

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Chaco Culture National Historical Park: Assessing the Visitor Experience and Value Based Management

Type of Project: Research
Discipline: Social Science
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Effective Dates: 2/1/2008 - 3/30/2011
Funding Amount: \$62540 (FY08: \$60,434; FY09: \$2,106)

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: The purpose of this study will be to examine peak and shoulder season visitor perspectives of the park as it is currently managed. We will also investigate how visitors would prefer the park to be managed under a scenario of increased visitor demand. The specific objectives include:

1. *Documentation of the current users and use patterns.* This element of the study will provide park managers with documentation of the current visitor characteristics and use patterns within and outside of the park.
2. *Description of the desired visitor experience.* Visitor expectations, motives for the visit and evaluations of existing conditions will be assessed. The importance of experience features such as access, personal freedom, desired services, etc. will be assessed.
3. *Visitor perceptions of park values.* The park is protected for universal outstanding values. This element of the study will evaluate visitor perceptions of the park's purpose. These value orientations will be used to compare visitor perceptions of the park's purpose to those stated in the area's protection and managerial policies. It will also allow segmentation of visitors when assessing desired conditions and support for potential management actions.
4. *Visitor perceptions of management actions given existing and an increased demand scenario.* This component of the study will assess visitor opinion on a range of management policies that are currently in place and actions that could be implemented given increased demand. Management strategies could include regulation of access or visitor movement within the park, increased development of the site(s), changes in the provision of information, and education or site-specific access prohibitions, among others.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: Final report and presentation in September, 2010, including a face-to-face visit with management

Keywords: current users and use patterns, desired visitor experience, Visitor perceptions of park values, Visitor perceptions of management actions, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, University of Montana