

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Engaging and Training Citizens in Stewardship of Night Skies

Discipline: Natural
Type of Project: Technical Assistance/Education
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Effective Dates: 9/1/2014 - 9/30/2015
Funding Amount: \$38,794

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: Under this Task Agreement, Colorado State University (CSU) Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere and the NPS will collaborate on the training and coordination of citizen volunteers who in turn conduct extensive public education. This Night Sky Ambassador Program has been a successful program for several years. In this particular task, the training of these volunteers will add components for connecting with youth in addition to preparing these volunteers for engaging general public audiences.

Public interest in stargazing and their desire to seek out dark night skies has been documented through individual park visitor statistics and academic research. Recently other organizations beyond the NPS, such as state parks, BLM areas, and wildlife refuges, have begun to offer similar astronomy programs and draw upon the experience of CSU and NPS in making those programs more effective. A key focus of these programs is to include educational elements that explain the problem of light pollution, its affect upon human and natural landscapes, and outdoor lighting solutions to minimize impacts.

This project will benefit the public by providing greater understanding of the scope of light pollution and the social, ecological, and economic advantages of a natural night sky. The loss of starry skies is a topic of serious concern and has been covered by hundreds of popular media articles. It is of increasing concern to national park visitors, and also to other state and federal land managers, state offices of tourism, and even the business, military, and academic sectors.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: 9/30/2015

Key Words: citizen science, night skies, Colorado State University, National Park Service - Natural Sound & Night Skies Division