Project Summary
Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Natural Resource Assessment Workshop: A Pilot Demonstration Project at Rocky Mountain National Park

Discipline: Interdisciplinary
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Utah State University
Effective Date: August 31, 2009 – March 1, 2011
Funding Amount: $18,000

Investigators and Agency Representative:
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Abstract: Land managers strive to use best available science in resource planning and decision making. No single "science integration" approach, method, or product is adequate for this purpose. Resource managers at Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) recently explored one informal approach to resource assessment. In 2009, ROMO staff conducted an in-house meeting to: 1) review valued park ecosystem resources and components, 2) map linkages between those resource components and some "driving" management issues, and 3) evaluate those linkages to identify data and management gaps that need focused attention in the near term, to help the park more effectively address the management issues. Participating staff indicated this was a constructive exercise that helped them think in practical terms about upcoming staff workload and priorities, and that it would be worth repeating in the future on a periodic basis.

ROMO resource managers do not consider this exercise a substitute (replacement) for formal park planning processes, such as resource stewardship planning. They also do not consider it a substitute for a general-level natural resource condition assessment or other ongoing park science efforts. It does provide a useful complement to those more comprehensive but less frequent reporting products. Among other benefits, this type of assessment gives managers a quick read on their current capacity to address the management priorities, strategies, and important park resources identified by those other efforts.

As outlined in this proposal, the National Park Service (NPS) and Utah State University (USU) will revisit and refine the assessment procedure and products from the 2009 exploratory effort. NPS and USU will collaborate to demonstrate and document a natural resource assessment workshop that gives land managers a rapid, informal tool to help them evaluate, and take steps to improve, their capacity to manage important park resources.

Outcomes with Completion Dates:

1. By November 25, 2009: Outline the matrix (framework of management issues and valued ecological components) that will be used at the workshop; identify workshop facilitator and key workshop participants; identify primary reference materials (data, reports, other documentation) that will be used to help refine and populate the matrix
2. February 1, 2010: Obtain and review reference materials; prepare summaries and other support documentation for use at workshop
3. By August 1, 2010: Conduct workshop to populate matrix cells and develop supporting documentation
4. Within 30 days of Workshop: provide draft workshop notes and findings to participants as a means to check accuracy and completeness before finalizing notes and findings
5. October 31, 2010: Develop documentation of the resource assessment workshop process and products, suitable for introducing and guiding its use by others

Keywords: Utah State University, Rocky Mountain National Park, workshop, science integration