

# **Project Completion Report**

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

**Project Title:** Assessment of Grassland Condition and Development of Reference Conditions for Three Intermountain Region Parks: Little Bighorn Battlefield NM, Sand Creek Massacre NHS and Washita Battlefield NM.

**Project Code:** P11AT10759 / CSURM-238

**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance

**Funding Agency:** National Park Service

**Partner University:** Colorado State University

### **NPS Agreement Technical Representative:**

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**Start Date of Project:** 1 September 2011

**End Date of Project:** 31 March 2013

**Funding Amount:** \$15,481

Project Summary: This project entailed a visit each of the three parks (LIBI, SAND, and WABA) to conduct an assessment of the current grassland condition, as well as participate as part of a team to evaluate potential reference conditions for grasslands given the particular contexts of the park (e.g., cultural landscape).

The assessment of current condition used qualitative indicators based initially on Technical Reference 1734-6 (Pellent et al. 2005) (available online at <http://www.blm.gov/nstc/library/techref.htm>), but modified for the context of this assessment in consultation with other members of the assessment team.

Reference conditions included the key attributes used in making the assessment of current conditions, as well as processes such as appropriate fire regimes, that might influence the condition of grasslands. A draft Natural Resource Condition Assessment was completed and the grassland chapter reviewed by the cooperator. The report is currently under review by the parks (including chapters not associated with this agreement), and once finalized will be posted at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/nrca/reports.cfm> as well as on the Integrated Resource Management Application (IRMA)

**Number of students participating in this project: n/a**

**Lessons Learned from this project:** In addition to assessing the condition of Natural Resources at each of the three parks, reference conditions were developed that will likely contribute to the development of desired conditions for at least two of the parks. We also were able to adapt the assessment to contribute to the ongoing State of the Park report for Sand Creek Massacre NHS.

**Other RM-CESU agencies or research partners who participated in this project:**

University of Colorado Boulder and Utah State University.