

This material is part of a collection that documents the harassment, discrimination, and retaliation perpetrated against Alaska's women research scientists by their supervisor, with full knowledge (and arguably, "tacit approval") of their federal employer, the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

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Budget cuts claim Alaska agricultural stations

by Jeff Richardson / jr Richardson@newsminer.com

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Budget cuts are forcing the closure of Alaska's federal agriculture research station early next spring, including a newly built greenhouse facility in Fairbanks, seen here along Geist Road Tuesday afternoon, December 13, 2011. A roughly \$40 million cut to the Agricultural Research Service is resulting in the elimination of 10 stations throughout the country, said ARS spokeswoman Sandy Miller Hays. That includes all work currently underway in at the Subarctic ARS station in Alaska, including projects in Fairbanks, Palmer and Kodiak. Eric Engman/News-Miner

FAIRBANKS — Budget cuts are forcing the closure in spring of Alaska's federal agriculture research station, including a newly built \$1.2 million greenhouse and research complex in Fairbanks.

A roughly \$40 million cut to the Agricultural Research Service is resulting in the elimination of 10 stations throughout the country, said ARS spokeswoman Sandy Miller Hays. That includes all work under way at the Subarctic ARS station in Alaska, including projects in Fairbanks, Palmer and Kodiak.

The planned ARS closures stem from a spending bill passed by Congress in November that included a cut to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The cut came with some warning — President Obama proposed the elimination of the stations in his budget proposal early this year.

About 10 federal employees throughout the state will be affected by the closure, USDA spokesman Matt Herrick said in an email. A number of University of Alaska Fairbanks students working and studying at the ARS station will also be out of work, said Carol Lewis, dean of the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Science.

Lewis said the transfer of the five Fairbanks ARS employees to other stations in the Western United States could take effect as early as March but that the employees will have the option of retiring or leaving the service. While research would be able to continue until spring, she said, no additional field work will take place.

The Subarctic ARS station specialized in agricultural pest management, Lewis said, and a focus on insects, weeds and pesticides was largely avoided by UAF to prevent duplication. The Palmer station focuses on collecting northern plant samples, while the Kodiak office has studied techniques for using fish waste for agriculture.

"We tend to count on the ARS to fill positions that UAF doesn't have the funding to fill," Lewis said.

Herrick said ARS is still considering options for the use of its Alaska buildings after the closure. That includes the new greenhouse facility on Geist Road that opened last year to provide a year-round growing environment in Fairbanks.

Lewis said UAF will have a chance to acquire the building, but will first need to evaluate how it would be used and whether its operating costs can be absorbed. Equipment at the stations could be claimed by UAF if it isn't transferred to another ARS site.

Lewis said administrators also need to decide whether UAF should take over some of the research being done by ARS in Alaska.

"We're going to have to look at the whole package," she said. "Certainly, we're going to get together and see what can be done, but budgets are really, really tight at the university."

Lewis said she hopes the research service can eventually come back to Alaska. She said there's a precedent for a return, since its stations in Alaska were previously shut down in 1993 before being revived in 2000.

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Lewis said there's a strong argument for ARS to maintain a research presence in Alaska, which has growing conditions unlike those seen anywhere else in the country.

"It leaves a huge hole," she said. "Not just from UAF, but from the farming community in general."

Contact staff writer Jeff Richardson at 459-7518.

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hrdharry | December 14, 2011

I really think the money the president makes needs to be cut 395,000 a year plus bennies is alot of money for one person.

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cadmus557 | December 14, 2011

You have to love how an article about higher education produces the most negative commits from those who lack it. Don't worry gang the earth is still flat and your relatives moved here not because they experienced "economic " or "social" failure in the lower 48, it was for the "huntin and fishin".

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DeltaCharlie | December 14, 2011

i hope this is the begining of getting rid of all of the non producers within our gov.!!

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atvalaska | December 14, 2011

Looks like the typical 4- p -program....piss poor prior planning, more money down the tubes... no worry the union workers got their money to build it...the politicians earned a vote or two funding "there masses" and 50% of us pay for it.....

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JusticeSleeps | December 14, 2011

I've got to admit, it's worrisome when my posted comments (about the harassment and discrimination I endured while working for ARS) meet the NewsMiner's criteria for publication, but are suppressed anyway. See JusticeSleeps.com to read about the EEO cases. If it weren't true, the government would have succeeded in their Cease and Desist against the website. (Obviously, they failed.) The ARS Administrator really did rule (in writing) that a "hostile environment for women" and "discriminatory treatment" by an ARS supervisor are "nongrievable matters". (A shortage of funds may not be the only reason that Unit is being closed...)

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| December 14, 2011

After reading through your site it is clear that you were not happy there from the start. To make an opinion on whether or not justice was sleeping cannot be determined since your site is one sided. As a scientist you should know that not looking at all the evidence in any study results in inaccurate information.

[Report Abuse](#)**JusticeSleeps** | December 15, 2011

In reply to fsrdr,

Actually, I loved my job at the beginning. I stopped liking it after my career was attacked (repeatedly) while the male scientists were simultaneously treated better (e.g. more resources, permanent technical help, etc...). Theoretically, discrimination against women is unlawful in this country. My purpose in filling the website with actual ARS documents (which means that it wasn't "one-sided", as you suggest) was to preserve the facts about how the agency discriminated against all its women research scientists in Alaska (and got away with it).

[Report Abuse](#)**warrenfarmer** | December 29, 2011

Cindy,

I find your stance on this interesting. I am supposing that your salary is close to \$100,000/year. Am I correct? I know you don't realize this, but so many people would covet your job. You make good money, and are in a very stable job where you get paid to write science papers. Many of us have worked at much less desirable jobs (low pay, minimal or no benefits), and had to deal with a boss or co worker who was a royal jerk. It is easy to pin the term "discrimination" on this situation and then tell the world that life isn't fair to you. Few Alaskans would sympathize with you. Perhaps you should be thankful for what you have?

Also, I find it sad that a person of your high education and obvious intelligence and talent are unable to create your own opportunity. You seem to view your only option as working for a government "paper mill". Your knowledge and skills are highly marketable in this state. You have many options other than wasting resources on bogus lawsuit

Think about this

[Report Abuse](#)**teapartypatriot_2** | December 14, 2011

Sure the UAF can take over these federal Ag buildings. With a \$1.1 billion dollar budget that includes over one million dollars a day from the State of Alaska they shouldn't have any problems whatsoever. Also the Delta farmers that collect over \$1 million a year in farm subsidies can depend on the UAF for help. One good welfare bunch deserves another. They should work together just fine.

And on the \$1.2 million dollar greenhouse. The UAF has a much better one. At \$5.3 million this new greenhouse cost \$790 per square foot. That is about the most expensive greenhouse in the world on a square foot basis. Hospitals don't cost that much. The UA has the bucks because like I said they get a \$1 million dollar welfare check every day from the State of Alaska.

[Reply](#)[Report Abuse](#)**justasking** | December 14, 2011

I built my (and my neighbor's greenhouse) out of scrap from the dumpsters, so almost free, I grow lots of food for almost no money, I plan another G/H this summer.

as to the fish fertilizer studies,,,been using fish waste as fertilizer for over 45 years,



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Why was this posted 14 days late, when there was little chance that the comments would be rebutted?

Well, warrenfarmer, here's how I would have replied if you'd given me the opportunity:

1) My salary (GS 12) is about 35% lower than what you've guessed, although all of the male scientists made close to \$100,000 (or more). My GS-15 supervisor's salary was \$150,000/year, even though my scientific-impact rating was over 2.5 times higher than his. If you want to be appalled at government salaries, start with the overpaid administrators and not with the women who are being attacked by them.

2.) Contrary to your statement, I doubt that many people would want a job where they are unlawfully harassed (without recourse) on a regular basis.

3) It weakens your argument when you compare me to employees other than my peer group (PhD-level research scientists). My performance appraisals were superior, and my scientific impact rating was higher than most of the (better-paid) men in my unit, despite the fact that I was being targeted for discrimination and retaliation (and the men were simultaneously benefitting from the extra resources that were being denied to the women scientists).

4) Don't be sad. I stood up against a federal agency that was breaking U.S. laws. Be happy that there are still people like me who are willing to fight for justice in this country.

[Report Abuse](#)**inupiatologist** | December 14, 2011

Alaska as a whole is a, Research Exploring environment to challenge. Please consider to view SouthEast University T.V. Ad, It is the most unique, how to present Alaska. We do not have foreign insects yet, where we need to watch people from urban areas,infested with communicable disease. We got our ocean to explore,to spent that kind of money.

[Reply](#)[Report Abuse](#)**mileder** | December 14, 2011

Crap.

[Reply](#)[Report Abuse](#)**mileder** | December 14, 2011

Nice greenhouse, anyway. The SoA/UAF should take over the program. Lots of people in Fairbanks garden and would be happy to see this facility being used.

[Reply](#)[Report Abuse](#)**Miffed** | December 14, 2011

Doubt that the people of Fairbanks or the surrounding area will ever benefit from this overpriced greenhouse, because somebody would have to provide upkeep. On top of that, someone is sure to bring up a liability issue, not to mention the fact that the "people" don't own it outright. What a flippin" waste of money and resources!

[Report Abuse](#)**americanjoe** | December 14, 2011

Yipppeee!

Finally a few government drones will lose their jobs and we can save a little money!

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