



COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS
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Heritage Preservation Partnerships: Archaeology Field Schools

Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units allow students to get real world experience in public lands management. For budding archaeologists, a field school dig is a foundational learning tool. Field schools also combine the research, technical assistance, and education foci of the CESUs as well as providing foundations for university, land management agency, and community partnerships essential to stewardship and preservation of public lands heritage resources.



■ **On-going field investigations.** Returning to the same site each year allowed for thorough investigation of the valley, 40% of which held archaeological objects. (Bob Brunswig/University of Northern Colorado)

Through a multi-year CESU project, the Bureau of Land Management and the University of Northern Colorado excavated numerous sites in Ballinger Draw in the Southern Rocky Mountains of North Park, Colorado. An initial survey found 40% of the valley's surface area held archaeological objects, concentrated in half a dozen sites. During successive field schools, students and faculty found 110 projectile points ranging in time from Paleoindian (ca. 9,000

years before present) to historic (ca. 175 years before present). In 2010, students dug at a spring and summer camp for 100 to 120 individuals; later in 2011 students investigated a hunting and winter preparation site. Another site provided the most significant body of evidence yet for the earliest prehistoric Ute presence in what was later historically documented as traditional Ute territory in Colorado's Southern Rockies. Ute tribal elders provided guidance to the

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

■ Project Partners



■ Project Contacts

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■ Project Type

Research

Technical Assistance

Education



■ **Tribal consultation.** Members of the Northern Ute tribe met on site with the students, giving their perspective on the resources of the valley. (Bob Brunswig/University of Northern Colorado)

teams during summer digs. Volunteers from the Colorado Archaeological Society also helped in the field. During the successive school years, students returned to the lab to sort, analyze, and catalog objects.

For university professors, the field school provides a focus for research. This project's investigators, Dr. Robert Brunswig and Dr. Frederic Sellet, have a combined 56 years of experience investigating prehistoric archaeology and ancient paleoenvironments of the Western United States. Bureau of Land Management archaeologists rely on this expertise to protect important sites, comply with federal laws, and interpret cultural resources for the public. An agency-sponsored field school provides cost-effective technical assistance by surveying, testing, and excavating high-priority sites. The students benefit too since, according to

Brunswig, "digs allow them to apply what they learn in the classroom in a very practical manner, gain a leg-up on getting into graduate school, and see if they want to specialize in field work or lab work." Providing educational opportunities to current and future federal scientists, resource managers, and environmental leaders is a core objective of the CESU Network.

Relationship Building

The relationship among the partners is one key to a successful CESU project. The participation of tribal elders, students, professors, volunteers, and land managers made this field school an enriching experience and provided valuable information for understanding and protecting archeological sites and their associated cultural objects and values.



Cheri Yost wrote this project spotlight in November 2012. Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units provide research, technical assistance, and education to federal land management, environmental, and research agencies and their partners. Their broad scope includes the biological, physical, social, cultural, and engineering disciplines needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context. There are seventeen CESUs, each composed of federal agencies, a host university, and partner institutions, which are linked together in a CESU network. For more information, see www.cesu.org or contact Dr. Thomas E. Fish, CESU National Coordinator, at tom_fish@nps.gov.