

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Historic Trails of Yellowstone Phase 3: Complete Cultural Property Forms and MPDF

Discipline: Cultural
Type of Project: Technical Assistance/Education
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Student Participation: yes, graduate and/or undergraduate
Effective Dates: 6/1/2016 - 10/31/2018
Funding Amount: \$14,999

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: The collaborative project of this agreement between University of Montana (UM) and National Park Service (NPS) will assist Yellowstone National Park (YNP) with finalizing National Register eligibility determinations for 124 historic trails and a National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), while giving UM student/s hands-on experience in documenting historic properties according to 3 State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) and National Register standards. The project entails the completion of 124 cultural property forms, which are the vehicle through which agencies and SHPOs concur on determinations of National Register eligibility (DOE). This project would constitute the third and final phase of the *Historic Trails of Yellowstone* project.

Phase 1 of the *Historic Trails of Yellowstone* project completed a historic context. A historic context identifies patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property or site is understood and its meaning, and ultimately its significance, within history is made clear. Using this historic context, Phase 2 completed a draft MPDF, which documents groups of thematically related historic properties, describing associated property types related to the historic context, and establishing significance and integrity requirements for nominating properties to the National Register. Phase 2 also entered developmental history information into draft cultural property forms for each of the 124 trails. The work for this project (Phase 3) is to complete the cultural property forms by including National Register information and geographic portrayals of trail segments in close collaboration with YNP cultural resource specialists and the CESU research partner from previous phases. Once Phase 3 is completed, the cultural property forms and MPDF would be submitted to the Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming SHPOs for determinations of eligibility. This final phase would complete the *Historic Trails of Yellowstone* project.

This final phase of the Trails of Yellowstone project will be complex. Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872, is nearly 3,500 square miles in size. This equals over 2.2 million acres, which is larger than the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined. The Park trail system, consisting of over 1,000 miles of diverging and converging trails through Yellowstone's backcountry, evolved originally from Indian trails with additions from overlaid history of military administration (1886-1918) era, National Park Service administration, Fire Management, and Depression era CCC projects. Due to the complexity, remoteness, and the sheer magnitude of distances through remote areas, it was determined in Phase 2 that conventional documentation methodologies would take decades to complete. In order to streamline this process, SHPO concurred with an unconventional methodology for batching trail DOEs together using trail hierarchy (primary, secondary, and tertiary trails). Using this approach, the work under this agreement for Phase 3 will finalize the 124 cultural property forms.

Keywords: technical assistance, historic trails, National Register eligibility, students, Yellowstone National Park, University of Montana