

## **Project Completion Report**

### **Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)**

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

**Project Code:** H2370094000 J2340100017

**Type of Project (Research, Technical Assistance or Education):** Research

**Funding Agency:** National Park Service

**Partner University:** Colorado State University

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**Start Date of Project:** January 31, 2010

**End Date of Project:** December 31, 2011

**Funding Amount:** \$29,375

**Project Summary:**

The goal of this research project was to facilitate the integration of social science research on climate change and adaptation planning for protected areas. This process was enabled by an interdisciplinary thinkshop. The thinkshop contributed to a deeper understanding of the potential and opportunities for integrated social science research on climate change, with a specific focus on adaptation action planning for protected area managers.

The *Protected Areas & Climate Change Thinkshop*, was a thinkshop hosted by Colorado State University (CSU) and the National Park Service (NPS). The thinkshop was held November 3-4, 2010 in Fort Collins, Colorado and engaged over 25 key social science researchers, climate scientists, and managers from Rocky Mountain National Park in brainstorming a list of social science research priorities.

The objectives of the integrated social science thinkshop were to:

- 1) Review of the state of knowledge on the probable impacts of global climate change in the Central Rockies area.
- 2) Understand the management institutions and systems including an overview of their primary responsibilities.
- 3) Discussion of the disciplinary perspective on the issue monitoring and informing decisions for the area.
- 4) Delineate the characteristics and criteria that would be present in an interdisciplinary social science approach to this area.

From the thinkshop, participants generated a list of research priorities (see Table 1) all of which have social science components.

**Table 1.** Top Priorities for Social Science Collaboration on Climate Change Adaptation at Rocky Mountain National Park

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1. Identify and integrate activities in response to change (environmental, social, cultural & climate related). What processes are needed to prioritize, focus & evaluate effectiveness of climate change response strategies? How do managers best respond to the relationship of cultural resources and climate change?
  2. How do we evaluate alignment of managers' perception of mandates responding to climate change with public perspective of what the NPS mandate should be?
  3. How can managers inform and accommodate for unintended or unknown consequences (collateral effects) of actions in response to climate change?
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This project was intended to contribute to advancing social science research on global climate change, and thus advancing the research capacity and collaboration among the social sciences and agency partners working on this topic. From the thinkshop outcomes, several products have been initiated. First, a manuscript describing the complexity of adaptation planning in protected areas from an integrated social science perspective, authored by Dr. Christopher Lemieux at the University of Waterloo. Second, an outline for a edited book led by Dr. Michael Manfredo, is scheduled to be compiled and produced for the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management in May 2013. Finally, Colorado State University will host the 19th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management with the theme: *A Time for Integration*, which builds directly on the results of the integrated social science thinkshop. All of these products are focused on reporting and facilitating a deeper discussion about the current challenges, opportunities and strategies for integrating social science research to meet the needs of land management agencies as they work to develop climate change adaptation plans.

Through this collaborative effort, which included insight from multiple disciplinary social scientists and multiple agency resource managers, we present an integrated and contemporary understanding of the human dimensions of adaptation planning for the Central Rockies in a era of global change. The thinkshop participants outlined a series of priorities for integrating our social science perspectives and our climate change adaptation management approaches, which will guide us as advance our disciplinary perspectives and management strategies in a changing climate.

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

Graduate students, Esther Duke, Adrian Benedetti, and Sarah Schweizer all participated as hourly employees in this project, supplementing their graduate studies.