

# Project Summary

## Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

**Project Title:** Preserve and Document the History of the 1988 Fires through the Collection and Transcription of Oral Histories

**Discipline:** Cultural  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** Montana State University  
**Effective Dates:** 6/1/2014 - 9/30/2015  
**Funding Amount:** \$20,000

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** This three-year project began in FY2012 with the park assigning an oral historian to conduct research into the 1988 fires and create lists of prospective participants to be interviewed. This second phase of the project will be done through a CESU agreement. An attempt was made to include as many different types of roles as possible through the dissemination of a survey to current and former Yellowstone employees, and beyond. Over 60 responses were received and, from those, the park compiled a list synthesizing all information. Twenty-seven individuals were noted as significant people who played varied roles during the fires, to be interviewed for the project. The 60+ responses, the synthesized list, the park's published study of the fires ("Yellowstone in the Afterglow: Lessons from the Fires," 2000), and the "1988 Fire Records" (YELL 131766) documenting all aspects of the fires are available as background materials.

Objectives

The main objectives of this project are to capture the stories, through oral history interviews, of a variety of people: from those who had some type of role in fighting the 1988 fires to residents who were witnesses to this historic event in the park's cultural and natural history. Since the fires occurred almost 30 years ago, these important accounts are in jeopardy of being lost forever as some of the older participants pass away, or the view of what occurred becomes more cloudy with time. The list of 60+ respondents will be culled to 15-20 who represent a wide cross-section of participants or witnesses to this event in order to obtain as many varied views and as in depth a history as possible.

1. The partner will: work with park staff to develop a list of 15-20 people to be interviewed, from the 60+ respondents;
2. Work with park staff to develop a set of questions to be used for each interview;
3. Arrange, conduct and tape each interview (interviews will probably be about an hour in length) using park equipment. Due to a very limited travel budget, they will be conducted by telephone or via Skype, if the interviewee has that capability.
4. The taped interview will then be digitized using the park's TEAC AD-800 CD and cassette player with USB Codec. The digitized versions will then be used when the oral histories are transcribed;
5. Transcribe each interview, using Baylor University's Institute for Oral History's "Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral Memoirs" (<http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf>). Typed transcription of an hour-long interview usually takes about 6 hours.
6. The 15-20 interviews, once completed, digitized and transcribed, will be cataloged by the park's archives staff into the oral history collection.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:**

Draft Final Report - 8/29/15  
Final Report - 9/30/15

**Keywords:** oral histories, 1988 fires, Yellowstone National Park, Montana State University