

Progress Report
on the CESU Administrative History

For Presentation at the June 2008 CESU Biennial Meeting
in Washington, D.C.

Diane Krahe, assistant research professor at the University of Montana in Missoula, has embarked on writing an administrative history of the CESU Network. This project aims to chronicle and analyze the brief but complex story behind the CESU Network as we know it today. The intended audience for this report includes federal and university managers and staffs of the CESUs; current and prospective users and supporters of the CESUs; and other people involved in the spheres of conservation and resources management, including those with expertise or funding that might sustain CESU partnerships. We hope the CESU administrative history can serve as a tool for future planning and development of the network. Knowing how the network got to where it is today, and grasping the broad contexts that shape the environment for CESU work, will help managers set directions that serve the public interest in integrated and interdisciplinary protection of natural and cultural resources.

At the start of this project, Diane was first introduced to the NPS CESU coordinators at the George Wright Society conference in St. Paul a little over a year ago. She regrets that she is unable to attend this meeting of a wider variety of CESU participants. As of next month, Diane will have conducted face-to-face oral history interviews with Gary Machlis, Jean McKendry, Bob Moon, John Haugh, and other principal players in getting the CESU Network up and running. She has also conducted face-to-face interviews with representatives from over half of the 17 CESUs, including Ron Heibert of the Colorado Plateau CESU and Darryll Johnson of the Pacific Northwest CESU on the eve of their retirement. By the project's end, she will have interviewed representatives of all the CESUs, some by telephone, as well as representatives of all federal agencies participating in the network. She has also met with a number of host university administrators to get their perspectives on the network, and she intends to speak with a few NGO partners as well. In May, she was here in Washington, D.C., researching the files of the CESU national office and interviewing key officials. She will return to D.C. in the fall to finish her interviews and document research.

Diane foresees this administrative history taking shape as a manuscript of five chapters. Her introductory chapter will provide an overview of how natural science and social science research was accomplished on federal lands from the 1930s until the mid-1990s. This overview will conclude with the workings of the CESU's most immediate precedents, the NPS Cooperative Park Study Units, the USFWS and state fish and game Coop Units, and USGS field stations. Chapter two will provide detail on the genesis of the CESU idea, the network's legal authority, and the network's initial formation through

the establishment of its four pilot CESUs: Rocky Mountain, Colorado Plateau, North Atlantic Coast, and Southern Appalachian Mountains. Chapter three will examine the growth of the network to its present incarnation of 17 units and explain its operations in partnering university faculty with applied science needs on our public lands, in the form of research, technical assistance, and education projects. Chapter four will take a closer look at the CESUs' track record so far – what is working well and what is not. This chapter will also discuss the major societal, economic and political factors that have sustained, shaped and redirected the course of the CESUs so far. In her concluding chapter, Diane will evaluate the network's primary successes and failures to date and look toward future developments of the still nascent network.

Although she still has plenty of perspectives yet to gather, Diane is starting to see some major themes surfacing repeatedly in her research. The creation of the CESU Network was a truly innovative approach to meeting research needs of federal land management agencies in an era of flat budgets and government “reinvention.” The CESUs' success has been owed not to institutional backing but to the hard work of certain individuals committed to the partnership concept of the network. The CESUs' continued success will depend on a new generation of federal officials, university faculty, and other partners with the same dedication, now that many of the network's founders are retiring. Among other major challenges facing the CESU Network, there is the need for greater administrative support to properly maintain and increase the capacity of the 17 units, the need for more active participation by a wider range of federal agencies, and the

need for true collaboration between agencies on issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Diane anticipates completing a draft of this history about a year from now. The final report will include appendices that contain copies of key legal documents and cooperative agreements; appropriate maps, graphs and tables; a bibliography that lists all documents, publications and oral histories used in the project; and an index.

If you have questions about the administrative history, please feel free to contact me (*insert your preferred contact information here*) or Diane at dkrahe@imt.net. Thank you.