

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site - Study of 1864 Environmental Conditions	
Type of Project:	Research
Discipline:	Interdisciplinary
Funding Agency: National Park Service	
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University	
Effective Dates: April 1, 2004 - April 30, 2007	
Funding Amount: \$20,000	
Investigators and Agency Representative: INVESTIGATOR: Mark Fiege, Associate Professor, Department of History, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1776 Phone: (970) 491-6468; FAX (970) 491-2941, mark.fiege@colostate.edu PARK CONTACT: Alexa Roberts, Superintendent, Sand Creek Massacre NHS, 910 Wansted, Eads, CO 81036, PH: 719-438-5916; FAX: 719-438-5410; Alexa.Roberts@nps.gov	
Project Abstract: Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site (SAND) was authorized in November 2000 to preserve, protect, interpret, and memorialize the site of a large Cheyenne and Arapaho village that was attacked by troops of the First Regiment and Third Regiment of the Colorado Cavalry on November 29, 1864. The enabling legislation calls for the NPS to protect "the cultural landscape of the site in a manner that preserves, as closely as practicable, the cultural landscape of the site as it appeared at the time of the Sand Creek Massacre." The landscape is, in fact, the primary resource of the Sand Creek Massacre site - remaining in some respects a pristine and unimpaired high plains ecosystem. The authorizing legislation also notes that the NPS shall interpret "the natural and cultural resource values associated with site." Some of these values are of great spiritual significance to Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants; others are of additional ethno-historic importance. In addition, the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site is currently developing interim and long-range management plans that also will require a thorough understanding of the site's environmental history. Although some information on the environmental history and historic landscapes of the Sand Creek Massacre site is included in the <i>Sand Creek Massacre Project: Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment</i> (2000), more detailed information is needed as a foundation for management decisions that will guide the long-term development of the national historic site. Such data will assist park staff and park partners in devising appropriate natural resource management strategies for restoring and maintaining, as much as practicable, the landscape to its 1864 appearance. The environmental history also will assist the park in appropriately managing current conditions. With the recent federal acquisition of former pasture land at the Sand Creek Massacre site, grazing has abruptly stopped for the first time in more than 100 years. It is critical for the park to understand how to appropriately manage resources in the context of these significant changes in land use. For example, the park needs to assess the feasibility of re-introducing both native and traditional domestic livestock onto the area, particularly bison, horses, and mules. The information included in the environmental history will help the park managers make decisions regarding the impact of these species on the environment, including advisable numbers and herd makeup and, in the case of bison, the practicality of herd thinning and skeletal/hide/robe/meat use, storage and/or the distribution of these parts for tribal/descendants ceremonial uses. In addition, the study will assist the park in laying the groundwork for human use of the site - trails, special events and interpretative activities, and burial, ceremonial, and camping needs of tribal/massacre descendants, none of which have yet been planned for. The staff at SAND and BEOL will work with cooperators at Colorado State University to carry out an in-depth and thorough study of the environmental history of the site, focusing on 1864 conditions and the varied natural and cultural factors that have shaped the landscape through time.	
Outcomes with completion dates: Report on environmental history of the Sand Creek Massacre site due November 16, 2006, following review by the NPS and the tribes	
Keywords: environmental history, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, Colorado State University, cultural landscape, grazing, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes	
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