

## **Project Summary**

### **Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

**Project Title:** Along the Trail with the Nez Perce: The Summer of 1877 in 2013, Yellowstone National Park

**Discipline:** Cultural Resources  
**Type of Project:** Technical Assistance  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** University of Wyoming  
**Effective Dates:** 7/1/2013 - 7/31/2015  
**Funding Amount:** \$10,100

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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**Project Abstract:** Since the induction of the Nez Perce Trail into the National Historic Trails System in 1986, increased public interest in and use of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT) has created a need for identification of cultural properties in and around the trail corridor so that these resources can be more effectively managed (see Johnson 2006, 2008). This project, if funded, has the potential to identify a previously recorded site as a Nez Perce campsite along a remote section of the NPNHT within YNP and provide information useful to both the Nez Perce Tribe and other inter-jurisdictional partners.

While elements of the Parker Mountain site were first described by P.W. Norris in 1880 (Norris 1881), the site was subsequently investigated in 1961, 1977, and 2008 (Eakin 2009). The 2008 investigations at the Parker Mountain site included systematic metal detecting and survey, recording of weathered wood believed to be remains of the same poles observed by Norris in 1880, and a general search for bark stripped trees and axe-cut stumps. The majority of the stumps have been cut with an axe or similar implement, and many remain attached to roots. It is possible that these stumps represent remains of trees harvested by Indians for the lodgepoles described by Norris in 1880.

The goal of the 2013 investigation at the Parker Mountain site will be collection of wood samples for tree-ring dating. Samples will be collected from the population of axe-cut stumps, cambium harvest trees, and axe-cut poles observed at the site in 2008. The dating of the scarred trees, as well as the axe-cut stumps to the year 1877 would provide indisputable supportive evidence for association of this site with the Nez Perce War of 1877. The study site is centered on a possible 1877 Nez Perce camp located in the immediate vicinity of Parker Peak, adjacent to Hoodoo Basin (Figs. 1, 2). Culturally modified trees at this site are to be precisely dated using dendrochronological techniques. In order to establish chronological control, a set of reference tree-ring samples will be required that include the last 200-250 years. Since this landscape is near timberline and characterized by discontinuous tree cover, a target area of approximately 4 km<sup>2</sup> surrounding the Nez Perce camp will be required to locate appropriate trees and deadwood remnants for the set of reference samples.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:**

Final Technical Report - 6/1/2014

**Keywords:** cultural properties, tree-ring dating, Nez Perce National Historic Trail, Yellowstone National Park, University of Wyoming