

RM-CESU - Project Completion Report, FY 05

Project Title: Creating Storyboards for an Interactive Web Page on the Cultural and Natural Resources of Glacier National Park

Park: GLAC

Funding Source: Rocky Mountains CESU Technical Assistance Funding (\$6500); Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center: \$225 support

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University Partner: Utah State University; Tehabi Program: Ben Baldwin

Student Participants: Garrett Boarts

Project Description:

Much is known about the cultural and natural resources in Glacier National Park, but little information has been made easily accessible to people who are not familiar with Glacier. Glacier's current web site contains text and pictures, but it does not do justice to the wealth of knowledge we have about many topics, the interesting stories about those topics, and the diversity of ways that people learn. The Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center and the Division of Interpretation & Education want to offer an exciting, accessible source of information on Glacier that will help people enjoy and know about Glacier before, during, or after a visit to the park.

The new web pages will expose virtual visitors to a large array of important cultural and natural resource issues throughout the park. Highlights of the web page will be: natural features, plants, animals, environmental factors, disturbance factors, history, culture, and social science issues. The incorporation of video and sound recordings into pages containing text and photos will make the web pages come alive. We will include video-taped interviews with park staff (e.g., Superintendent, interpreters, cultural and natural resource specialists) and with scientists who study park issues. We want to present information in a very accessible and pleasing way so that the photos, videos, and sound recordings will excite the viewer about Glacier National Park, capture some of the experience of being in Glacier NP, and inform the viewer about the wide variety of resources in the park. The ultimate goal of the web page is to inform visitors who are planning trips to the park, remote visitors who can't come to the park, and students studying the park or its cultural and natural resource issues.

In addition to highlighting facts about Glacier's cultural and natural history, we will interweave information about current research and resource management issues in the park. We will have easy-to-read, one-page summaries of current research projects and critical resource management issues that the viewer can select to read. Citations for key works about the topics will accompany the research summaries and PDF files of those publications will be included when available.

Partners include the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center (CCRLC), the Division of Interpretation & Education (I&E), and the Division of Science & Resources Management (S&R). The template for the web pages has already been created by Bill Hayden and Dave Restivo. The cultural and natural resource specialists in the Division of Science and Resources Management will advise the staff of CCRLC and I&E throughout the project.

Garrett Boarts, a Tehabi intern from Utah State University, was hired to write the first storyboards for the web site. Garrett worked in conjunction with the CCRLC, I&E, and S&R to create these storyboards. Bill Hayden (I&E) and Dave Restivo (I&E) advised us throughout the season. Garrett interviewed park specialists; wrote text; selected some photos and sound recordings; created two videos interviewing park specialists; and designed several storyboards for the web page.

Project Results:

Garrett created several storyboards for the web page. In the RM-CESU proposal, I suggested that we would be able to complete storyboards for one section (of the 7 sections we hope to create). He made great strides in developing a general overview section, but he did not complete the section. There was not enough time in his internship to fully develop the storyboards. Garrett did an excellent job. He had a lot of initiative and worked hard. The task simply proved too great. Because he did not know much about Glacier's cultural and natural history, there was a large learning curve. Also, because I had never created storyboards, I did not know how long it would take to develop each piece. The result is I now have an accurate assessment of how much time it takes to develop one section. Therefore, I have learned how much time it will take to fully develop the web site. Because the learning curve is so great, the person creating the storyboards has to work continuously on them for at least several months at a time. Garrett could have completed the section if he had had 1-2 more months of time. There will be less start-up in the future because Garrett has clarified many of the important issues for creating storyboards for the template I&E has developed.

Garrett gathered lots of pieces that will go into the final general overview section. The overview section on Glacier National Park features topics such as plant diversity (including whitebark pine), wildlife diversity (including grizzly bears and wolverines), the dynamic nature of glaciers, fire as a process that creates and recreates Glacier's forests, and Native American presence in the park. Once we have completed the overview section, we will then create sections for each region of the park [e.g., North Fork region (noxious weeds in Big Prairie, wolf recolonization, and homesteading) and Going-to-the-Sun region (history of Going-to-the-Sun road, wildlife management in the road corridor, and the historic architecture of Lake McDonald Lodge).]

The educational value of this project to the student was much greater than I expected. Garrett not only learned about the cultural and natural history of Glacier NP in depth, he also learned a lot about the difficulties of creating web pages (e.g., the limits of web

pages: how to make the storyboards small enough that people can download the information over dial-up connections and still put in the information in an exciting way), and the difficulties of designing a new product (that is someone else's idea) from scratch. He also took interpretive training and learned how interpretive writing styles differ from scientific writing styles.

Follow-up of this Project - Sally Hejl will continue to work on the overview section and will attempt to find funding to complete a series of web pages.