FY2013 Annual Report
Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) are multi-agency partnerships with the Nation’s universities and other institutions, organized around biogeographic areas. The CESUs were established to provide research, technical assistance, and education to resource and environmental managers. The Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (RM-CESU) is one of 17 units in the CESU National Network.

The Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit has been operating for fourteen years. In 1999, the RM-CESU was one of four pilot CESUs established through a competitive process. It was then a partnership of four Federal agencies and 6 universities. The partnership has grown today to 9 Agencies and 16 universities. Members of the RM-CESU are the following:

- University of Montana-host 1999
- University of Idaho 1999
- Montana State University 1999
- Salish Kootenai College 1999
- Utah State University 1999
- Washington State University 1999
- University of Wyoming 2002
- Colorado State University 2004
- University of Colorado Boulder 2002
- University of Colorado Denver 2002
- University of Northern Colorado 2006
- University of Calgary 2007
- Metropolitan State University of Denver 2011
- Little Big Horn College 2012
- Northwest College 2013
- University of Utah 2013

USDI
- Bureau of Land Management 1999
- Bureau of Reclamation 2004
- Fish and Wildlife Service 2009
- Geological Survey 1999
- National Park Service 1999

USDA
- Forest Service 1999
- Natural Resources Conservation Service 2004

DOD
- US Army Corps of Engineers- Civil Works 2008
- Office of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) 2009

Mission

The mission of the Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit is to improve and disseminate the knowledge base for managing natural and cultural resources in the rapidly changing social, cultural, and environmental landscape of the Rocky Mountain Region, and to extend its expertise to national issues where appropriate.
RM-CESU PROJECTS ACTIVITY FOR FY2013

This year, the RM-CESU facilitated 192 task agreements (TAs) obligating $20,653,289 to new projects ($9,935,788/99 TAs) and adding funds to existing projects ($10,717,501/93 TAs). A complete listing of projects may be found on the RM-CESU Project List for FY13 on the web site at http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/Projects/default.php (look under Annual Reports). RM-CESU projects provide needed research, technical assistance, and/or education to our Federal partners and cover the fields of natural resources, cultural resources, social sciences, and interdisciplinary fields.

Project Spotlight: A Spatially Explicit Evaluation of the Bioenergy Potential of the Southwestern United States

Function: Research
Agency: US Geological Survey
PI: Steve Running and Cory Cleveland, University of Montana

University of Montana’s PIs, Steve Running and Cory Cleveland, will investigate the potential for biofuels development in the southwestern US to meet energy demand. Demand for alternative energy development in general, and biofuels development in particular (since biofuels are so easily used with existing engine technology), is increasing dramatically. Due to the high solar potential and relative lack of land currently used for agriculture, the southwestern US is being proposed as an excellent region for increased biofuels development. In addition, much of the development is being proposed on public lands, of which the southwest has many. Yet we have a surprisingly poor understanding of the potential for biofuels to actually meet significant energy demand, and modeling techniques offer an exciting opportunity to explore and help constrain the potential for this important alternative energy resource. Specifically, land managers and decision-makers have almost no information with which to weigh the pros of biofuels development against potential cons. The objectives include:

- Investigate the potential impacts of biofuels development on western ecosystems
- Develop a suite of models to better predict productivity potential to help decision making
- Explore how predicted climate change will affect the potential of western biofuel crops to meet energy demand.
## RM-CESU Activity by Agency Partners for FY2013

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<th>Agency</th>
<th># of Task Agreements</th>
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## Trends and Observations:

- Seven of the nine Agencies facilitated task agreements through the CESU this fiscal year. NPS, both in terms of number of projects and $ amount, and DoD, in terms of $ amount, are the power users of the CESU.
- Although total number of task agreements or modifications went down during this sequestration year, project funds stayed firm (both project mean and medium increased this fiscal year – see p.6)
- RM-CESU facilitated over $8 million in cultural, social and interdisciplinary projects in FY13 ($3 million over FY12). DoD alone funded $2.8 million towards cultural resource projects on military lands.
- USFWS is slowly increasing its use to the CESU agreement (nearly $500,000 over FY12) to facilitate projects ranging from predicting the effects of climate change on aquatic systems to grizzly bear recovery.
- There is continued emphasis on climate change related research, technical assistance and education. The RM-CESU agreement was used for a number of
projects associated with the NPS Climate Change Response Program and the Great Northern LCC. Nearly $1 million directly supported climate change projects.

**RM-CESU Activity by University Partners for FY2013**

All of our university and college members received at least one project this year with the exception of Washington State University.

Every new partner, University of Utah ($17,865 – subsistence use of natural resources around Denali National Park), Northwest College ($5,000 – dendrochronology baseline for Bighorn Canyon NRA) and Little Big Horn College ($5,000 – digitizing journals at Little Bighorn Battlefield NM for public access) had a NPS project this year.

Colorado State University (CSU) continues to be a power user of the CESU. CSU received $14 million in 72 task agreements with Department of Defense, National Park Service, and Geological Survey. CSU’s Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML) alone was the recipient of $7.2 million in 27 task agreements from the DoD. CEMML provides research and sustainable management of natural and cultural resources on federal lands.
Three university partners, Montana State University, University of Montana, and University of Idaho, all received over a million dollars in project funding. Montana State University worked with the most agency partners – five (Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Geological Survey).

Both of the tribal partners, Little Big Horn College and Salish Kootenai College, received CESU funding for projects this year. Little Big Horn College received $5,000 from Little Bighorn Battlefield NM (LIBI) to hire a student to digitize journal articles at LIBI’s White Swan Library. The digital copies will be placed in the White Swan’s research computer, providing accessibility to the public and researchers. SKC students are being placed in summer internships with the BLM’ Missoula Field Office. Depending on student interest, the students are gaining valuable experience in wildlife, fisheries, cultural resource protections, or forestry. Jeff Bendremer, professor of history at SKC, partnered with Glacier National Park to establish a cultural resources student internship at the Park and is also collaborating with Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site to facilitate an archeology field school at the Ranch (please see page 8 for Project Spotlight).
Twenty-five principal investigators receiving project funds in FY13 were using the RM-CESU agreement for the first time and contributed $1,930,585 to RM-CESU totals.

Colorado State University (4): Michael Ryan (Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory), Russ Schumacher (Atmospheric Science), George Wittemyer (Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology), Ellen Wohl (Geosciences)  
University of Colorado Boulder (4): Maria Caffrey (Geological Sciences), Doug Gin (Chemical and Biological Engineering), Balaji Rajagopalan (Hydrology, Water Resources and Environmental Fluid Mechanics), Paul Sutter (History)  
Little Big Horn College (1): Edwin Springfield (Library)  
Montana State University (4): Gina Himes-Boor (Ecology), John Paxton (Computer Science), Randal Rucker (Economics), Joseph Shaw (Optical Technology Center)  
Northwest College (1): Eric Atkinson (Biology)  
University of Idaho (2): Caren Goldberg (Fish & Wildlife Sciences), Kerri Vierling (Fish & Wildlife Sciences)  
University of Montana (2): Phil Condon (Environmental Studies Program), Victoria Dreitz (Avian Science Center)  
Utah State University (2): Judson Finley (Archeology), Simon Wang (Plants, Soils, and Climate)  
University of Utah (1): Kelly Bricker (Parks, Recreation, and Tourism)  
University of Wyoming (4): Kristina Hufford (Renewable Resources), William Lauenroth (Botany), Jay Norton (Ecosystem Science & Management); Benjamin Rashford (Environment and Natural Resource Economics)

**Student Participation:** 67% of RM-CESU National Park Service projects, and we are estimating over 50% of all Federal projects receiving funding this year, have student participation. Student participation includes research work by graduate and undergraduate students, as well as internships, field schools and class participation in projects.
Project Spotlight: **Conduct Archeological Testing to Support Determination of Eligibility for Stuart-Menard Cabin Site**

**Function:** Education and Technical Assistance  
**Discipline:** Cultural Resources

**Agency:** National Park Service  
**Funding:** $46,349

**PI:** Jeff Bendremer, Salish Kootenai College

Salish Kootenai Field School at Grant Kohrs Ranch

In July 2013 the Salish Kootenai College (SKC) conducted its first-ever Archeological Field School at Grant-Kohrs Ranch (GRKO). The goals of this unique field school experience for tribal students in historic preservation are: first, for Native American and non-Native American students to acquire a vital field excavation skillset to complement their coursework in the SKC’s new Historic Preservation curriculum. Second, to provide GRKO with scientific archeological exploration of the physical integrity of the Stuart-Menard Homesite and associated features, which were razed in the 1930s by the original owners of the ranch.

The results of the pedestrian survey, mapping, and test excavations will be used by the park to assess the eligibility of this archeological site to the National Register of Historic Places, which in turn will guide decision-making for a new Visitor Center. Under the guidance of Principal Investigator Dr. Jeffrey Bendremer, students learned how to do pedestrian survey, mapping with GPS and electronic distance measurement (EDM) devices, sketch mapping, excavation of test units, screening for artifacts, documenting possible features, and field-describing and cataloging artifacts.

Preliminary results for this two-year project show the integrity of the site is better than anticipated. Just below the current ground surface, the team uncovered two linear slab rock features indicative of a building foundation but located north of the house location described in the historic literature. In addition, there is a probable brick-paved ‘living surface’ that could be interior, and a possible brick chimney feature. The most intact discovery is a round, rock-lined well at about 1 m depth. In addition, artifacts indicate household and farming objects from about 1880 through the late 1920s. Cultural Specialist Pei-Lin Yu provided technical assistance to the park in locating the partner and drafting the scope of work, and conducted an outreach visit on personal time to talk with students about careers in archeology.

The park has provided supplies, facilities expertise (and a few popsicles) to the team. This project is unique in involving Native students from a tribal college in an archeological excavation project: students are learning culturally appropriate and scientifically valid field techniques for skillsets that are directly applicable to careers in historic preservation and cultural heritage in tribal government or beyond. The project received favorable publicity from the Indian Country Today magazine.

*Left:* Students Amak Kenmille and Dwayne Reid profiling test excavation unit.  
*Right:* P. I. Jeffrey Bendremer checking the depth and consolidation of sediments in the stone-lined well.
RM-CESU ACTIVITY FY09-FY13
In last five years of operation, the RM-CESU has facilitated 1,104 Task Agreements obligating 94.7 million dollars to the university partners for project work. There are currently 394 active projects between RM-CESU agency and university/college partners.

RM-CESU HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

❖ Addition of new members:

➢ Northwest College, Powell, WY (effective Date: 12/11/2013).
  http://www.nwc.cc.wy.us/
➢ University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT (effective Date: 12/11/2013)
  http://www.utah.edu/

❖ Wilderness News:
Wild Matters: Cultural Resources in Wilderness, Cultural Resources for Wilderness
“Cultural activities have helped shape and preserve wilderness for thousands of years, and wilderness designations and practices have helped to protect cultural heritage resources from a wide variety of effects. But in the federal land management world this relationship has had highs and lows, including controversial court cases. When conflicts between wilderness and cultural heritage values are settled in court, the stakeholders have relinquished power to a judge and
future relationships suffer. This article, part of the “Wild Matters” series produced by the National Park Service’s Intermountain Region Wilderness Executive Committee, considers important principles for managing cultural resources in designated wilderness, describes areas of overlap, discusses some success stories, and provides a frame of reference as we negotiate pathways beyond – or around – the thorny obstacles of litigation. Rocky Mountains CESU NPS Cultural Specialist Pei-Lin Yu is a co-author.” Read the article here: http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/files/WildernessStewardship/Wild_Matters_Cultural_Resources.pdf

 Two RM-CESU Students Awarded Jerry O’Neal Fellowship for Research in Glacier National Park and Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site The Jerry O’Neal fellowships, funded through the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center at Glacier National Park, were announced for student work in summer 2013. This student award supports research in Glacier National Park, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The competition was facilitated through the Rocky Mountains CESU and is open to students at all the RM-CESU partner universities. This year’s Fellowship awardees are:

➢ Cristina McKernan, M.Sc. 
Candidate – Ecology, Colorado State University: The Effects of Glacier Loss on Alpine and Subalpine Riparian Vegetation in Glacier National Park, Montana Cristina will assess the current vegetative composition and the status of high elevation riparian wetlands in GNP and evaluate how this vegetation may respond to changes in stream flow and geomorphic processes caused by glacial melting. Understanding the potential influences of climate induced changes in the hydrologic drivers of riparian
wetlands is a critical topic with implications for channel stability, flood control, water chemistry, and biodiversity, all high priority concerns for GNP.

- Elizabeth Pansing, M.Sc. Candidate – Integrative Biology, University of Colorado Denver: Role of microsite type, cache pilferage, and elevation in whitebark pine (Pinus albicaulis Engelm.) regeneration in the Northern Rocky Mountains: Implications for restoration and climate change

Elizabeth’s research investigates the regeneration ecology of whitebark pine. Her research goals are to determine microsite types in which whitebark pine germinates most frequently, how germination rates change with elevation, and if rodent seed predation is a significant source of seed loss. Results are expected to provide information that could increase the success of a developing restoration technique called direct seeding, and use treeline dynamics to determine the impact of climate change on regeneration and restoration.

- 2013 RM-CESU Student and Project Team Awards

The RM-CESU Student Award program was established in 2007 as a way to recognize outstanding accomplishments by students and project teams (the academic institution and the federal agency) involved in RM-CESU projects.

- Student Award: Julia Ausloos, University of Colorado Denver. Julia received a Masters in Historic Preservation from the School of Architecture and Planning. She worked on a National Park Service project, on BLM land, titled: NPS Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Documentation of Parallel Wall House and Saddlehorn Hamlet Pueblos, Cortez, CO.
August 2010 – June 2013. The nomination was forwarded by Michael Nulty at UC Denver, and endorsed by Thomas Keohan, NPS-IMR, Heritage Partnerships

➢ Project Team Award: NPS Rocky Mountain Inventory and Monitoring Network (Mike Britten, Billy Schweiger, Laura O’Gan and Donna Shorrock), Rocky Mountain National Park (Paul McLaughlin, Judy Visty – retired, and Ben Bobowski), and Colorado State University (David Cooper, Ed Gage and former graduate students Katie Driver and Jennifer Jones). This Team was nominated for the RM-CESU project: Wetland Protocol Development – Pilot Work in Rocky Mountain NP and Wetland Ecological Integrity Data Analysis and Reporting.

➢ Ice Patch Archaeology Project, Coordinated Through Rocky Mountains CESU, Wins National Award Pei-Lin Yu of the National Park Service’s Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit accepted the Department of the Interior’s Partnerships in Conservation Award on October 18 in Washington, DC, on behalf of the Ice Patch Archeology and Paleoecology Project Team. Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes presented the awards, which recognize exemplary conservation results through public-private cooperation and community engagement. The Ice Patch Archeology and Paleoecology Project brings together Glacier National Park, the University of Wyoming, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, University of Colorado Boulder, the Blackfeet Nation, and the University of Wyoming in a unique project to document melting ice patches in Glacier NP and recover delicate artifacts and natural objects that are exposed as a result of climate change. The Ice Patch project, funded by the NPS Climate Change Response program, was one of 16 such partnerships recognized at the event.

➢ RM-CESU NPS Research Coordinator Receives Prestigious Department of the Interior Award Kathy Tonnessen, Ph.D., received the Department of the Interior’s Superior Service Award, which recognized her exceptional career accomplishments, especially as an outstanding leader in the development and evolution of the CESU network nationwide. Under Kathy’s leadership since 1999 the RM-CESU is the linchpin for the Intermountain CESUs and she has been a leader in working with park managers and NPS programs to find University partners to work on natural resources, cultural resources and social
science projects. This was a fitting capstone to her NPS career, since she will retire in late March 2014.

❖ **RM-CESU visits Metropolitan State University of Denver for Fall Meeting on October 4-5, 2012** The fall meeting started the morning of October 4 with an outreach visit to Metro State campus. Jim Burchfield (UM), Kathy Tonnessen (NPS), Pei-lin Yu (NPS), and Lisa Gerloff (UM) met with Metro State administration and faculty, discussing how the University can get more involved with agency partners through the RM-CESU.

The **Managers Meeting** in the afternoon included representatives from the NPS, BLM and USFS, as well as university attendees from University of Colorado Denver, Colorado State University, Metro State, University of Montana, University of Northern Colorado, and University of Wyoming. We discussed Federal agency research needs and heard three presentations by the 2012 RM-CESU award winners.

During the **RM-CESU Executive Committee meeting** on October 5, we heard presentations from reps form Northwest College and University of Utah. The committee recommended both schools for membership in the RM-CESU. The committee also had the opportunity to comment on the “new look” of the RM-CESU website: [http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/default.php](http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/default.php)

❖ **RM-CESU Executive Coordinator shares CESU with BLM Leadership Team** On December 12, 2012 RM-CESU Executive Coordinator, Lisa Gerloff, and Lori Anderson, BLM Grants Officer, gave a tag team presentation on the CESU to the Montana-North Dakota BLM Leadership Team in Billing, MT. Lisa Gerloff gave an overview of the CESU Network and benefits as a member. Lori Anderson followed with a ‘how to initiate a CESU agreement” as a BLM employee.

❖ **RM-CESU Gets the Montana parks together for a webinar on research and technical assistance needs** On February 25, 2013, the RM-CESU, Kathy Tonnessen and Pei-Lin Yu (National Park Service) and Lisa Gerloff (University of Montana), convened a webinar to talk with our resource managers in Glacier NP, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM, and Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS.

In advance of the webinar, which lasted for 1.5 hours, we sent out recent reports, documents and lists
of research needs for the parks that are currently posted on the RM-CESU web site (http://www.cfc.umt.edu/cesu/AgencyNeeds/NPS/default.php).

During the webinar, which included resource management and science staff from the NPS-IMR and the Rocky Mountain I&M Network, we asked a representative from each park to present the “Big Issues” in Resource management for their park, and their “Needs for Research, Technical Assistance and Education”.

Among the three Montana parks there was a varied menu of Natural and Cultural Resource needs, including how to control invasive weeds, how to get archives assistance, and how to deal with livestock grazing in riparian areas. The RM-CESU representatives looked back at accomplishments in FY12, and then made recommendations on how the parks might use the RM-CESU agreement to get their needs met in FY13. The park representatives agreed that the research and technical assistance “needs list” are valuable to inform the academic community about how to get involved with parks. The three Montana parks will be working with Lisa Gerloff to update these lists.

 Rocky Mountains CESU participates in Teacher Workshop at Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS, Managing Natural and Cultural Resources in a Changing World

On June 17, 2013 Kathy Tonnessen (NPS-Research Coordinator), Pei-Lin Yu (NPS-Cultural Specialist) and Lisa Gerloff (University of Montana, RM-CESU) travelled to Deer Lodge, MT to assist with the annual teacher training workshop, organized by Grant-Kohrs Ranch (GRKO) interpretive and education staff.

The objectives of this 2013 workshop are to 1) assist teachers develop curricula relevant to the GRKO and 2) to increase an appreciation for the history and relevance of this NPS site as it pertains to history, science and resources. The 5-day workshop, June 17-21, 2013 addressed 4 topics – wildflowers, livestock management, restoration/remediation, and native tribes in MT. Each topic included an opportunity for field work and hands on activities – leading to development of specific curriculum by workshop participants. There are 12 teachers from throughout the US participating this year in the training, which is approved for “continuing education” credit through The University of Montana.

The three CESU representatives presented information on how the RM-CESU projects have benefitted Natural and Cultural
Resource management at GRKO. Some of the project results were highlighted during a “field” tour by horse-drawn wagon by Jason Smith, Natural Resource Manager at GRKO. Project results that the park is now using in resource management and interpretation include (1) control of invasive weeds in pastures, (2) understanding of the hydrology of the natural streams and irrigation ditches that cross the ranch, (3) damage assessment from old mine tailings that created a “superfund” site on the ranch, and (4) sound monitoring to understand how the “cultural soundscape” is being effected by human disturbance.

Kathy, Pei-Lin and Lisa completed their visit at GRKO with a meeting with the new superintendent, Jacque Lavelle.

**RM-CESU presence at 10th annual Waterton-Glacier Science & History Day**

On July 30, three staff from the RM-CESU assisted Glacier National Park and the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center at the 10th annual Waterton-Glacier Science and History Day held in West Glacier, MT. Lisa Gerloff (Executive Coordinator), Kathy Tonnessen (Research Coordinator, NPS) and Pei-Lin Yu (Cultural Specialist, NPS) attended. Every summer, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park presents this special all-day program highlighting the parks’ science and history. This event brings together scientists and historians conducting research in Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks, giving them an opportunity to share their insights and research results with the general public. The event was free and open to the public.


Pei-Lin Yu served as the moderator for the History Session, which included “The Men Who Maintained Glacier National Park During World War II, Memories from the Civilian Public Service Camp #55 Crew” by Marcella Sherfy Walter, Public Historian, Montana Historical Society, and “Rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, Behind the Scenes” by Jack Gordon, Landscape Architect,
Glacier National Park, and Michael Baron, Resident Field Engineer, Glacier National Park, Western Federal Lands Highway Division.’

A number of the projects highlighted at this symposium were facilitated through the Rocky Mountains CESU, and presenters included RM-CESU partners from University of Montana, Montana Tech, USGS and Glacier National Park.

RM-CESU Outreach Trip to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and Florissant Fossil Beds NM  
On September 8-10, 2013, Kathy Tonnessen, NPS Research Coordinator, did “outreach visits” to two of the Rocky Mountain Cluster parks in southern Colorado: Great Sand Dunes NP and Preserve, near Alamosa, CO and Florissant Fossil Beds NM, near Colorado Springs. The objective of these visits was to see the results of on-the-ground projects facilitated through the RM-CESU agreement with partner universities, and to brief the superintendents and staff on the opportunities to work with university and college partners in the Rocky Mountains CESU.

The first stop was at Great Sand Dunes (GRSA), where the chief of resources, Fred Bunch, led the tour of the “lowlands” of the park, some of those lands newly acquired in 2004. These grasslands and wetlands are the home to migrating sandhill cranes, a bison herd and numerous other ungulates. One of the recent projects sponsored through the RM-CESU agreement with University of Colorado Denver was a remote sensing imaging of the historic Pedro Trujillo Homestead, a remnant of the early ranching and homesteading era near to the Dunes. Kathy was then able to brief the GRSA superintendent, Lisa Carrico, and the senior staff at the park on the benefits of partnering with RM-CESU partners.

Florissant Fossil Beds NM (FLFO) was the next stop on this outreach tour. Herb Meyer, the paleontologist at FLFO, headed a tour of the new Visitor Center and museum archives, opened in June 2013. Herb was instrumental in the design of the paleontology exhibits, which are based on the scientific history of fossil discoveries at FLFO. The RM-CESU assisted with getting information for these exhibits through sponsorship of an oral history of FLFO, paleo internships through University of Colorado Boulder, and the creation of the Visitor Center film by students at Montana State University. Kathy spent time with the new FLFO superintendent, Michelle Wheatley, and staff at the monument to update them on how the RM-CESU has supported the resource management program at FLFO, with special emphasis on the monitoring and inventory data collected through the Rocky Mountain Inventory and Monitoring Network, and the work with the interpretive and paleontology resource staff.