

**Project Summary**  
**Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

**Project Title:** Evaluation of Fertility Control as a Wildlife Management Tool in the National Park Service

**Discipline:** Natural  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** Colorado State University  
**Effective Dates:** 7/1/2011 - 12/31/2012  
**Funding Amount:** \$ 20,000

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** Many National Park Service (NPS) units across the United States are currently faced with overabundant wildlife populations for a variety of reasons. Often wildlife population densities are significantly influenced by anthropogenic factors and in some instances these populations require management to meet park objectives. Feasible options for managing the size of wildlife populations are often limited. Traditional tools such as hunting, trapping, and translocation are often in conflict with NPS policy. Alternatively, agency culling, encouraging predators, and habitat alteration are often in conflict with local and national stakeholder interest groups. Fertility control is another potential wildlife management tool that wildlife managers are considering in many NPS units. Wildlife fertility control methods have been investigated for several decades, but only recently have the regulatory and logistical aspects of applying these techniques begun to parallel the biological advances in the technology. The science of fertility control has developed to the point where it may be biologically possible to alter population size given sufficient management efforts. However, the technologies are not without side-effects.

To date the NPS has not developed guidance for parks when considering whether the side-effects of fertility control outweigh the benefits of managing a wildlife population using non-lethal techniques. While NPS policy allows for the use of fertility control agents, there is no guidance for when, where, and under what circumstances these techniques would be appropriate. The answers to these questions more often require value judgments than technical inputs. As a result NPS units are applying different standards for evaluating the potential use of fertility control agents depending on the region, the park, and the individual manager's opinions. There is a need to develop a consistent method for considering fertility control as a management option; a need for deliberation on what consequences are acceptable under a given set of situations. This workshop will solicit input that will be used to provide recommendations and guidance for NPS managers when considering fertility control options.

Colorado State University (CSU), Department of Communication Studies, Center for Public Deliberation, has considerable expertise in planning, facilitating, synthesizing, and reporting on workshops which are meant to explore complex problems filled with value driven judgments as well as examining the basis for these values. Collaboration with Dr. Sprain will allow the NPS to access this unique expertise, and create a document which reflects these discussions and ideas. Dr. Sprain will assist NPS staff with planning, program development, and selection of participants/speakers. Dr. Sprain will organize and facilitate the workshop and, with input from NPS staff, develop a "white paper" which reports the results of the workshop in a fashion that can be provided to NPS managers as a guidance document.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates: December 31, 2012**

1. Create a fertility control workshop agenda and desired discussion outcomes in collaboration with NPS.
2. Develop, organize, facilitate, and conduct a two-day workshop on fertility control with NPS wildlife managers and subject matter experts.
3. Provide support for non-federal workshop participants.
4. Provide the workshop venue.
5. Produce a workshop report or "white paper" including recommendations and conclusions discussed at the workshop.

**Keywords:** Fertility Control, Wildlife Management, NPS- Biological Resource Management Division, Colorado State University

