

Project Completion Report

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU)

Submitted by Elaine Skinner Hale, RPA, June, 2012

Project Title: ALONG WITH THE NEZ PERCE: THE SUMMER OF 1877 IN 2009, Yellowstone National Park

Project Code : J1580090140, UWY-100

Type of Project: Research

Funding Agency: National Park Service

Partner University: THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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Start Date of Project: May 15, 2009

End Date of Project: Sept 30, 2012

Funding Amount: \$138,000

Number of Students Involved, and Type of Student (Undergraduate, Graduate, Post Doctorate): 2 undergraduate (NPS requested one additional student from Nez Perce/Umatilla Tribes but the tribes declined to identify any tribal student interested in participating.), 1 Graduate

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.

The final product, the *Report of 2009 Cultural Resource Investigations Along Four Sections of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming*, by Daniel H. Eakin, June 2010 has been received and is on file at the Yellowstone National Park Research and Heritage Center, Gardiner, Montana. The information is restricted from public access under 43CFR Part 7 (a) (1).

The 2009 field season archeological inventory was the third year continuation of the four-year "Archeological Inventory of Nez Perce National Historic Trail" as it passes through Yellowstone National Park (PMIS 37733). The Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT) has been declared by Congress as nationally significant; however, no archeological inventory had previously been conducted for the YNP portion --approximately 85 miles of trail. After intense archival research and research into the oral traditions concerning the trail through YNP, archeological inventory and site-specific investigations to identify sites with the most potential for historical association to the trail were conducted in 2009.

The archeological investigations follow broad areas where previous research indicates evidence of the Nez Perce camps may have been established for the 11+ days they passed through the park. Due to the paucity of material goods left by the Nez Perce who were at that time traveling with very few of their possessions, these camp sites and trail passages are, at best, difficult to identify. Former YNP Backcountry rangers, John Loundsbury and Jerry Mernin provided advice on where the campsites might be located. Following this information, the 2009 investigations included broad areas within the Hayden Valley, the Pelican Springs area, and remote areas of the Lamar River drainage that lead to the Parker Peak area where the Nez Perce were thought to have exited the park. Additional investigations in the Mary Mountain area were conducted.

The 2009 field work was conducted by the Office of the Wyoming State Archaeologist with Dan Eakin as crew chief, through a cooperative agreement with the Rocky Mountain Cooperative Ecosystem Unit in conjunction with the University of Wyoming, Department of Anthropology. Approximately 2,200 hours (2-10 day and 1-16 day field sessions) were spent in field investigations by the OWSA crew and an anticipated 1,520 hours will be spent over the 2009-2010 winter season with artifact analysis, curation of artifacts, and report preparation. Elaine Skinner Hale and Tami Blackford and Christie Hendrix, all YNP staff, spent 80 hours administering the project. Three students (two (2) undergraduates and one (1) graduate) participated in portions of the field work sessions. Three (3) volunteers donated approximately 80 hours of time in the field and assisting in research on possible sites. YNP Corral Operations packed the camp and archeological supplies to the remote locations and the Backcountry Rangers provided support for the logistics and safety of the crew. No services were received from outside agencies although assistance was requested from the Nez Perce and Confederated Umatilla Tribes.

Standard archeological inventory and investigation methods were used. Metal detectors were employed to identify buried metal objects that could indicate a historic period native camp. Unfortunately as the archeologist were flagging metal and wood artifacts on the Mary Mountain (General Howard camp) trail hikers picked up several flagged, unspent military cartridges and walked off with them. Rangers were summoned but the artifacts were not recovered.

The objectives, as stated in the proposal were met with the survey and documentation of all sites encountered. Sites specific investigation of those areas that appear to relate to the Nez Perce flight through YNP will continue next field season. Of particular interest is the location of a metal NPS sign that indicated an area where the Nez Perce were thought to have camped on Mary Mountain to consider the fate of their recent captives from the Cowan party. Initial investigation of the site revealed un-spent military shells, metal shoes for a mule, and other items that indicated this was the area where General Howard camped, resting his troops as they pursued the Nez Perce over Mary Mountain. The Nez Perce camp (a few days earlier than the General Howard camp) is suspected to be at the mouth of Cowan Creek, further up the mountain from the sign location. Both sites will be intensively investigated in 2010. Little else was found in the other locations investigated in 2009. This information will be added to the 2006

Lifeways of Canada investigations, and the 2008 OWSA inventory and documentation of Nez Perce Trail sites. Video was made of the 2009 sites inventoried, the same as with previous investigations for this project. After a long period of requesting participation from the Nez Perce tribes and the Umatilla, and with no persons able to work in the backcountry coming forward, it was decided to proceed without tribal participation.

The 2009 survey produced 11 new sites which were added to the ASMIS database. Additional investigations will only be conducted for those sites that have potential to be associated with the Nez Perce flight through YNP.

The direct costs to the OWSA of the 2009 inventory was \$117,477 and the indirect (overhead) costs to the RM-CESU was \$20,553, bringing the total cost for the 2009 work to \$138,000, all of which was obligated. The funding source was the NPS CRPP Base funds. No other funds were received.

Information on the Nez Perce inventory project has been presented at various professional conferences including the Wyoming Archeological Society conference and the Plains Anthropological Conference. Dan Eakin will continue to present new material at various conferences as the analysis' are completed. The draft report of the 2009 field investigation was provided to the Nez Perce and Umatilla Tribes for comment, to be included in the final report but no comment was received.