

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Assessment of Grassland Condition and Development of Reference Conditions for Three Intermountain Region Parks

Discipline: Natural
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Effective Dates: 9/1/2011 - 3/31/2013
Funding Amount: \$15,481

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: One of the challenges in managing grasslands and other resources is that there is often disagreement about how to best manage these resources given differing contexts. There typically is not one "correct" way to view the resources. Rather, one's perspective about the current condition and appropriate reference conditions may vary widely depending on the focus and background of the expert. For example, an appropriate reference condition for grasslands may vary depending on whether the emphasis is on biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, historical context, rare species, etc. This variation in perspective has caused considerable frustration for park managers whose job requires deciding the appropriate emphasis for a given park. Consequently, this project attempts to gain a better understanding by using a team approach whose members come from differing, but related and appropriate, backgrounds. The resulting information will be incorporated into a Natural Resources Condition Assessment being conducted for each of the three park units: at Little Bighorn Battlefield NM, Sand Creek Massacre NHS, and Washita Battlefield NHS.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: Reports will be completed as soon as possible after each park visit and no later than 30 September, 2012.

Keywords: grasslands, **reference condition**, **team approach**, Natural Resources Condition Assessment, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM, Sand Creek Massacre NHS, and Washita Battlefield NHS, Colorado State University