

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Science and Community Involvement for Yellowstone National Park Winter Use Environmental Impact Statement and Rulemaking

Discipline: Interdisciplinary
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Montana State University
Effective Dates: 5/15/2010 - 12/31/2010
Funding Amount: \$21,655

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: During the next two years, the National Park Service will prepare a new Environmental Impact Statement and a new long term plan for winter use in Yellowstone National Park. Part of the NEPA process includes winter use science workshops and community involvement.

NPS will work directly with the Montana State University in organizing and planning science workshops, in participating in the science workshops, and in reviewing the results of the workshops. The goal of the workshops and community involvement is to: Enhance accountability and integrity of Yellowstone scientific assessment of impacts from winter use activities on park natural resources and visitors. The overarching objectives of the workshops are to:

1. Provide scientific recommendations for indicators that measure the effects of winter use on park resources and visitor experience, and scientific guidance for selecting standards of quality that can serve as thresholds that recommend management action.
2. Provide scientific recommendations for experimental design and adaptive management methodologies for monitoring changes in impacts to park resources, values, and visitor experience resulting from managed winter use.

Specific Objectives of the Wildlife Workshop:

1. Review Yellowstone monitoring results 1999-2009
2. Review scientific literature pertaining to winter use effects on wildlife.
3. Review ecological studies of wildlife populations dynamics and movement of wildlife in central Yellowstone
4. Provide scientific recommendations regarding indicators of effects and guidance regarding management standards.
5. Recommend new monitoring directions, especially (a) the effects of noise on wildlife and (b) the effects of road grooming on bison

The results of the science workshops will be used to inform the next winter planning process, including the environmental impact statement.

Outcomes with Completion Dates:

Due Date for Draft Final Report and/or Other Products: July 1, 2010

- Organization of Winter Science Workshops, including visual chart depicting the key elements of the workshop and how results will be used at what points in the current NEPA process, coordination by phone and email with workshop participants, building participant tracking database to be updated and accessible by all.
- Summary workshop design and annotated agenda.
- Review and editing for workshop proceedings.

Keywords: winter use, Environmental Impact Statement, long term planning, community involvement, Yellowstone National Park, Montana State University