

Project Completion Report Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)

Project Title: Develop communications materials for social science, natural and cultural resource topics, management activities, and issues

Project Code: H1200040001 (IMR)

Type of Project: Research

Funding Agency: National Park Service, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science

Partner University: Colorado State University

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Start Date: September 15, 2008

End Date: May 31, 2012

Project Summary:

CSU provided support to the CESU Network and Natural Resource Program Center (NRPC) information infrastructure by evaluating current developments in the academic and private educational communities concerning resource education programs and communications activities with regard to the missions of the CESU Network and NRPC programs of Water Resources and Biological Resources. Four focus areas were identified in the evaluation process and pursued: 1) Chihuahuan Desert Network Communication Plan, 2) Wild and Scenic Rivers Communication Plan, 3) Kaloko Honokakua water education curriculum, and 4) Graphic Identity communication tools. These products will support NRPC in remaining on the cutting edge of natural resource education and communications, and facilitate their ability to provide educational products and services to others at the national, state and local level. Similarly, CSU also evaluated current information resources available for the CESU Network and incorporated recommendations to support the development of mixed media information resources to help foster increased awareness and visibility of the CESU Network both within the existing community of partners and among potential new partners.

- 1) Chihuahuan Desert Network Science Communication Plan
The goals of the communication plan were to develop web-based communication products and to collect and incorporate feedback and input from the network staff on existing communication efforts. Network staff, resource managers, and interpreters contributed input regarding existing formal and informal communication tools, as well as advice for new communication plans. The Chihuahuan Desert Network Science Communication plan was developed by collecting input from network and park staff, through interviews delivering the following four key communication components: 1) Face-to-Face relationship building between CHDN staff and park partners is crucial and must be prioritized - specific strategies to develop these relationships was also included, 2) Non-technical messengers of CHDN science and research must be clearly identified and provided with appropriate information for non-technical audiences - specific strategies to identify and prepare these messengers was included, 3) Three strategic communication products were developed: a newsletter template, a series of 3 videos related to the "water stories" of the CHDN and particular parks (Big Bend NP and White Sand NM), and graphic icons for the CHDN vital signs, and 4) Appropriate evaluation measures. The final communication plan was presented to network and park staff.
- 2) Wild and Scenic Rivers Communication Plan
The Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Communication Plan was completed through identifying communication gaps and developing communication products to address these gaps within the Wild and Scenic Rivers program. Existing communication products were compiled and ranked by the WSR community and several products were identified as target deliverables. Three communication products were identified as priorities for the communication plan. The top communication product identified was a NPS intranet website for the WSR program that would provide information on the history, goals, mission, management considerations, and the different classifications of WSRs. Content for this WSR website has been compiled and reviewed and is in the process of being incorporated into the revised NPS intranet. A second product was the Junior Ranger booklet. This product was first implemented at the Farmington River, and has been shared with the WSR offices to be used as a template. Additionally, a series of WSR factsheets were developed to be used by WSR to provide additional outreach materials on the program. These materials have all been developed and distributed with the input and assistance from the WSR program staff.
- 3) Kaloko Honokakua Water Education Curriculum
Outreach and education materials showcasing efforts ongoing in Pacific network parks were developed. In developing these materials products were developed through I worked with the National Park Service's Office of Education and Outreach to showcase projects from the Cooperative Ecosystem Study Unit through a series of summaries and other outreach materials. I composed questionnaires that aimed to engage CESU network representatives throughout the Desert Southwest, Hawaii, California, Alaska, Colorado Plateau, Gulf Coast, and Pacific Northwest regions. I sought information on CESU projects from any interested agency whose projects were complete, peer reviewed, did not contain classified information for publication, had management implications, and were supported with photos that had permission of use and were in original format. I corresponded via email and interviewed principal investigators in person and via telephone to gain knowledge about CESU task agreements in order to compose summaries for website publication. The summaries synthesized technical and nontechnical information and were reviewed by principal investigators and National Park Service and Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit staff. Publications can be found at <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/materials/spotlights.htm>.
- 4) Communication Tools for Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Units
Examples of communication tools being used by CESUs around the country were identified and evaluated for their ability to communicate science to non-technical audiences, and their potential to be used as examples of effective communication for other CESUs. Electronic documents were developed that highlighted work and projects completed by CESU's around the country. These

documents aimed to present scientific research projects to a non-research oriented audience, and make the work completed by these CESU's more accessible to the public and other CESUs.

Number of students participating in this project: undergraduates, graduate students, degrees conferred.

Undergraduate Research Assistants: Erin Drake worked on completing the Chihuahuan Desert Network Science Communication Plan; Casey Brown worked on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Communication Plan; Stephanie Guerra worked on the Kaloko Honokakua Water Education Curriculum project; Karina Mullen completed the work on Communication Tools for Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units.