

INFORMATION FOR NEW SCIENTISTS

Last updated November 20, 2023

RMBL's goal is to make it as easy as possible for scientists to get their research programs up and running quickly. RMBL offers numerous advantages, including coordination with permitting agencies, long-term relationships with landowners and other important stakeholders, access to a wide variety of research sites, access to shared research equipment and modern laboratory space, staff support, a substantial amount of accumulated scientific knowledge, the opportunity to interact with national and international scientists, and financial support. Scientists working through RMBL are covered under the RMBL Special Use Permit with the US Forest Service on the Gunnison, Paonia, and Aspen Districts and have access to millions of acres of public land for research. The sheer number of scientists conducting work at RMBL, however, requires a considerable amount of coordination to make certain that projects do not interfere with each other.

STAFF SUPPORT. One of the primary responsibilities of the Science Director, Jennifer Reithel, is to assist scientists. She can be particularly helpful for new scientists in developing a research plan, identifying a research site, and coordinating with existing scientists. Do not hesitate to ask her for assistance: sd@rmbll.org, Ph: 970-349-7231. RMBL's Research Support Specialist, Amanda Henderson, amanda@rmbll.org also facilitates research, including providing GPS/GIS support. Research Scientist, Ian Breckheimer ikb@rmbll.org oversees the Spatial Data Platform (SDP). The Science Director and Research staff are available to support scientists in setting up research projects, including using our geodatabase to explore the local ecosystems and find potential research sites.

For operations and logistics please contact the Director of Administration and his staff, admin@rmbll.org Ph: 970-349-7231. You can direct policy questions or questions about running grants through RMBL to Ian Billick, Executive Director, director@rmbll.org, Ph: 970-349-7231.

RESEARCH APPLICATIONS. All research and collecting must be reviewed by the Research Committee comprised of peer scientists. They review proposals to help manage potential conflicts between projects, assure that proposed manipulations to the environment are appropriate, and to review the productivity of returning scientists. The only projects that have been turned down are projects up for renewal that have been unable to generate a decent research plan and that have been unable to demonstrate significant productivity.

Researchers who are new to the field station fill out a 'New researcher application' and may request a 1 year 'Exploratory Approval'. Collectors fill out a 'Collectors' Application'. See the website or contact the Science Director for instructions on writing project descriptions. Research and Collecting applications are due February 1 annually. Late applications can be reviewed, but there is a late fee.

Approvals are given for up to five years. However, approval is given for projects with specific methodologies. If the methodologies change, you will need to submit an amendment to your research plan for review.

ANIMAL CARE. RMBL has a USDA-approved animal care committee that reviews all projects involving vertebrates. Our committee reviews projects even if they have been approved by your home institution's animal care committee, though we are sensitive to minimizing unnecessary complications. Our committee is not an NSF-approved committee. Consequently, our review will not suffice if you receive NSF funding that requires approval of an animal care committee. The deadline for animal

applications is Feb.1. Late applications can be reviewed, but there is a late fee. The animal care committee grants approval for up to 3 years.

RESEARCH SITES. The Science Director must be consulted before establishing new research sites. She and Amanda Henderson can help you explore potential research sites. Because we manage approximately 4,000 research sites in a typical year, we require that scientists map their sites using handheld DA2 cloud-based collection devices that we provide. GPS data and accompanying metadata are submitted to RMBL for site management and archiving purposes. Precise GPS coordinates are also necessary for scientists who wish to use RMBL's spatial data products.

PERMITTING. RMBL scientists work with the Science Director to ensure that their research sites are properly permitted. Because some permits require a year lead time, scientists are encouraged to talk with the Science Director about potential research sites as far in advance as possible. RMBL scientists conduct research on RMBL-owned and managed land, on USFS land on which RMBL has a special use permit, and on some private land. New research sites must not conflict with existing research. Sites on public land, including wilderness areas and research natural areas, as well as sites on private land, come with different types of restrictions. Work involving significant ground disturbance on public land could require NEPA review by the USFS. The Science Director can help with research site permitting.

MENTORING STUDENTS. RMBL operates an education program in which students conduct independent research under the supervision of a scientist. We have a scientist who coordinates the logistics of the program so that mentors can focus on their research. Mentors include senior scientists, postdocs, and graduate students. Mentors receive a small stipend for each student. Students are funded through a combination of mechanisms, including an REU site grant, RMBL scholarship money, personal funds, and funds from their home institution. If you would like to mentor a student, or want more information, the Science Director oversees the program.

RMBL COMMUNITY PORTAL. All scientists and their research team members set up individual accounts in the RMBL Community Portal. The Portal is a developing system where RMBL scientists submit research plans and the RMBL community can request, manage, and track many RMBL logistics, including housing, fieldwork, and meals management. The platform continues to expand and will include more elements in the future. Please contact RMBL admin: admin@rmbll.org if you have any issues with the Portal.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS. Scientists hire their own research assistants (RAs). RAs set up their own RMBL portal accounts and make their own housing requests.

HOUSING. RMBL has cooking and noncooking housing available at several rates. Important note: Housing requests must be received by April 1 in order to be prioritized for onsite housing. Our facilities are typically full to capacity from mid-June to mid-August. Late requests will be filled if housing is available. There are penalty fees associated with shortening or canceling housing registrations. For more information, contact the administrative office admin@rmbll.org

DINING HALL. People living in non-cooking housing, including all students in the education program, eat all meals in the Dining Hall. Others can sign up for meals 24 hours in advance. The dining hall is open from mid-June through mid-August.

LAB SPACE. RMBL has bench space in multi-use rooms and private lab-spaces available for rent by the day or by the year. We have small research rooms, as well as bench space in a wet lab with chemical fume hoods and deionized water, a microscope/balance room, and a sample processing

room. Lab space requests must be received by April 1 in order to be prioritized. For more information contact the Science Director.

RESEARCH EQUIPMENT. RMBL maintains some general use equipment, including microscopes, computers, balances, cameras, drying ovens, thermal cycler, mapping equipment, ultra-cold freezer, standard refrigerator and freezer, autoclave, and biosafety cabinet. We have a Li-Cor 6400 and two plant growth chambers that may be available. We also have a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer, which is available for use on a fee/sample basis if you have previously been trained on this equipment or are taking the GC-MS class at RMBL. Contact the Science Director for more details.

STATION FEES AND PARKING FEES. RMBL scientists and their lab team members pay a daily station fee for the duration of their stay, regardless of whether the research group stays onsite or offsite. The station fee (aka 'research use day') covers the cost of permitting, research site coordination, and other administrative expenses. Scientists driving to the field station will also have parking fees. A Fees document with more details is posted on our website, www.rmbl.org

INSTRUMENTATION FEE STRUCTURE. Research projects fall on a continuum from having a heavy field presence by personnel spending upwards of several weeks or months in the field, to projects that involve deployments of sensors and instruments and relatively little personnel time in the field, on the order of days or weeks at most. RMBL staff will discuss with individual researchers where they fall along this continuum, in order to determine the most appropriate fee structure: one based on field time vs. one based on an instrumentation deployment. To support instrumentation deployments, we charge a flat Research Integration and Planning fee to get the Instrumentation campaign set-up, and a smaller Installation and Renewal fee annually thereafter. RMBL staff and the scientist will document a formal understanding on the scope of work and fees to be billed, as well as a payment schedule. More details are posted in our Fees document on the web. Questions should be directed to the Science Director.

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS. Scientists, postdocs, and graduate students may apply for small RMBL fellowships. Fellowship applications are due Feb.15.

We ask that scientists provide us a copy of grant proposals for work associated with RMBL. These are not made public without permission of the scientist. If you provide us a copy of the proposal before it is submitted, we can review it to ensure that we see no red flags in terms of the work that is being proposed. No research is approved, however, until the Research Committee has reviewed it. If sufficient notice is given, we can ask the Research Committee to approve a research plan before a proposal is submitted.

Scientists can run grants or subcontracts through RMBL. We offer a lower overhead rate than most other institutions. Additionally, our financial staff is very responsive and easy to work with. Contact the Executive Director, Ian Billick, director@rmbl.org for more information.

Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory – The Institution

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL) is a nonprofit 501 c3 membership organization. As scientists working at RMBL, you are encouraged to join the membership. If you are interested, you can get information from the RMBL Executive Director, Ian Billick at director@rmbl.org . The members control the mission of RMBL and review nominees to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, including at least four scientists working at RMBL, sets RMBL's strategic direction, oversees finances, and appoints the Executive Director. The Executive Director works with the Board to set RMBL's strategic direction and is responsible for operations, including the hiring of staff.