

Great Plains CESU Annual Executive Committee Meeting
April 23 2002 -- Lincoln, NE
Meeting Summary

Presentation Overviews

National Park Service – Gary Willson (Gary's Power Point Presentations will be sent as an email attachment for you to look at, and will hopefully be available on the website as well).

- Presented slides of:
 - NPS Organization
 - Regional Map
 - Midwest Regional Office Organization
 - Parks within GPCESU region
 - Map of NPS Inventory & Monitoring Networks
 - Map of Network of CESUs

Summary:

- GPCESU
 - Includes 33 national park units (out of 386)
 - Includes parts of the Midwest and Intermountain Regions of the NPS
 - Includes parts of the Heartland, Northern Great Plains, Gulf Coast, and Southern Plains I&M Networks
- National Park Service Project Fund Sources
 - Park Base Funds (limited except in large parks)
 - GPCESU Funds (40K)
 - Servicewide Comprehensive Call
 - o 21 funding sources
 - o 10M to 20M available on an annual basis
 - o Project Proposals
 - Developed by park
 - Developed by park and CESU partner university/college

USDA Forest Service, Research and Development –Michele Schoeneberger (Michele's PowerPoint Presentation will also be sent as an email attachment and will be posted on the website as well).

- USDA – Forest Service (3 Branches)
 - 1) National Forest System – Region Offices – National Forests – Ranger Districts
 - 2) **Research and Development – Research Stations – Field Labs**
 - 3) State and Private Forestry

Research and Development is the branch currently involved in the CESUs. The Rocky Mountain Research Station is serving 5 CESUs: Rocky Mountain, Great Basin, Colorado Plateau, Desert Southwest, and the Great Plains.

- There are two Research Work Units within the GPCESU region:
 - Center for Great Plains Ecosystem Studies, Rapid City, South Dakota** – Dan Uresk
 - Emphasis on grasslands
 - 3 research population areas: species, community, and landscape
 - USDA National Agroforestry Center, Lincoln, NE** – Michele Schoeneberger
 - Accelerate the development & application of agroforestry technologies to attain more sustainable land use. It is the science of restoring specific ecosystem functions in dramatically altered landscapes.
- Have a very broad range of authorities to get \$ to universities: Coops, partnerships
Current partnerships include: UNL-SNRS; UNL-Biometry; Alabama A&M; Penn State; KCARE/KSU/KS Forest Service
- RMRS & CESUs: What is the role of Research & Development in CESUs? RMRS only represents the research branch, not the land managing agency (the Forest System)
 - CESU can bring more universities, agencies together
 - maximize money
 - avoid duplication of research
- Explanation of why the Forest Systems (FS) branch cannot fund research (as explained by Gary Machlis)

-While the Forest Service joined the CESUs as a whole agency, only Research & Development can currently fund research. The National Forest System cannot take their money and funnel it into research, they can spend money on administrative studies only (no new knowledge can be generated).

-Options for Forest System:

- 1) move money to Forest Research arm and from there the money can flow to the CESU
- 2) FS partner with other federal agencies to accomplish things
- 3) The National CESU is currently working to remedy the problem, so FS can fund research – need to go to Legislature and ask for a “legislative remedy”

All three of these alternatives are occurring right now.

USGS – Jay Hestbeck

Rational for joining CESU – the mission of the USGS is to provide science to the Department of Interior.

- Source of funds: base budget of about \$4 million (this covers base costs)
 - 62 FTE
 - bring in about \$2 million in reimbursable money -- this is where the project money comes in.
- Where USGS scientists can help:
 - they are full time scientists
 - always doing research
 - don't have all types of expertise on staff – partnering with university scientists would help fill the voids.
 - 90% of attention is in the Great Plains, but have the ability to work internationally.
- USGS can no longer hire seasonal employees on government payroll, they must now contract out. This provides an opportunity for the CESU: Academic institutions have a lot of people looking for summer work, provide an educational opportunity to students.
 - can advertise student opportunities for summer work: website, email announcements
- Field stations for Northern Prairie:
 - University of Minnesota: Wolf Project, Grassland Initiative, Invasive Species
 - University of Missouri: Central Plains/Ozark Plateau Ecology; mainly botanically inclined (fire ecology, vegetation restoration, Inventory & Monitoring for NPS)
 - Hope to add an additional field station in the Black Hills, South Dakota

Bureau of Reclamation – Larry Rossow: Regional Research Coordinator

- BOR only works in 17 western states (Dakotas, on down and then West). The Great Plains Region is east of the Continental Divide, and has offices in Billings, MT; Bismarck, ND; Casper, WY; Grand Island, NE; Loveland, CO; and Austin, TX.
- Each region has a small amount of money – Larry helps offices to submit proposals. Some current research includes:
- GP region receives approximately \$200,000 a year
 - One goal is to partner up in order to make the money go farther and this is the main reason for joining the GPCESU.

Jari Beek – Resource Manager, BOR

They have a wide variety of habitat including alpine tundra all the way down to estuaries on the Gulf of Mexico. Have 80 reservoirs within GP region – face conflicting water needs.

Overview:

- 675 employees within region
- 1.6 million acres of land (a lot of this is under water)
- 722,000 public lands

- Threatened and Endangered Species are a HUGE issue
- Initiative on Platte River Basin
 - cooperative agreement between CO, NE, WY, USGS, BOR
- Initiative on Republican River Basin
- Invasive species with canal maintenance

- Trans-basin issues
- Migratory bird treaty issues
- Safe drinking water – rural areas

- BOR is not funded through Interior budget, they are funded by a section of the Army Corps of Engineers.

- CESU Opportunities:
 - wetlands program, water conservation, GIS
 - research initiatives that are research specific
 - like the 15% indirect, would like to ease all other relevant cooperative agreements into CESU, reduce paperwork, cost.
 - water conservation initiative, water re-use, water quality, urban & recreation needs

- There was a question as to whether they had research managers in field areas and the answer is NO, not really. For example, the office in Grand Island has two natural resource specialists to cover all of the Nebraska area.

- Opportunity for students:
 - The Student Career Improvement Program: recruit students to work a certain number of hours a year while in school, and upon graduation they are guaranteed a job in the agency.
 - While the deadline for this year is already passed, the CESU will aid them in getting the word out regarding this chance for students.

What should the CESU be doing (as a group, as host).

1. Information Dissemination

a. Database on the web – searchable (enter expertise with keywords)

- research needs of government agencies within region
 - o funding opportunities that go with these research needs
- capabilities of all partners (institutions & federal)
 - o facilities, human resource expertise
 - o current projects in order to gage what each agency is doing (overviews should suffice at this time)
 - o status updates
- establish appropriate web links
- scheduled call for information (make this a requirement; must be prepared to provide this information if join GPCESU).

2. Points of Contact (real)

- a. Provide useful points of contact for all partners of GPCESU –

3. Student / Career Opportunities

- a. Agency needs
- b. Student availability

4. Identify and Establish Theme Teams –

- a. List university expertise by themes (as ID'd by agencies)
- b. Topics and Tools (Services)
 - Example: Topic = water quality, Tool = GIS, Service = remote sensing centers, etc.

5. List Financial Contacts

6. Short or Long – term goal to make web information available to others

7. Identify and add appropriate federal agencies:

- *USFWS
- *NRCS -N. Plains Reg. Office (recently signed on as National Member)
- ACOE (according to Gary Machlis, they are not a National Member)
- *EPA

USDA-FS (Forest Systems – wait for this to be sorted out at National Level)
DOD

8. Identify and add appropriate partners:

TNC

- The Host University will work on developing the database, the key will be cooperation by our technical representatives.

Current GPCESU Projects & Procedures: Gary Willson

- GPCESU Projects 10/00 – 9/01: 11 projects for a total of \$239,830
 - by funding agency
 - NPS 10 projects; \$228,830 (95%)
 - USGS 1 project; \$11,000 (5%)
 - BLM, USDA-FS 0 projects; BOR not a partner
 - by university
 - University of Minnesota 4 projects; \$85,058 (35%)
 - Texas A&M 1 project; \$66,200 (28%)
 - University of Nebraska 4 projects; \$63,576 (27%)
 - University of South Dakota 1 project; \$15,000 (6%) (contract)
 - University of North Dakota 1 project; \$9,996 (4%)
 - CSU, OU, Little Priest, Langston 0 projects; UW, SDSU, and USD not partners
 - by type:
 - research 4 projects; \$148,634 (62%)
 - technical 6 projects; \$71,196 (30%) (includes inventory & monitoring)
 - education 1 project; \$20,000 (8%) (i.e. Wkshps sponsored by fed. agencies, but held at univ.)
 - by discipline:
 - biological 4 projects; \$109,400 (46%)
 - social 3 projects; \$67,808 (28%)
 - physical (GIS) 3 projects; \$58,622 (24%)
 - cultural 1 project; \$4,000 (2%)
 - by location:
 - Great Plains parks 14 (out of 33)
 - Other parks 4
- GPCESU Projects for FY2002: 10 projects in the works thus far totaling \$243,613
 - by funding agency:
 - NPS 10 projects; \$243,613 (15 projects; \$300,000+ projected)
 - by university:
 - University of Nebraska 4 projects; \$89,375
 - Texas A&M 1 project; \$43,800
 - University of Wyoming 1 project; \$30,075
 - University of Minnesota 1 project; \$30,000
 - University of Oklahoma 2 projects; \$26,000
 - University South Dakota 1 project; \$24,363
 - by type:
 - research 1; \$43,800
 - technical assistance 9; \$199,813
 - education 0
 - by discipline:
 - biological 8; \$214,250
 - social 0
 - physical 0
 - cultural 2; \$29,363
 - by location:

- Great Plains parks 16 (out of 33)
- Other parks 0
- FY 2001/FY 2002 Comparison
 - # of Projects
 - FY 2001 – 11; FY 2002 – 10 (as of 4/1)
 - Total \$
 - FY 2001 - \$239,830; FY 2002 - \$243,613 (as of 4/1)
 - Partner Universities with Projects
 - FY 2001 – 5/9; FY 2002 6/11 (as of 4/1)
 - GP Parks with Projects
 - FY 2001 – 14/33; FY 2002 16/33 (as of 4/1)
- CESU's have consistently increased the amount of project money involved (nationwide trend).
- BOR mentioned that they have agreements with UNL, Kansas to do surveys, inventories on lands and wondered if that in the future they could work under the CESU agreement – the answer is YES!

NPS Protocol for Initiating Project Modifications – Gary Willson

- Gary presented a handout that outlined the appropriate steps to take in order to initiate a project modification through the NPS under the Cooperative Agreement. Everyone will receive a copy of this handout.
- Only real criticism of this procedure involved step #2, when a PI for a proposed project is not known. Rather than the Project Manager and GPCESU Research Coordinator selecting a PI from the expertise database on the web, it was felt that Partner Universities should be made aware of the project and interested candidates should then be able to compete for the project. Otherwise some may feel that the CESU still allows one specific person to be able to do all the work, etc.
 - Would this delay the whole process and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the CESU in reducing paperwork and process to get a project started?
 - Perhaps it should be left up to the Project Manager to have the option of searching the database, giving time to release an RFP, etc.
 - Could search database and then contact several appropriate individuals and ask them to submit a letter of interest and statement of qualifications if they are interested in doing the research. Give them a specific deadline.
- The NPS project summary form is a short form which provides all of the important information regarding a project modification – this is all that needs to be signed for a modification to be complete.
 - Key Points: NPS as funding agency; modification #; funding amount; investigators; project title; effective dates; abstract; signatures of GPCESU NPS Research Coordinator, Agency Administrative Rep, Investigator, and Partner Administrative Rep.
 - A project modification also requires a substantial involvement statement on behalf of NPS and the necessary peer review process (research projects = more elaborate review and inventory and monitoring projects = less elaborate, given the proven methods, etc.)

Research Needs Catalog – Gary Willson

- GPCESU provides a link between National Park information needs and partner university faculty expertise. Currently the GPCESU is building a website that includes listings of university faculty and their research interests. Organized and readily accessible information on park research, technical assistance, and education needs does not exist.
- Gary Willson, Jim Stubbendieck, and a Post-Doc are beginning to form a Research Needs Catalog for the Parks within the Great Plains.
 - List natural and cultural research, technical assistance, and education (training) needs from each park
 - Summary section of multi-park and landscape level research questions
 - This was received well and it was mentioned that it would be a good idea for each of the CESUs to do such a catalog, however they would need to be uniform so perhaps this one could be a prototype.
 - Gary presented the idea that the catalog could be expanded to include other federal agencies
 - each agency would know common needs of others
 - in a lot of cases, there are multi-agency lands next to each other and the catalog would help identify landscape level research.

- While everyone thought this was a good idea, no plans were made to expand the catalog to include other agencies at this time.

Strategic Plan – Kyle Hoagland

The strategic plan will include at least three “directions”: Research, University and Agency Interaction and Collaboration, and Enhancing Dialogue.

1). Research Direction

Several important issues to the Great Plains were identified at last year’s meeting, from these Steve Cinnamon (Previous Acting NPS Research Coordinator) developed 6 strategic issues. A discussion about these 6 issues and if they needed to be changed, added to, or deleted took place during the current meeting. The following are the resulting 8 strategic issues:

- **Biological invasions and their impact on existing ecosystem integrity**
- **Habitat fragmentation for species**
-threatened and endangered
- **Health of wetlands, lakes, streams, and rivers**
- including agrochemicals, nutrients, etc.
- **Preservation and/or restoration of native aquatic and terrestrial communities**
- **Social and cultural values of natural areas under changing population and land use**
- **Timely transfer and access of information for resource management and policy**
- **Implications of global environmental change on managed and unmanaged ecosystems**
- **Implications of land use change on ecosystem integrity**

The comment was made that we provide an example of each issue in order to clearly identify the meaning.

2). University and Agency Interaction and Collaboration

3). Enhancing Dialogue

What happens next: Kyle Hoagland will consider each of the above research themes under the Research Direction and expand on each. The two additional directions will also be expanded on. A draft document will be circulated electronically for final input and the final plan will be posted on the web site. This plan will be updated annually if necessary.

Policy for Adding New Partners

There was discussion regarding the question of whether or not it was necessary to establish a policy regarding the addition of new partners. As of now, the only policy is that the amendment to add a new partner has to be in writing, signed, and agreed to by all signatories to this agreement. As you know, three additional institutions and one federal agency have joined the GPCEU over the last year. We currently have at least three more schools that are interested in joining and several others that have at least made inquiries into the possibility of joining. So we presented the question as to whether we should set any limitations on the number of partners, or requirements that each prospective new partner must meet, etc.

- question was raised as to whether or not it was legal to exclude any institution: we do have the right to not accept an institution as a partner based on the agreement.
- it was mentioned that one reason to vote no would be competitive, i.e. schools within the same states may have problems with additional schools from the same state joining.
- with increased interest in CESUs in the future there is the potential that more money will come earmarked for CESUs – if this happens, it may cause problems if someone cannot join.
- the majority present at the meeting were hesitant to develop any policy on this issue without guidance (or similar action) at the National level.
- a majority agreed that for right now, a rather “open door” policy was OK. This does not mean that everyone is automatically accepted, it means that we as the Host Institution will allow all reasonable interested parties to submit proposals to join the GPCEU. All proposals will be forwarded on to the current partners for consideration. It is important to point out that each partner can still vote either Yes or No. One negative vote will exclude the respective institution from joining the GPCEU.
- A concern with this “open door” policy is that if we let everyone join, then other than reducing the indirect cost to 15%, what have we accomplished?

- USGS: 15% indirect is attractive, one-stop shopping
- what benefit is it for a university to join? Cost more overhead, but decreases paperwork, and the pie of money will be larger overall (15% of \$400,000 is more than 40% of \$50,000).
- It was agreed to by those in attendance that reviewing proposals for partnerships could be limited to once a year. Since we already have several proposals to join the GPCESU that we need to move forward with, this year's deadline is May 20. While new proposals can be submitted at any time, they will not be reviewed until approximately the same time next year.
- This issue may need to be considered again in the future –

Administrative Support Funds – Kyle Hoagland

Initial support for UNL GPCESU Coordinator provided by one-time contributions by each agency (\$10K); supports half-time position. These funds also used for initial meeting (travel, lodging, meals) and subsequent annual meetings, operating, and web site development.

- Coordinator responsibilities
 - Communicate with university and federal partners and cooperators
 - Facilitate addition of new partners
 - Coordinate web site development and upgrades
 - Play a major role in planning annual meetings
 - Interact with NPS coordinator to establish projects and track progress

- Proposed Annual Budget:

UNL Contribution	\$17,360 (0.5 FTE)
BLM	\$4500
USGS	\$4500
NPS	\$4500
BOR	\$4500
USDA-FS	\$4500

- Allocation of Funds:
 - \$3,472 for salary and benefits for 0.5 FTE Coordinators position (total = \$17,360)
 - \$1,028 for annual operating expenses (total = \$5,140); this would also provide a buffer, to accommodate an annual salary increase

Those in attendance agreed that it is important to maintain this position in order to maintain the infrastructure. Most don't see the proposed annual \$4500 as being a large hurdle. Could look at end of year money to support this. Kyle will move forward with this proposal.

Phone Conversation with Gary Machlis – CESU Council Coordinator

1). We questioned the issue of adding new partners:

- There is no obligation to bring in new partners
- Local option to add new non-federal partners
- Can establish policy for new partners as long as it is fair and rational
- NRCS is a new national partner, having signed on as a member of the Great Lakes-Northern Forest CESU. NRCS can partner with all of the "new" CESUs currently being advertised, but can partner with the CESUs that are already established only if the respective CESU wants them.
- Department of Defense: only the Environmental Security Division is a National member, the Army Corps of Engineers is NOT a National member at this time.

2). Can CESUs actively "recruit" a new agency to join? For example, can Gary Willson (NPS Research Coordinator) go out and try to convince other agencies to join the GPCESU?

- Yes! Any prospective agency must be a National member before they are able to join at Regional level. For any agency that is already a National member, the process would be fairly simple.
- With interest at Regional level, it is up to the CESU Staff to brief the appropriate people at the National level for that agency.
- Fish & Wildlife Service is already a national member, so if we generate interest at the regional level, it would be a simple process.

4). National CESU Network Meeting

- these meetings will be held every two years (there was a meeting last year, so the next meeting will be in 2003).
- the reason for the 2 year period is that the meetings require a lot of work on a minimum staff and that they want there to be significant changes, improvements between meetings. By next year, the whole network will be complete.

Briefing by Gary M.:

First Inventory of Projects –

- in the 2 ½ years of the CESU Networks existence, there have been over **500** projects worth **\$27.5** million.
- NPS funded 65% of current projects, but this number is dropping as more agencies get involved (this is a good thing).
- all of the inventory information will be made available to us – via the National website.

What is ahead –

- At the end of 5 years, the cooperative agreements must be renewed.
- Each Host Institution must be given the criteria for evaluation (to be provided by National)
 - i.e. ratio of projects that went to Host vs. Partners, if all are going to the Host, then something is wrong
- The overhead will need to be renegotiated per university – however will need to be applied to everyone within the Network at the same time (even before some of the CESUs have reached the 5 year point).
- What size is good? How many partners can join and can any drop out?
 - Prediction for end of CESU Network: 17 CESUs and 100 universities
 - Need to be careful not to let this grow, just to grow.

Gary also mentioned an opportunity for students in the fall

- 2 graduate student internships at universities that are part of the Network:
 - Washington, DC
 - Idaho
- any discipline can apply, the length of stay is one semester or so, and the stipend is about \$1200 a month.
- this will be announced on the National site at a later date and each CESU will be asked to spread the word as well.

Meeting Adjourned!

List of Attendees:

Kyle Hoagland	University of Nebraska	khoagland@unl.edu
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