

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Workshop to Promote Understanding of American Indian Connections to Devils Tower
Discipline: Cultural Resources
Type of Project: Education
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Effective Dates: 5/1/2005 - 5/1/2006
Funding Amount: \$3,299

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract:

Over 20 American Indian tribes have a cultural connection with Devils Tower, located in eastern Wyoming. Among these are six distinct American Indian Nations that have a direct geographical connection to the Tower: Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, Lakota and Shoshone. A sacred site within the Black Hills, American Indians use the Tower as a place of worship. Most of the ceremonies that take place are small groups or individuals, who have gathered for prayer, pipe ceremonies, the tying of prayer cloths, or vision quests. Group rituals also continue here, including sweat lodge and sun dance ceremonies. Although a small unit of the National Park Service, Devils Tower has been at the forefront of legal matters related to American Indian religious issues and the management of national park lands. While some of these issues have been resolved, tension continues to remain between some of our visitors, neighboring communities, and associated tribes.

Devils Tower National Monument was established because of its scientific and geological importance. Since that time, there has been a growing awareness of the Tower as a cultural resource. In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed, stressing the importance of access to sacred sites and protection of American Indian religious rights on public lands. In 1996, Executive Order No. 13007 reinforced the duty that land managers have in accommodating American Indian ceremonial use on federally managed sacred sites. All of these contribute to management decisions at the Tower.

This project seeks to promote staff understanding of American Indian connections with Devils Tower by conducting an on-site workshop with cooperators at University of Montana and the affiliated tribes. Raising cultural awareness will help park staff, including seasonal staff, interact more positively with American Indian partners. It will also aid park employees to better communicate the cultural importance of the Tower to visitors.

Outcomes with Completion Dates:

Workshop and Final Report, December 30, 2005

Keywords: American Indians, Devils Tower National Monument, staff education, cultural resources, affiliated tribes, University of Montana

For Administrative Use Only:

Date Annual Report Received:
Date Final Report Received:
Publications, etc. on file: