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NSF awards UAF science facility \$16 million

Ian Larsen/Sun Star Reporter

Nov 22, 2011

Although the winters at UAF are cold, the scientific research is still hot. On Nov. 16, the National Science Foundation awarded the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Arctic Biology \$16.3 million to help fund the Toolik Field Station's research.

The Institute of Arctic Biology wrote a grant proposal for the award. Institutions across the country peer edited the proposal. This will be the third time the NSF gave the station this award. The grant also comes with a five-year cooperative agreement with the NSF.

Toolik Field Station is located in the northern foothills of the Brooks Range on Alaska's North Slope. Scientists there have conducted ecological and arctic observatory research since 1975. This station is a test site for both national and international research. Now that the station has earned this award, it is seen as a "major" part of the National Science Foundation facilities according to a press release.

Toolik Field Station researchers mainly track and monitor environmental and terrestrial data. They study the life stages of plants, snow from year to year, weather data and animal life on the Slope.

"Much of what is known about terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, adaptations of plants and animals to the Arctic and the effects of climate change come from long-term, process-based ecological research conducted at Toolik," UAF arctic biology scientist Marion Syndonia "Donie" Bret-Harte said in the Institute of Arctic Biology press release.

Timothy Sharp, a UAF senior, works in Bret-Harte's soils lab. He is a lab assistant for graduate student Claire Addis. "She is observing the effects of higher snow density on shrubs sent from the Toolik Station from winter to winter," Sharp said.

Because of this award the station can afford improvements that "will enable the station to increase and improve the provision of housing, utilities, meals, communications, modern lab space, vehicles and common-use science equipment to the hundreds of scientists and students who work at the station each year," according to the press release.

"Most of the buildings at the station are tents, with the exception of kitchen and dining hall. Although with the funding from NSF we will be able to build another dorm, and more labs in the next five years." Bret-Harte said. Not only will this award allow for better housing, meals and utilities, it also will improve the station's credibility internationally.

Currently the station hosts around 450 researchers that come from across the

NOOKRAKER

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POLITICAL LIFE @ UAF

3 DAY FORECAST

Weather for University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Today



Mostly Cloudy
-4°/-17°

Thursday



Mostly Cloudy
-15°/-28°

Friday



Mostly Cloudy
-13°/-28°

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nation each year to Toolik, according to Bret-Harte. from all over the country. In 2010, researchers at Toolik conducted 61 funded research projects involving more than 500 participants from 68 different universities

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