



## Statement from The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) Regarding Allegations of Sexual Misconduct at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI)

To the scientists that came forward to describe the sexual harassment and assault to which they were subjected<sup>1</sup>: We commend you for your bravery and resolve. We believe you and stand in solidarity as you pursue justice and accountability. Sexual harassment, intimidation, and assault cannot and will not be tolerated by our community under any circumstances.

Field stations are essential to advancing our understanding of tropical ecosystems, and the time spent by scientists at field stations plays a pivotal role in their personal and professional development. A field station must be a healthy and safe workplace for trainees, support staff, volunteers, visitors, and researchers; they in turn must strive to abide by the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Those responsible for the governance and administration of field stations have a duty to enforce these standards - including when staff are participating in conferences and other off-station professional events - and to ensure researchers using station facilities can do so without fear of sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or violence.

STRI's prior leaders appear to have failed repeatedly in their duty to ensure a safe working environment for its scientific community. Their failure to act swiftly and decisively resulted in a pervasive culture of impunity and dangerous working conditions. We call on Smithsonian Secretary Bunch, Undersecretary Stofan, Deputy Secretary Park, and STRI Director Tewksbury to decisively and transparently: (i) adopt the recommendations for protecting women working at STRI put forward in the Open Letter to the White House Gender Policy Council<sup>2</sup>, (ii) implement the reforms proposed by STRI's Staff Scientists in their letter to the leadership of the Smithsonian Institution<sup>3</sup>, and (iii) engage with its community in the focused and continuous reflection necessary for changing the Institute's entrenched culture.

These are not isolated incidents, nor is this the only tropical field site at which researchers are subject to harassment based on gender or other forms of identity. The ATBC is committed to advocating for tropical scientists facing any form of discrimination or harassment and to the welfare of our scientific community<sup>4</sup>. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee stands ready to provide assistance to any members that request or require it<sup>5</sup>. They – together with the ATBC's leadership – invite the global community of tropical biologists to join them in working to ensure that all our colleagues can work without fear of discrimination and harassment.

11 December 2021

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<sup>1</sup> BuzzFeedNews: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8jvzxw>

<sup>2</sup> Open Letter to White House Gender Policy Council: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8jjpj6>

<sup>3</sup> Open Letter from STRI Staff Scientists to Secretary Bunch: <https://www.stri-idea.org/open-letter-from-stri-staff-scientists>

<sup>4</sup> Resolution on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion <https://tropicalbiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ATBC-DEI-Resolution.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://tropicalbiology.org/about-us/committees/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-committee/> and [DEI@tropicalbiology.org](mailto:DEI@tropicalbiology.org)