



COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS  
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## Training the Next Generation: Historic Preservation Field Schools

Federal laws require land management agencies to preserve and protect museum objects, archeological sites, historic structures, and cultural landscapes. CESUs provide real world opportunities for students interested in pursuing cultural resource management careers while improving the condition of the nation's heritage resources.



■ **Training preservation professionals.** Students learn new skills during historic preservation field schools facilitated through the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units Network. (*Randall Skeirik/ National Park Service Vanishing Treasures Program*)

Field schools bring together professional expertise, student labor, skilled volunteers, and local resource managers in projects that preserve the prehistoric and historic resources on the nation's parks, forests, monuments, and other public lands. These field schools are an important element of graduate studies in architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, and archeology. They also

benefit facility managers and maintenance staff that get specialized training in historic preservation techniques.

At Golden Spike National Historic Site in Utah, a team of professors and students from the University of Vermont completed a project that improved the condition of two historic railroad trestles—one of which was about to collapse—allowing the park to incorporate the resources into

### Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

#### ■ Project Partners



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#### ■ Project Reports

Bates Wells Ranch Emergency  
Stabilization Final Report

#### ■ Project Type

Technical Assistance

Education



■ **Cost effective preservation.** Field schools are a cost-effective way to improve resource condition, while teaching preservation skills to current and future agency personnel.

a planned hike and bike trail. The team worked with the site's cultural resource specialist, local volunteers, and experts from the National Park Service's Vanishing Treasures program to assess and document the condition of the trestles, develop appropriate treatment options, and make repairs. The team followed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and established best practices for this kind of restoration work.

At Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, the University of Arizona's Drachman Institute, the National Park Service Vanishing Treasures Program, and Cornerstones Community Partnerships (a non-profit specializing in preserving architectural heritage and community traditions), tackled a similar project. The resources there included historic ranches and prehistoric sites that suffered from deferred maintenance, as well as vandalism and litter. The project built upon a previous project documenting the sites, and it included prioritizing the most critical maintenance needs and tackling these over multi-year field schools. The safety of field school participants was a top priority, and the team followed park safety protocols scrupulously.

### Nimble Projects

CESUs establish effective partnerships between land management agencies mandated to protect historic resources and universities with specialized expertise and students willing to learn new skills. For students, field schools demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of working with historic structures on public lands. The projects leveraged limited federal funds and focused priorities for maintenance. CESU projects can evolve over time and easily facilitate adding more sites, team leaders, students, and expertise. This is especially important when tackling historic preservation projects, where physical conditions can rapidly deteriorate, causing a loss of historic and structural integrity.



Left, the University of Vermont team restored a trestle at Golden Spike National Historic Site, shown before, during, and after restoration. (Randall Skeirik/National Park Service Vanishing Treasures Program)



Left, the University of Arizona team stabilized a bunk house at the Bates Well Ranch in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. (Naomi Brandenfels/University of Arizona)



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](http://www.cesu.org) or contact Dr. Thomas E. Fish, CESU National Coordinator, at [tom\\_fish@nps.gov](mailto:tom_fish@nps.gov).