



THE GERALD L. BALILES CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



AT HULL SPRINGS

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Breaking New Ground at the Baliles Center



The Baliles Center at Hull Springs is buzzing with activity now that Westmoreland County has issued building permits for the next phase of construction.

JM Hayden Construction mobilized its equipment in early July and crews have begun work erecting new student and faculty residential units, along with a screened pavilion designed to accommodate an “outdoor” space for teaching, meeting and events.

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Total cost of this phase is not to exceed \$1.25 million. A sincere thank you to all of our faithful donors for making these critical additions to the Baliles Center possible!



Exterior walls are going up on the new faculty (top) and student (bottom) cabins as part of the next phase of construction at the Baliles Center at Hull Springs.

Longwood LIFE STEM Summer Bridge

Twenty new Lancers participated in the LIFE STEM Summer Bridge Program, which provides financial and academic support, focused career preparation, early research experiences, and high-quality faculty mentoring for scholars majoring in biology, chemistry, environmental science, and physics (or dual-degree engineering).

Through an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to science, LIFE STEM Scholars have many opportunities for professional and personal growth throughout their four-year college experience. Beginning that experience at the Baliles Center at Hull Springs allows for a bonding with fellow students and the Northern Neck property that lasts throughout their life-changing years as Longwood University students and beyond.

Faculty members leading the exploration of the Northern Neck and Chesapeake Bay were Drs. Mark Fink, Ken Fortino and Michelle Parry.

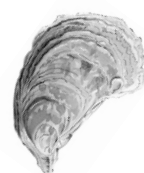


Longwood LIFE STEM scholars began their four-year experience at the Baliles Center at Hull Springs 9 – 13 August.

Top: One stop during their stay was an exploration of nearby historic Stratford Hall.



Right: Students pile on for a photo while selecting bunks for their stay at the Ames House.



Dr. Mark Fink's Field Ornithology class observed a Bald Eagle on her nest while on a weekend Spring field trip to the Baliles Center at Hull Springs

Field Ornithology Experience

Longwood University ornithology students have explored the 662-acres of the Baliles Center at Hull Springs for decades, going back to the 1990s when Mrs. Mary Farley Ames Lee was in residence. In May, students in Dr. Mark Fink's Biology 460 ornithology class spent time at the Northern Neck property which was gifted to Long-

wood as part of a bequest from Mrs. Lee, a 1938 Longwood graduate. The students performed field work while experiencing the spectacle of spring migration. Dr. Fink noted that the rich diversity of habitats that comprise the Baliles Center at Hull Springs provides for excellent bird observation and study.



Longwood faculty members participating in the Brock Faculty Institute (from left), Mark Fink, biology, Gus Hemmer, campus recreation, Greg Mole, history, Ben Campbell, biology, Carl Riden, sociology, Melissa Rhoten, chemistry, Larry Collins, environmental science, Kris Paal, communication studies, and Ravi Sankar, environmental science and geography, journeyed across the Chesapeake Bay, passing Smith Point Lighthouse, to Tangier Island. Smith Point Lighthouse (in the background) was constructed in 1897 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. The lighthouse sits at the mouth of the Potomac River in Virginia.

Brock Faculty Institute

The Brock Experiences Program Faculty Institute on Chesapeake Bay provides an opportunity for Longwood faculty and staff members to learn about the development of the Brock Experience courses, one of Longwood's signature programs.

The Institute exposes participants to the high impact, place-based learning experiences that are a hallmark of the

popular award-winning Brock Program. This past May, seven faculty and staff members joined co-leaders, Drs. Mark Fink and Melissa Rhoten, on a 4-day expedition onto the Chesapeake Bay to experience firsthand the issues facing the bay and the people who live and work on it.

The study included visits to Smith and Tangier Islands, which offer

intense experiences, and on the final day of the Institute, the group assembled at the Baliles Center at Hull Springs for a debrief.

Drs. Fink and Rhoten's Chesapeake Bay Brock course relies on the Baliles Center as a natural anchor point and home base for students during their exploration and study of the Bay and its issues.

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Students from Ware Academy, Gloucester County, visited the Baliles Center as part of a day-long field trip focused on the Chesapeake Bay.

Building New Partnerships

Students, teachers and parents from Ware Academy, Gloucester, were welcomed to the Baliles Center for a day-long field trip on Friday 21 April .

The students divided into three groups, toured the property, and engaged in hands-on activities. Three “stations” were set up for the 5th-8th graders, allowing exploration of the property’s restored wetlands, experiencing data collection at the research laboratory, and a live demonstration featuring oysters and their effect on water quality.

Leading the sessions were Longwood University faculty members, Dr. Dina Leech, Baliles Center research manager,

and Dr. Benjamin Campbell, both associate professors in the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences; representatives from the Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) Katie Ratcliffe and Sophie Swartzendruber, environmental consultants in Wetland Restoration Ecology; and members of the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA), Sue Borra, president, Richard Siciliano, Doug Schaefer, and Eric Hentge.

While at the research lab, students viewed plankton under a microscope, and analyzed data collected from environmental sensors to determine water quality.

The restored wetlands allowed students to explore areas returned to natural habitats and see first-hand how the conversion has affected water quality and wildlife populations.

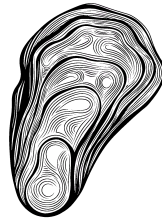
Local oyster experts from TOGA shared lessons on the importance of the oyster as filter feeders of the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Our thanks to Ware Academy teacher Allison Robins for coordinating the trip, which we hope will become an annual event for Ware students!





OAKS "N" OYSTERS



SAVE THIS DATE · SATURDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2023

Mark your calendars for Saturday 4 November from 1 - 4 p.m. to celebrate our second annual Oaks 'n' Oysters FUNdraising event!

Tickets are \$125 per person, which includes a bountiful spread of fresh Chesapeake Bay oysters, shrimp, local vegetables, cheeses and locally sourced wines, beers, and ginger ale.

The day will feature both a live and silent auction, which proved to be among the highlights of last year's premier event.

We are pleased with the health and growth of the two Southern red oaks planted last year by our two teams of volunteers. You will wish to see their progress for yourselves!

Details on purchasing tickets are forthcoming.