to asses our capital fundraising capacity. It's likely we will launch a capital campaign by the end of 2020 or early 2021.

As RMBL's user days continue to increase, we are also thinking about strategies for helping the community to connect. We know that strong connections among community members is one of the factors that has made RMBL both scientifically productive and a great place to discover, work, learn and live. Communication and building a strong community become more challenging as RMBL diversifies and grows, so how should our operations evolve in response? We don't have all the answers yet, but we know it's an important issue.

Inflationary pressures (cost of materials, healthcare, housing in the Valley) combined with a tougher regulatory environment and growing needs of the scientific community (longer field season, big data, more equipment) means that RMBL needs a different financial model – one that will allow us to address deferred maintenance and support the evolving needs of field scientists without compromising RMBL's ability to attract a diverse scientific community. We continue to actively work with the Board of Trustees to develop that model. Until then, RMBL can only make incremental progress toward some of these longer-term goals.

Progress report on goals set for 2019
In 2018 we set seven primary goals. Below is a list of those goals and our progress this year.

1. **Laundry room – improve outside drying lines, repair coin slots, remove non-working machines, replace at least one washing machine.** We replaced one washing machine and two dryers, repaired the coin slots, and posted instructions on how to use the coin slot.
2. **Early season arrivals – improve communication with early season arrivals with regard to road opening, road repairs and cabin openings (for example, to help manage expectations**

for cabins that may not be deep-cleaned at start of season due to compressed time between road opening and arrivals of researchers). We sent the 1ˢᵗ weekly bulletin on April 26, which is about three weeks earlier than in past years. The early season bulletins included information on road opening, cabin openings, winter travel and conditions in Gothic. Our facilities and admin teams started cabin openings and deep cleanings several weeks earlier than in past years. (This was possible because we had facilities and custodial staff who were able to ski in/out of Gothic, which may not always be the case in the future.) Our admin team called new scientists and new students arriving early to make sure they understood early season conditions and emailed an "early scientist handout" to all people arriving prior to May 31. Finally, we coordinated the provision of snowshoes to scientists who needed this equipment to access Gothic and field sites.

3. **Clearly communicate responsibilities for re-stocking supplies in outhouses. (i.e. which outhouses are maintained by RMBL, and which outhouses are maintained by all community users.)** We communicated these responsibilities via handouts, information posted in cabins, and during in-person orientations. We received many positive comments about the condition of the outhouses.

4. **Provide a way to provide feedback on internet issues in addition to helpdesk@rmbl.org.** We instituted a "ticketing" system for IT requests which resulted in faster and more efficient handling of IT-related issues. Additionally, our IT contractors were on-site every Wednesday and interacted more with the community, which allowed them to proactively identify and address issues. We provided helpful tips in the weekly bulletin and worked closely with scientists needing large upload bandwidths to reduce their impacts on other internet users. We received fewer complaints about Wi-Fi issues this summer, so we believe our efforts were successful.

5. **Consistently open dining hall at 5:30 am.** This was clearly communicated as an expectation to our dining hall staff, and they made sure we improved this in 2019.

6. **Refresh Yule cabin.** In fall 2018, we painted the interior and freshened up the furnishings.

7. **Declutter content in cabins. (to enhance ability to keep cabins clean)** The admin team decluttered many of the cabins in fall 2018, and that facilitated a more thorough deep cleaning process at the start of the 2019 season. We continued the decluttering in the fall of 2019.

8. **Install photo board to help connect people in the community. (Participation will be optional, but this has been used successfully at other field stations with a large community.)** We installed a photo board in the hallway of the Willey admin building and provided an instant camera for community users to take and post portraits. We did not get as many photos as we'd like, so we are exploring ways to encourage more participation in 2020.

Other ways you can provide feedback

While we strongly encourage participation in the annual online exit survey, we welcome your feedback at any time. We encourage you to give us your thoughts on pretty much anything, including items you think we have missed, feedback on how we have analyzed the information we received, or how we have prioritized our responses. You can contact Kelly, RMBL's Chief Operating Officer, at kelly@rmbl.org or (970) 349-7736 at any time throughout the year.

If you have any feedback that might have budgetary implications for 2020, please provide feedback no later than November 15 so we have time to consider that for the 2020 budget cycle.