

Gone But Not Forgotten: NWRC Closed Field Stations



Bowling Green, KY

NWRC has a long history of operating field stations. The first appears to be the Fort Collins station, established in 1953. Arguably, the first field station may actually have been in Hawaii during the 1930s, when the predecessor to the modern-day NWRC, under the Bureau of Biological Survey, maintained a field station in Hawaii.

Over the years, several field stations opened and closed, then re-opened. The Hilo, Hawaii, station opened in 1966 and closed in 1983, through congressional action. It re-opened in 1988 and is still open. The Olympia, Washington, field station is another example of open-closed, 1959-1985, and then open-closed again, 1986-2009.

Some stations began with a focus on one type of research and then switched. For instance, the Twin Falls, Idaho, station, opened in 1964 as a jackrabbit research station. In 1972, the focus switched to predator research, until it closed in 1992.

Some stations closed and then re-opened in another location. An example is the Bowling Green, Kentucky, station, opened in 1980 and closed in 1989, moving personnel and operations that same year to re-open in Starkville, Mississippi. While the Bowling Green station focused on blackbird work, research at the Starkville station involves fish-eating birds and commercial aquaculture.

In addition, some stations were sub-sets of other stations. Bend, Oregon, was part of the Olympia, Washington, station. The Laredo, Texas, station was part of the Logan, Utah, field station.

Stations opened for various reasons. In the past, it may have been Congressional earmarks, stakeholder desire/funding, etc. Stations also closed for different reasons. The work finished, the leader retired or moved, Congressional action, and/or funding ceased. The most recent closing, in 2011, is the Kingsville, Texas, station, based at Texas A&M. It closed due to the removal of Congressional earmarks in the FY 2011 budget.

Over the years, as NWRC research focus changed, so did station work. For instance, while part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), NWRC operated several Pacific Coast research stations focused on marine mammals. In 1986, NWRC transferred from FWS to USDA/APHIS through Congressional action. The marine-mammal stations, however, stayed with FWS.

Past stations, as do many current stations, often had affiliations with universities. Some closed field stations had only one person and relied on students. An example is the Berkeley, California, field station, in operation from 1992-2002, that functioned with a leader and utilized various educational levels of university students to conduct research.

NWRC once had field stations all over the world in locations such as Haiti, Bangladesh, Columbia, Mexico, Philippines, Chad, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Sudan. From 1967-1995, the Center had an International Program supported mainly by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). The International Program provided a unique opportunity for NWRC to conduct research in many different locations on a wide variety of species.

Field stations are a vibrant, important part of NWRC research. They are geographically close to relevant stakeholders and problems of concern. Closed stations may be gone, however, they are not forgotten as their history and accomplishments live on.



Pakistan



Olympia, WA



Mexico



Philippines



Twin Falls, ID



Laredo, TX



San Clemente, CA



Pullman (WSU), WA



Haiti



Davis, CA



Pacific Coast, CA