

## October 2017 Featured Expert: *Timothy Hoellein, Ph.D.*

*I'm happy to introduce Timothy Hoellien. Tim and I spent a week with 15 teachers on the R/V Lake Guardian for the Sea Grant Shipboard Science Workshop. He is an Aquatic Ecologist working on Great Lakes pollution issues, including micro plastics. Please help me welcome him.*

*- Kirsten*



**TPNC:** What does a typical work day look like for someone in your position?

**Hoellein:** *My work days are pretty variable depending on the time of year. During the school year, I teach classes and mentor students on their research projects, with occasional trips in the field. During breaks I am more likely to be traveling for field work and conferences. All of this is mixed in with a time at the computer for writing, data analysis, and correspondence.*

**TPNC:** What do you like about your job?

**Hoellein:** *One of things I like most is the opportunity to be creative and work with team of people where we are all learning and teaching each other. Science requires creativity when developing ideas for projects, and for composing the grant applications and*

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*presentations that best explain those ideas to other people. Science also requires strong teamwork. We need a team of people to accomplish much of the work we do. Everyone brings a unique set of experiences and training to the team. So, we are all enriched by the experience of working together to solve the challenges of the projects we are working towards.*

**TPNC:** What do you find challenging about your job?

**Hoellein:** *One of the challenges I find in my job is keeping up to date on all the advancements in research and teaching. There is so much to learn about the latest and best ways of collecting data: knowing about updates in equipment, software, programming, mapping are all part of the job, and I need to know how the standards are changing. The same is true for teaching. I like to find new, thought provoking ways of engaging students in classes.*

**TPNC:** What types of classes did you have to take in college to get your position?

**Hoellein:** *I took a lot of classes in science to get where I am – chemistry, biology, and math. But, I also am so glad to have taken courses in writing, literature, and art. Exercising all parts of my brain have led me to this career, and I continue to do my best to nurture a well-rounded sense of curiosity about the world.*

**TPNC:** What is your favorite aspect of nature?

**Hoellein:** *This is a hard question as there are many things I love about nature. I am of a split mind on this subject. I grew up in western Pennsylvania so I love the hills, the rivers, and the Great Lakes. But as beautiful as those places are, they are also stamped by industrial manufacturing and pollution that has a long-lasting legacy. This is the image of nature that has shaped my role in science. I work on issues related to environmental pollution, especially in urban environments. The places I work, like the Chicago River, are in environmental peril, but they are also beautiful and valuable places for everyone to have nature-oriented experiences. I love that nature can persist in these places, and by understanding how the ecosystems operate, we can be in a better position offer them healing and preservation in the long term.*

**TPNC:** What is the biggest misconception you would like the public to know about what you do?

**Hoellein:** Many people think all I do is teach during the school year and then take time off or travel during the summer. I would like them to know that my job as a scientist is a year-round position that requires doing all sorts of different tasks throughout the year.

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I'm so happy to have the chance to work in a field where use lots of different types of skills, and can make a meaningful contribution to environmental conservation through education and research.

*Thanks to Carrie for sharing her interesting work!*