

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Prepare materials for an EA for Prairie Dog management at DETO

Discipline: Natural
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Wyoming
Effective Dates: 9/30/2009-12/31/2011
Funding Amount: \$25,000

Investigators and Agency Representative:

NPS Contact: Mark J. Biel, Chief of Resource Management, Devils Tower National Monument, PO Box 10, Devils Tower WY 82714; (307) 467-5283 Ext. 212; (307) 467-5350 fax; mark_biel@nps.gov

Investigator: Daniel Tinker, Asst. Professor of Botany, Aven Nelson Building, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071; 307-766-4967; tinker@uwyo.edu

Project Abstract: University of Wyoming shall provide manpower, equipment, and services to perform all tasks necessary for the preparation and completion of a Black-tailed prairie dog management plan that will become the preferred alternative in the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) process for the continued management of black-tailed prairie dogs at Devils Tower National Monument (DETO).

The black-tailed prairie dog colony at Devils Tower is the most popular visitor destination after the Tower itself. The current black-tailed prairie dog colony is approximately 41 acres and is located adjacent to popular visitor use areas such as the park amphitheater, picnic area, Circle of Scared Smoke sculpture, and park campground. Due to the proximity of the colony to these high visitor use areas, the prairie dog's nature to expand the colony, and human safety concerns related to fleas on the prairie dogs that can carry plague bacteria and the potential to transmit this disease to humans, park staff have been active in control actions to limit the intrusion of prairie dogs into these high use areas. Due to the on-going nature of these control activities, the lack of an approved prairie dog management plan for the park, and limited options for trapping and relocating prairie dogs within and outside the park, an Environmental Assessment needs to be completed that looks at alternatives for future management of the black-tailed prairie dog population within the park.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: December 31, 2011

Keywords: Black-tailed prairie dog, Environmental Assessment, management plan, Devils Tower National Monument, University of Wyoming