

RM-CESU -Progress Report, FY 07

Project Title: Interpreter Notebook on Threatened and Endangered Species in Glacier National Park

Park: Glacier NP

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Project Description:

A great deal is known about the natural and cultural history of Glacier National Park, but interpreters (especially first-year interpreters) do not have time to learn about Glacier's resources in depth before they begin performing their jobs, which includes leading people on hikes in the park and giving evening programs. In seasonal training at the beginning of the peak visitor season, the interpreters are exposed to information about a large number of resource issues and research projects in oral presentations given by experts. They are also taught interpretive skills during this training. However, they do not have an easy-to-read resource to use throughout the season that helps them refresh their memories and leads them to additional resources.

The Division of Interpretation and Education would like the Research Learning Center to create a series of notebooks on important resource topics (e.g., on threatened and endangered species; ecology; cultural and historic resources; geology; and impacts of climate change on mountain ecosystems). These notebooks will include general information on a topic as well as resources for where an interpreter can learn more about a topic.

The objective for this project is to create a notebook for park interpreters on Glacier's threatened and endangered species.

Proposed scope of work:

The T&E interpretive notebook will include a chapter about each species (gray wolf = endangered, Bald Eagle = threatened, bull trout = threatened, Canada lynx = threatened, and grizzly bear = threatened). We will highlight current resource management issues about each species and the latest research projects on these species. A RM-CESU student will create the notebook. S/he will be advised about content by species' experts and the park's resource specialists. The student will interview the experts for each species in order to obtain key literature and the expert's opinion about salient points. Once a section is written, the appropriate expert will review that chapter. Species' experts include: Dan Pletscher (University of Montana) and Diane Boyd (independent consultant) for gray wolf; Riley and Pat McClelland (retired Glacier National Park)

and Steve Gniadek (Glacier National Park) for Bald Eagle; Wayne Fredenberg (US Fish and Wildlife Service) for bull trout; Scott Mills (University of Montana), John Squires (US Forest Service), and Kevin McKelvey (US Forest Service) for Canada lynx; and Kate Kendall (US Geological Service), Chris Servheen (US Fish and Wildlife Service), and John Waller (Glacier National Park) for grizzly bears. The student will gather all of the materials (publications, maps, and photos), create summaries of salient points, and assemble them into a notebook.

The notebook will be available in hardcopy and on CD. The hardcopies will be located in key locations in the park where interpreters work on program development and at visitor contact stations. The CD will be mailed to each interpretive ranger in the spring once they have committed to coming to Glacier for the summer season.

The notebook will allow interpreters to learn more easily about T&E species found in Glacier National Park so that they can become better interpreters of park resources. They will learn about each species, management issues, and current research studies that are addressing management concerns in-depth. Other divisions will also benefit from the existence of the notebook. Anyone in the park will be welcome to use it as a reference tool.

The ultimate audience for this product is park visitors who will better understand the resources in Glacier National Park. The visitors will learn accurate, up-to-date information from park interpreters. Visitors are more likely to enjoy their experiences in Glacier National Park because they will become more intellectually and emotionally connected to the resources and, therefore, will be more likely to become park stewards.

Progress to date:

Rebecca Rising, Environmental Studies M.A. student at the University of Montana, was recruited to create the notebook on Glacier's threatened and endangered species for park interpreters. Rebecca Rising, Sallie Hejl, and Matt Graves (West Lakes District Interpreter) met to determine an overall outline and suggested content for each of the chapters (one chapter per species). Rebecca corresponded with the experts to find the appropriate literature, read the literature, wrote the initial draft of the notebook, and sent each chapter to two reviewers (one research scientist and one resource manager who are experts on that species). Rebecca received comments from some of the reviewers but not all. She edited as many of the chapters as time allowed based on those comments. Rebecca has completed her commitment to the project.

Next steps:

Once we have received the rest of the comments from reviewers, other staff members at the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center will edit the manuscript and create the final notebook. We hope to have a very good draft of the notebook ready in time to give it to the interpreters during seasonal training in June 2008. We expect the final version to be completed by December 2008.