

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: The Social Sciences of Climate Change Collaboration: Advancing social science contributions to climate change response planning

Discipline: Social
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Effective Dates: 1/31/2010 - 12/31/2011
Funding Amount: \$29,375

Investigators and Agency Representative:

NPS Contact: Kirsten M. Leong, National Park Service, Biological Resource Management Division, 1201, Oakridge Drive, Suite 200, Fort Collins, CO 80525; 970-267-2191; kirsten_leong@nps.gov

Investigator: Michael J. Manfredi, Professor and Department Head, Human Dimensions of Natural Resources; Interim Head; Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Stewardship, Colorado State University; 970-491-491-0474 office; manfredi@warnercnr.colostate.edu

Project Abstract: The national park system was created to conserve unimpaired magnificent landscapes, enshrine our nation's enduring principles, and remind us of the tremendous sacrifices Americans have made on behalf of those principles. While some impacts of climate change have already been documented, we are only beginning to grasp the possible long-range consequences. Land managers will need to determine to what extent their staff can and *should* take action to protect the parks' current resources while allowing the ecosystems in which they are located to adapt to new conditions. As species assemblages and communities adapt to shifting climate regimes, fundamental management assumptions will be challenged. Social science research is necessary to assess the types of actions that are appropriate for management by agencies such as NPS and to judge societal understanding of and response to potential agency responses to climate change.

This project will begin to address this need by initiating a dialog about the social sciences and global change to promote idea sharing and network building among social scientists interested in contributing to climate change research and innovations in graduate and undergraduate education. This effort is rooted in two specific assumptions. First, there is a need for improved integration, i.e., consilience, of separate social science disciplines in finding explanation of social phenomenon. Second, an integrated social science will improve the application of the social sciences in decision-making.

The working objectives of this project are:

- 1) *To examine the historical context and the current situation of the social science disciplines (informed by key areas where integration among the social sciences has been exhibited) that shape our ability and direct our action in achieving conjoint application of the social sciences to research on climate change.*
- 2) *To explore promising theoretical approaches and key advancements in scientific methodologies - from analysis techniques to creating effects based on science team groups - that have implications for the achievement of progressively greater integration, to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and discover the practical implications for collaboration within the social sciences and between the social sciences and the natural sciences.*
- 3) *To discuss strategies for the education of future social scientists involved in climate change work, their organization, and needs for networking and professional growth and collaboration.*
- 4) *To identify the current and future needs and demands by the broader decision making and practitioner community where co-production and application of integrated social science perspectives would be likely to make a real difference, and to think about enhanced decision support strategies based on the consilience approach.*

Project objectives will be met through: an international launching workshop; follow-up writing 'thinkshops' to more fully develop thematic areas identified in the workshop and produce corresponding peer-reviewed white papers; and a major follow-up conference.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: 1. International launching workshop at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado (April 19-21, 2010); 2. Summary of findings from international launching workshop (June 2010); 3. Follow-up thinkshops to further develop peer-reviewed white papers (Fall 2010); 4. A technical report addressing how social science can contribute to land use and cover change issues, in particular land and protected area management and policy-setting activities. (Spring 2011); 5. Peer-reviewed white papers finalized and assembled in edited form for submission for publication (Spring 2011); 6. Book publication (Summer 2011)

Keywords: Climate Change, impacts, management decision, social science, National Park Service, Colorado State University