Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Field School and Interactive Ghost Town: Archaeology and Preservation at Coloma, MT

Type of Project: Research and Education
Project Discipline: Cultural
Funding Agency: Bureau of Land Management
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Effective Dates: 5/1/2006 - 4/30/2012
Funding Amount: $71,975 (FY06: $15,000; FY07: $19,975; FY08: $22,000; FY10: $15,000)

Investigators and Agency Representative:

Agency Contact:

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Project Abstract: The Purpose of this work is to develop several years of conservation-oriented research and Coloma Ghost Town to explore diverse methods to archive and preserve an immense cultural resource using a combination of GIS technology, historical and archaeological research, and a philosophy grounded in heritage tourism. In addition, the proposed work will provide the opportunity to include field experience into class curriculums and will provide students with practical experience in the field setting which will enable them to develop research projects.

The ruins of Coloma rest amidst a fir and spruce forest in the Garnet Range of western Montana, The Montana Gold Mining Company established Coloma along a steep mountain slope during the winter of 1894-1895. In 1903, lost profits fueled a *borrasca* for the community, and it lost its post office and status as a town. While a handful of miners made sporadic visits to the area until the 1950s, many features at Coloma have been deserted for over 100 years. There are over 150 cultural features visible on the site's remnant, historic landscape. These consist of collapsed and partially standing historic structures, building foundations, mine dumps, explorations pits, mine shafts, mill remains, and historic roads and waterways. Extensive historical research will be undertaken to locate written, photographic, and cartographic records associated with Coloma's past. This information will then be integrated with the extensive physical remains to understand Coloma's history during the short-lived heyday and also to recognize the myriad factors that caused it to fall silent.

Outcomes with completion dates:
The end-product will be an interactive, "virtual" ghost town that will showcase the results of archaeological and historical research in a GIS database. This database will represent one of this project's products that will integrate digital technology with the overall goal to ensure that the site is archived in such a way that the professional audience, and perhaps heritage tourists, will be able to access both digital records and the site's physical remains well into the future. Other products will include master theses and student papers.

Keywords: Coloma, western Montana, ghost towns, GIS, field schools, Bureau of Land Management, University of Montana