

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Innovative Partnerships for Managing Tourism and Recreation in World Heritage Sites and Other Protected Areas

Discipline: Interdisciplinary
Type of Project: Education and Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Effective Dates: 7/30/2010 - 12/31/2012
Funding Amount: \$93,100 [FY12: \$18,100; FY10: \$75,000]

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: Balancing the use of World Heritage sites and other protected areas for public enjoyment with the need to protect those areas for future generations is a major issue facing the managers of these areas. Public use and enjoyment of World Heritage sites and protected areas are growing and are expected to continue to grow as societies urbanize and populations increase. Tourism is the world's largest industry, and ecotourism and the cultural tourism sector are growing at a rapid rate. The world's number of protected areas also continues to grow - - today over 130,000 protected areas cover over 14 percent of the world's land surface and over 5 percent of territorial seas. Likewise, each year 10-20 sites are added to the World Heritage List, which is rapidly approaching its 1,000th site. The growth in population, continued popularity of visitation to these areas, and growth in the number of protected areas have put increasing pressure on World Heritage site managers and land management agencies generally to develop innovative approaches to meeting recreational demand and at the same time protect the natural and cultural resources. While land management agencies globally recognize the importance of expanding public use and interpretation programs at parks and reserves, they often lack the staff, investment capital, experience and know-how to manage, design, build and maintain high-quality recreation and tourism programs that are in concert with their natural environment.

Partnerships with private sector organizations, ranging from local community-based enterprises to non-governmental conservation groups and global hospitality industry leaders, are important alternatives among a range of institutional options for managing tourism services, programs and facilities in protected areas. Expansion of tourism and recreational programs and installations can be a powerful engine for contributing to local and national economic development, generating new revenue for conservation agencies and government treasuries, and creating new service sector jobs. Such partnerships can also expand the environmental education, outdoor recreation and interpretation programs of parks and reserves in an era in which the increasing disengagement of youth from the outdoors has become a global concern. Tourism programs can also help revitalize local traditions, diversify income and employment options for impoverished rural communities, provide new outlets for artisan and agricultural products, and help maintain pride in traditions, culture and spiritual values of local communities. They can also generate public and decision maker support for protected areas when parks and reserves area shown to produce jobs and income, improve livelihoods for local communities and help promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness.

There has been great progress on developing guidelines and case studies of innovative approaches to protected areas management internationally; however, much less work has been invested in reviewing good practices and developing guidelines for successful partnerships with private sector enterprises to improve tourism and recreation services in World Heritage sites and protected areas.

The workshop:

A five day workshop is planned in the San Francisco Bay area, likely within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). GGNRA is the 2nd most visited unit within U.S. National Park Service (USNPS) with over 13 million annual visitors. A field trip is planned to Yosemite National Park, a World Heritage Site, which is the 3rd most visited national park in the USNPS system with over 3 million visitors.

Guest speakers will include U.S. protected area superintendents, staff responsible for concessions policy and oversight, and representatives of leading concessionaires and friends-of-the-parks organizations.

Participants will be asked present brief case studies on concessions policy within their agencies or overviews of concessions practice within an individual protected area.

Break out groups will be assigned a specific area and tasked with developing guidelines for good practice in crafting policies and agreements for partnerships with private sector partners in public protected areas. Topics will be determined via input from participants, and may include:

- commercial services planning (figuring out what exactly they need in their protected areas)
- Methodology for determining what is a necessary/appropriate commercial service in your area? (consistent with park purposes, needed for visitor enjoyment, does not degrade the resource, etc.)
- Contract administration
- Contract compliance
- Fees and charges (to the public)
- Contract development (how to write, terms, what is included, etc.)
- How to determine financial feasibility
- What does each partner bring to the table - concepts in financing public private partnerships
- Who owns the facilities
- Building a park infrastructure that can support commercial services?

The final draft good practice document will be distributed internationally online as part of an existing best practice series managed by the World Commission on National Parks. Results of the workshop will also be made widely available on line through a brief instructional PowerPoint training module on good practices in concessions planning, management and supervision that will be linked to several of the most widely visited conservation web sites internationally. We propose April/May 2011 as an estimated time frame for hosting the workshop.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: September 1, 2012

Five day workshop as well as a publication on good practices in public private partnerships for tourism programs in World Heritage sites and protected areas that would feature the case studies reviewed in the workshop.

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