

Each year the Domain hosts a minimum of 12-15 longer term field research projects. Central to keeping tabs on these efforts is Kevin Fouts, Sewanee Headwater Institute Research Coordinator. Despite not having student support available this spring, Kevin has kept as many of these projects alive as possible.

“My main focus at this time is the dam removal project at Brushy,” said Kevin. “We’ve been collecting baseline data for several years in anticipation of the dam removal, which is happening late June.”

Ideal from the outside looking in, maintaining equipment in the field often involves traipsing through the woods, off trail, in wind, cold or driving rain. Scrambling over fallen trees from a recent storm or pushing through thorny bracken in search of the signature pink flagging that marks the locations of research plots in order to take a measurement, check the status of a battery or swap out a data card.

Despite the occasional vagaries of weather, there is a beauty and a satisfaction to gathering good data. In addition to baseline data collection in anticipation of dam removal, the other projects receiving focus at this time include salamander studies, bat activity data collection, monitoring duck and frog activity, water quality studies in a constructed wetland and preparations for COVID-adapted schedules for turtle and small mammal trapping.

In short, though student participation is dearly missed, the pursuit of science continues.