

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Improving Education at U.S. Nature and Environmental Centers

Type of Project: Education

Discipline: Interdisciplinary

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University

Effective Dates: 6/1/2005 - 12/30/2009

Funding Amount: \$180,475

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract:

The National Park Service, EPA, Colorado State University, Association for Nature Center Administrators (ANCA), North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) will work together to evaluate the diverse array of NGO and governmental nature centers and educational centers - including their educational materials, activity guides, and curricula. This project will include a census of nature centers in the U.S. to provide baseline data about educational efforts, staff, budgets and resources. The objectives of this evaluation include: (1) to rank educational materials and curricula at nature centers based on their effectiveness, (2) to conduct a needs assessment for non-formal centers in terms of their educational efforts, (3) to disseminate the results of this project to a wide audience to reduce duplication of curricula, (4) to prepare a report on results of the study will be disseminated to 2,500 educational professionals, (5) to develop strategies and partnerships for training of non-formal educators regarding the implementation and evaluation of educational materials, projects and programs.

Phase 2 of this project began in FY 2006, with a change in principal investigators. The Phase I study will be used as a basis for Phase II planning and implementation of cooperative training among the partnering organizations (NAI, NAAEE, NPS, and ANCA) to better meet the needs identified by the needs assessment. This will include dissemination of Phase I results in a form useful to program managers and planners to aid them selecting and using the most effective educational materials available. Because of the nature of the proposed project, its large scale and scope, phase II will be very much dependant on the Phase I results. Possible follow-up strategies include the provision of training opportunities at national workshops (NAI, NAAEE), at NAI's new facility in Ft. Collins. There is the potential to collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the National Conservation Training Center, training could also be offered at NPS training facilities based on regional needs identified by Phase I of the project. The project will also identify strategies for filling gaps in educational materials and efforts for dissemination to potential partner groups who develop such materials.

Outcomes with Completion Dates:

- Comprehensive review of literature
- Evaluation report based on census of nature centers, gap analysis, survey results.
- Presentation of information at professional training sessions.
- Curricula, videos, posters, brochures, pamphlets, and training designs

Keywords: nature and environment centers, education, Colorado State University, Environmental Protection Agency, National Association for Interpretation, curriculum

For Administrative Use Only:

Date Annual Report Received:

Date Final Report Received:

Publications, etc. on file: