

Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Collaborative Management for Controversial Natural Resource Issues

Discipline: Social

Type of Project: Technical Assistance/Research

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University

Student Participation: Yes

Effective Dates: 3/1/16-9/30/19

Funding Amount: \$13,407

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: Natural resource management in parks can become controversial when stakeholders hold different beliefs and attitudes about resource condition and management activities, for example off-road vehicle management, management of overabundant native wildlife, and management of feral animals. Management of many of these issues would be improved through collaborative management and civic engagement, for example as outlined in Director's Order 75A. However, there is little guidance on how to engage in collaborative management and civic engagement, which requires understanding the human dimensions of issues. The goal of this project agreement is to develop example materials for specific resource topics that can help NPS navigate the human component of controversial natural resource issues, make management decisions with these considerations in mind, and incorporate external partnerships where feasible and prudent.

The NPS anticipates several potential modifications in future years to address directly related topics under the scope of task agreement as described above. Any future awards are dependent upon appropriations and demonstration of a successful cooperative partnership between NPS and the Recipient. The first topic examined will be management of free-ranging domestic cats (*Felis catus*) in parks. The project will help parks navigate the social and biological aspects of free-ranging domestic cat issues by using human dimensions research to construct guidance documents and tools that help parks develop strategies, messaging, and partnerships for cat management tailored to site-specific considerations.

In addition to serving NPS, this project will benefit other conservation agencies and organizations that conduct human dimensions (HD) research on biological resource management issues. Priority HD issues, such as free-ranging domestic cats, identified for NPS may also be emerging issues for these other entities, as they likely have similar challenges and target audiences and therefore could become critical partners in addressing priority issues. The project will also directly inform development of communication materials for use with the public and offer training opportunities for university students who will be involved in the research and dissemination of results. Finally, this project will engage and benefit many external partners, such as veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, animal shelters, and governmental and non-governmental wildlife and natural resource organizations.

Keywords: Collaborative Management, natural resource management, cats, National Park Service, Colorado State University