

## **Project Summary**

### **Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

**Project Title:** Examination and Analysis of Key White Bird Battlefield Sites

**Discipline:** Cultural Resources

**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance

**Funding Agency:** National Park Service

**Other Partners/Cooperators:** University of Idaho

**Effective Dates:** 9/1/2009 - 8/30/2010

**Funding Amount:** \$8,284

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** Nez Perce National Historical Park manages the 1,245 acre White Bird site in north-central Idaho. The battlefield is a site of national historic significance where the first battle in the 1877 conflict between the U.S. Army and Nez Perce occurred. The property was added to the NPS in 1965 through creation of NEPE. Since that time, there have been several archeological inventories of the NPS holdings conducted at the site. These projects resulted in the discovery and recording of 32 archeological sites associated with events of the June 17, 1887 battle and also the general pre- and post-battle occupation of the area.

Even with this intensive level of archeological survey, there are still several key questions relating to movements of combatants across the site during the engagement that remain unanswered. Like many battlefield sites, the relatively short duration of the engagement, intensity of the battle, and the rugged nature of the landscape provided for key discrepancies in documentation of the events that occurred on June 17, 1877. Specifically, there are a few important battle related events that are described by both the military and Nez Perce accounts, yet the exact location of their occurrence today remains uncertain. In most cases past archeological survey work has identified potential locations where these events may have occurred, but to date none have been explored in any detail. Identifying and evaluating these locations will provide information valuable in illuminating the NPS interpretive message at the site and further the park's cultural resource management objectives.

The focus of this project will be to identify and examine potential locations for three key battle related events that occurred on the White Bird site during the 1877 encounter. These include:

1. Potential location of the Theller Ravine.
2. Analysis of possible defensive wards discovered during the 1987 archeological project.
3. Further refinement of the positioning of Companies F and H at the start of the battle.

Methods used in the general identification process will include a detailed review of the archeological and historical records, analysis of NPS GIS data, and on-site archeological survey coupled with metal detector sweeps of all potential locations.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:** Draft final report is due April 15, 2010. Final project report is due May 30, 2010.

**Keywords:** archeological and historical records, on-site archeological survey, White Bird Battlefield Sites, Nez Perce National Historical Park, University of Idaho