

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

**Project Title: Hydrological Restoration Project for a Portion of the Weippe Prairie Site of Nez Perce National Historical Park**

**Discipline:** Natural  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** Colorado State University  
Student Involvement: Yes, GRA  
**Effective Dates:** 7/15/2015 - 12/31/2016  
**Funding Amount:** \$48,881

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

NPS Contact: Jason Lyon, Integrated Resource Program Manager, Nez Perce National Historical Park, 39063 US Highway 95, Lapwai, Idaho 83540, (208) 843-7017, (208) 843-7006, jason\_lyon@nps.gov

Investigator: David Cooper, Department of Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, Phone: 303-499-6441; dcooper@rm.incc.net

**Project Abstract:** The purpose of this project is to implement permanent hydrological restoration of a portion of the NPS Weippe Prairie site. This site is of great historical importance as it is the location of first contact between members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and the Nez Perce people. For this reason, the Weippe Prairie site is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and included as a unit in Nez Perce National Historical Park (NEPE). For thousands of years the site was intensively used by the Nez Perce to gather camas, a staple of their subsistence. The Nez Perce were engaged in that activity in September of 1805 when met by William Clark.

The NPS acquired the Weippe site in late 2003 after well over 100 years of private ownership had transformed the land via intensive grazing, farming, and ranching. Through these uses the native plant communities, and the wet meadow ecosystem that supported them, were highly altered and degraded to only a reflection of what they once were.

As a unit of NEPE, the Weippe Prairie is a key interpretive site discussing resource utilization and traditional management aspects of the Nez Perce culture, as well as the early interactions of these native peoples with early Euro-American explorers. Restoration of a healthy and thriving camas population at the Weippe site is a key component to the visitor experience and understanding of the area, and the national significance of the site. It is also of extreme importance to the modern Nez Perce Tribe who collectively attaches great cultural and spiritual significance to the Weippe Prairie.

The hydrological restoration efforts discussed here are focused on reviving a portion of this ecosystem and the native camas dominated plant community. These efforts follow on a 3 year pilot restoration project conducted with the assistance of researchers from the NPS-WRD and under the direction of David Cooper from Colorado State University (CSU). Very little quantitative research exists into restoration of camas meadows in the interior Pacific Northwest. Research being conducted at the Weippe Prairie site has contributed greatly to the broader understanding of these specific, culturally significant, natural systems. Dissemination of the results of our research to the scientific community, other nearby federal land management agencies, tribes, and the visiting public is one of the key aspects of this project on such a nationally significant historic site. Over the years since the NPS has owned and managed the property, researchers from three Universities, two federal agencies, and numerous NPS staff have worked together to gather data, analyze impacts and stressors, develop plans, and work toward implementing the project proposed under this agreement. The methods utilized here, and the lessons learned, will greatly contribute to management of these fragile, culturally significant ecosystems across the west.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:** Finalize report and prepare recommendations - December 2016

**Keywords:** hydrologic processes, restoration, Weippe Prairie, Nez Perce National Historical Park, Colorado State University