Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Sentinel Sites of the Western Hemisphere: connecting the conservation dots along the mountains of the Americas to improve protected area resiliency & biological diversity

Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Discipline: Natural Resources
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Student Involvement: Yes
Effective Dates: 7/1/2017 – 7/1/2022
Funding Amount: $50,000

Investigators and Agency Representative:
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Project Abstract: The National Park Service is at a crossroads in conservation. After more than one hundred years of organizational evolution, the public that has both supported and challenged their mission is re-evaluating their role at home, and abroad. This project seeks to bridge a gap in nationalistic and international ideals, through the lens of protected area managers' real-world issues. The premise is that we can assist local protected area resiliency, thus the conservation of biological diversity, through a collective understanding of management efforts at home and abroad. This project will focus on 'where the rubber meets the road' and link together an analysis of management issues common to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve, Rocky Mountain National Park, parks in the Arenal-Tempisque Conservation Area of Costa Rica, the Huascaran National Park of Peru and Bernardo O'Higgins National Park in Chile. The five locations will serve as sentinel sites along the backbone of the Western Hemisphere to tell a story that is local to global, and provides the information needed to support the resiliency and adaptive management capacity of local protected areas. The story will build upon comparative ecology as well the sociopolitical. Differences among sites will celebrate the power of place; while issues and opportunities in common will be highlighted as a source of strength, connectedness, and leverage. This story will serve as a foundation to engaging communities towards a more sustainable future for the protected area they find most important while giving the park managers actionable items and a network of support and understanding to achieve their goals.

Keywords: conservation, protected areas, resiliency, biological diversity, National Park Service, Colorado State University