



COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS
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Engaging Youth from Local Communities and Affiliated Tribes in Historic Preservation Projects

Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs) create partnerships that benefit communities and their ethnographic resources. In the western United States, ancient pueblos, cliff dwellings, churches, and forts are rapidly disappearing from the land. The National Park Service's Vanishing Treasures Program and Cornerstones Community Partnerships (a non-profit specializing in preserving architectural heritage and community traditions) developed a multi-year training program focused on resource preservation and reconnecting tribal youth with traditional building practices and materials.



■ **Preserving structures and stories.** Both traditionally trained community members and professional preservation specialists and conservators mentored the group. *(Jake Barrow/Cornerstones Community Partnerships)*

Adobe and other earthen materials, stone, and wood are the primary raw materials used in traditional construction in the Southwest. Thousands of these traditionally built structures exist on federal and private lands. If properly maintained, they can last hundreds of years. Many, however, are deteriorating because of weather, human impacts, and deferred maintenance. Craftsmen working on these structures have specialized skills and knowledge of

materials science. Fewer young people are entering the preservation trades, making it extremely difficult to properly preserve and maintain these architectural treasures.

Cornerstones Community Partnerships specializes in preserving traditionally built structures and providing historic preservation skills training to youth. This connects youth with both the physical structures and the traditions associated with them. In addition to learning hands-on preser-

Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

■ Project Partners



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■ Project Reports

Engaging Youth From Local Communities and Affiliated Tribes in Historic Preservation Projects in the National Parks: FY11 Vanishing Treasures Youth Internship Programs

■ Project Type

Technical Assistance

Education



■ **Connecting youth with their community.** This field school focused on connecting tribal youth with their community's heritage. Here the trainees are participating in the multi-year rehabilitation of San Miguel Chapel, Santa Fe, New Mexico. (*Jake Barrow/Cornerstones Community Partnerships*)

vation techniques, mentors introduced youth to the steps in preservation planning, including measuring and documenting a resource before, during, and after a project.

This CESU project focused on youth from the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo in Northern New Mexico. At three sites, the participants learned about the care of adobe, stone masonry, and mortars and plasters. Both traditionally trained community members and professional preservation specialists and conservators guided participants. This mentoring of future craftsmen was an important goal for all of the partners.

Tangible and Intangible Benefits

This CESU program had multiple benefits. Youth learned the skills to preserve and protect their heritage sites, and they learned about the “language, history, stories, and interpretation” of the structures and their communities. It addressed the maintenance backlog for traditionally built structures within national parks and on private lands. Finally, it interested participants in pursuing preservation careers.



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.