

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

**Project Title:** Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors

**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Discipline:** Social Science  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** Colorado State University  
**Effective Dates:** 9/1/2011 - 9/1/2012  
**Funding Amount:** \$103,053

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** The 2010 Census presents the most current and comprehensive statistical picture of the American public available. The data it provides can tell national park managers much about their visitors, which can help inform decisions concerning the resources and programs they manage. For example, are the interpretative programs offered attracting the full range of ethnic backgrounds represented by the local and distant communities served by the park?

This project will explore the 2010 Census by comparing known visitor characteristics from Visitor Services Project (VSP) survey data collected by the National Park Service (NPS) with community demographic and economic data collected by the US Census Bureau. This comparison is possible by linking the data collected in the more than 240 VSP surveys conducted since 1988 with the demographic and economic data collected in the 2010 Census. This linkage will be made using the ZIP code data collected from VSP respondents. This comparison will also be greatly facilitated by the recently developed VSP database, which provides access to all VSP survey data.

- Task 1: Investigate the VSP database to identify which parks or groups of parks to include in a comparison with 2010 Census data. Identify as broad a range of parks as possible. The VSP database is maintained by the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit. Please contact Margaret Littlejohn, NPS VSP Director, at [littlej@uidaho.edu](mailto:littlej@uidaho.edu) or 208-885-7863 for access.
- Task 2: Cross-link data from the VSP database for the parks selected in Task 1 with 2010 Census data using ZIP code data in order to answer the following questions.
- What are the general economic and educational backgrounds of park visitors?
  - How do the ethnic backgrounds of park visitors compare to those of the communities they come from?
  - Does the age distribution of park visitors match that of the communities they come from?
  - How do visitors from the local community obtain information about the park versus those from more distant communities?
  - What park activities or characteristics appear to attract visitors from local communities versus those from more distant communities?
- Task 3: Prepare a report describing the comparisons made in Task 2. This report will include:
- Executive summary,
  - Introduction, including an overview of VSP and the specific research questions,
  - Methods for Task 1 and Task 2,
  - Results for each research question (in aggregate for all parks in the study, in aggregate for selected groups based on park characteristics and visitor characteristics, and for individual parks of interest), and
  - Management implication.
- Task 4: Develop a web-based tool that allows users to look up changes in demographics between the 2000 and 2010 census surveys for counties adjacent to NPS units. Demographic data to compare will include population, racial and ethnic distributions, age distributions, and economic conditions. This tool will be hosted on the University computer system.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:**

Draft of the report described by Task 3, delivered to the Agreements Technical Representative 60 days prior to the end date of the project (July 1, 2012). This report will be in PDF electronic format.

Final of the report described by Task 3, delivered to the Agreements Technical Representative by the end date of the project (September 1, 2012). This report will be in PDF electronic format.

Mock-up of the web-based tool described by Task 4, demonstrated to the Agreements Technical Representative 60 days prior to the end date of the project (July 1, 2012).

Final of the web-based tool described by Task 4, delivered to the Agreements Technical Representative by the end date of the project (September 1, 2012).

**Keywords:** 2010 Census , visitor characteristics, Visitor Services Project , National Park Service, Colorado State University.