

Project Completion Report

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)

Project Title: ARCHEOLOGICAL INVENTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT FOR SITES, VIEWS, AND TRAILS ALONG THE GRAND CANYON OF THE YELLOWSTONE, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

Project Code (such as UMT-72 and/or the “J” number): UWY – 108 / J1580090452

Type of Project (Research, Technical Assistance or Research): RESEARCH

Funding Agency: National Park Service, Yellowstone Park Foundation Donation

Partner University: THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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Start Date of Project: August 15, 2009

End Date of Project: December 20, 2010

Funding Amount: \$25,000

Number of Students Involved, and Type of Student (Undergraduate, Graduate, Post Doctorate): 1 Graduate, 1 Undergraduate

Project Summary, including descriptions of project deliverables, any changes made

during the life of the project, work accomplished and/or major results. If the information is restricted (e.g. location of endangered species or cultural resources), indicate the title and location of the final report.

Overlooks and trails around the perimeter of the ‘Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone’ continue to evolve since Yellowstone National Park (YNP) was created in 1872. Originally, the overlooks were not much more than game trails used by visitors to “scramble” over boulders and trees to gather glimpses of the Canyon and falls.

Around the turn of the century the army made an effort to formalize the overlooks and trails to improve visitor safety. The early structures were constructed from timbers. In the early years of the National Park Service (NPS), beginning in 1916, landscape architects, architects and engineers were called on to give formal articulation to tourist facilities around the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River.

In the 1930s a necklace of 10 overlooks, including staircases and 5 miles of pathways were constructed along the precipice of the canyon. Crafted of iron, native stone, and mortar these works of art hung in the balance of “mother natures’ wrath. For nearly 75 years, they have stood unwavering to the continual hammering of both humans and nature, but time has taken its toll and they are in need of stabilization and major repair.

With the help of the Yellowstone Park Foundation the Artist Point overlook has recently been rehabilitated. The Federal Highway road rehabilitation program in the park also assisted in the rehabilitation of the Lookout Point and Grandview overlooks, both closely associated with the roadway. There is still much work to be completed at the seven other Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone observation areas and the connecting paths, trails, and staircases.

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River is located in the central portion of the park and consists of views, paths, and stairs located on the North Rim Drive, the Inspiration Point Drive, the Brink of the Lower Falls road, and the South Rim Drive. The area is located in the northeast border of the Crystal Falls 7.5 minute quadrangle map and the northwest area of the Canyon Village 7.5 minute quadrangle map.

Facilitated by a cooperative agreement through the RM-CESU, Rosenberg Historical Consultants, a partner of the Office of the Wyoming State Archeologist, conducted intense archival research to develop the historic context within which to evaluate the significance of the views and trails in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River. They also field documented the seven (7) overlooks and three (3) trails extant in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone area, providing access and spectacular views of one of Yellowstone National Parks’ most visited “wonders” using the Wyoming Historic Properties form. The historic context was used to produce a National Register of Historic Places Historic District Nomination form that includes the seven overlooks and the three trails.

The historic context and the field documentation resulted in Yellowstone National Park’s determination that the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone Historic District is eligible for

the National Register of Historic Places as nationally significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, Moran's paintings and Jackson's photographs of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone were instrumental in persuading Congress to establish the world's first national park, a pivotal event in the history of the United States, the conservation movement, and for national entertainment/recreation. Under Criterion C, in the areas of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the features are representative of the aesthetics and design philosophy of the NPS Rustic style. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the park's determination in December 2010.

The Archival Research and Field documentation project has been completed for a total cost of \$25,000, of which \$21,277 are direct costs and \$3,723 are CESU overhead costs at a 17.5% rate. The funds were provided by the Yellowstone Foundation (donations) –a non-NPS source and YNP staff (Elaine Skinner Hale, staff archeologist and Joe Regula, landscape architect) provided project management, direction, product review, and historic preservation compliance (60 hours). All of the funds were obligated and the objectives of the project were accomplished in full.

This project provides historic documentation appropriate for sharing with the public to enrich their understanding and enjoyment of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and its significance in the National Park movement. It also provides the needed documentation of the historic properties to facilitate further rehabilitation of the historic views and trails.