

## Project Summary

### Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

**Project Title:** Along with the Nez Perce: The Summer of 1877 in 2009, Yellowstone National Park

**Discipline:** Cultural Resources  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** University of Wyoming  
**Effective Dates:** 2/15/2009-12/31/2012  
**Funding Amount:** \$274,000 [FY10: 136,000; FY09: \$138,000]

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** In 1877, a group of Nez Perce traveled through Yellowstone National Park as they made their way towards the Canadian border pursued by the U.S. Army. The Nez Perce numbered 800 or more and about 2000 head of horses (Lang 1990:14). Each family traveled together and trailed their own horses (Lang 1990:18). It is assumed that these family groups would also have camped together and the Nez Perce camp would have been dispersed over a large area. During the summer of 2006, Yellowstone National Park, with its partners the Nez Perce Tribe, the Umatilla Tribe, and Colville Tribe (the Chief Joseph Band), visited five locations in the center of the park where the 1877 band of Nez Perce encountered tourists or are believed to have camped. These areas today are part of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT).

This is the fourth year of a four-year project to inventory the Nez Perce Trail as it crosses the park. The pilot program in 2006 (Vivian et al. 2007) examined Tangle Creek where the Shively and Radersburg tourist parties were captured (hereafter Radersberg site); Nez Perce Creek, especially east of the highway; Otter Creek near the road into the Bear Feeding Ground; west side of the Yellowstone River at Nez Perce Ford and east side of Nez Perce Ford where Nez Perce camped; and Indian Pond where Nez Perce camped for two nights. The Radersberg and Otter Creek tourist camps were visited by small groups of Nez Perce warriors, while all or nearly all of the Nez Perce were at other locations. An unknown number of Nez Perce campsites may exist along their route through the park and locating these sites is one of the stated goals of the study. Archeological identification of all the sites is problematic given the historic circumstances (they were at this time traveling with very limited material goods), subsequent land use, and the fact that by 1877 the Nez Perce were in the terminal phase of their traditional culture.

The 2008 fieldwork investigated the Helena Party incident location, portions of the eastern boundary including Hoodoo Basin and Bannock Lake, and the area around Mary Lake and Highland Hot Springs. Among articles mentioned in the archival records specific to the Helena Party site were two muzzle-loading shotguns that were beaten against trees and made unusable. A percussion lock set for a double-barreled muzzle-loading shotgun was recovered from the Helena Party site along with three cartridge cases from three different guns, probably representing Nez Perce firing positions. Also a complete spur, numerous food cans, mess gear and clothing parts were recovered at the Helena Party site. Field reconnaissance in the Bannock Lake area revealed many stumps scattered over a large area where lodge poles were evidently harvested. Within this area a mixed collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian and U.S. military items were recovered. This area may represent a Nez Perce camp although more research is necessary to identify an accurate age for the site. Several culturally modified trees were recorded at the Parker Peak site (48YE506) near the eastern boundary of the Park. Unfortunately the 2008 efforts in the Highland Hot Springs area did not produce evidence of a Nez Perce camp.

The 2009 fieldwork investigated the Alum Creek and Trout Creek area in the Hayden Valley. Additional inventory was undertaken along the north bank of Nez Perce Creek up to the base of Mary Mountain. A Chittenden Nez Perce sign was reported to have been seen at the base of Mary Mountain some years ago by park staff, and was located by the crew. This aided in the identification and recording of the site of the council of August 24, 1877, where the fate of the Radersburg tourist party was decided by member of the Nez Perce. The site of General Howard's so-called "third camp" was also indentified in this area.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:** June 10, 2012, final report plus two copies on CD or DVD. Three complete sets of site forms.

**Keywords:** archeological survey, Nez Perce Trail, Yellowstone National Park, University of Wyoming