**Meeting Summary**

**Joint Rocky Mountain, Desert Southwest and Colorado Plateau CESU Partners’ Meeting**

**High Country Conference Center, 201 West Butler Avenue, Flagstaff, AZ**

**September 9, 2019**

Welcome and Introductions- Jim Allen

National Office Update- Tom Fish

* Participated in portions of each of the individual CESU meetings in the AM
* Presentation
  + Establishment of the CESU network. In 1999, The Rocky Mountain, Colorado Plateau, North Atlantic Coast and Southern Appalachian Mountain CESUs were formed. In 2000, the Desert Southwest, Pacific Northwest, South Florida-Caribbean and Great Plains CESUs were formed. In 2001, the Chesapeake Watershed and Great Basin CESUs were formed. In 2002, the Great Lakes-Northern Forest, Gulf Coast CESUs were formed. In 2003, the North and West Alaska, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Great Rivers, Californian, Hawaii Pacific Islands CESUs were formed. 17 total regions across the US.
  + Discussed updating the regional map to show collaborations that are taking place in Canada, Mexico and other international locations.
    - Projects can be research, education or technical assistance.
    - Only Federal partners can be sponsors. Currently have 16 Federal partners across the network
      * Department of Energy considering membership as well as FEMA and CDC, USDA DM, USAID and state department have also considered joining
  + Total partner enrollment is 456
  + Submitting an amendment to the Great Rivers agreement to bring the Natural Forest System (part of the US Forest Service) into partnership. Tom has received some signatures from Forest Service personnel and is hopeful this will be fully approved. Then it should be possible to add the Natural Forest System to other CESUs.
  + Discussed how host support flows from federal partners to the individual CESUs (33 step process). It has been streamlined within NPS, but still cumbersome.
  + Persistent challenges
    - Partners join and participate in one or two projects, then stop involvement.
    - General lack of participation with some partners.
    - Lack of attendance/response at meetings, phone conferences or emails
    - Partners do not return signature pages
    - Partners do not notify Host of representative changes
    - Unconventional use of the program
  + A small working group has been established to plan a face to face with the council in November. The first letter was already sent to the Council and addresses

some persistent challenges, specifically the slow or non-delivery of host support and additional administrative support for the National office. The second letter, drafted by RMCESU, addresses using the program to fund projects/programs that were formally funded at fully IDC rate and the impacts this is having at the Host university.

* + - If anyone has feedback or other concerns they would like addressed, please email the committee or Lisa Gerloff.
    - Suggestion to the committee to handle these conversations delicately because overall the program is successful and very positive
      * Need accurate representation of the issues and give them true attention
      * Suggestion to individual partners or agencies develop their own training materials
        + Suggest making decision trees for how to use CESU
      * Discussed possible revisions to CESU project criteria document
      * Discussed Federal agencies restricting funding opportunities to one CESU, can we advocate for more open solicitations or should non-federal partners join more CESUs. Which solution is best?
  + Other issues
    - General administrative burden
    - Level of review for funding/proposals causing project delays
    - Discussed developing some orientation materials, such as a webinar that new partners can watch
      * Highlight sample research projects on webinars
  + Housekeeping
  + Tom is digitizing original CESU agreements so that each CESU Host has one available.
  + Developing some common language about the CESU that can be posted on department and agency websites to build visibility
  + New minority fellow from Howard University to help work on the national database
  + Likely to have another fellow to help with website and other informational resources
  + Minority fellowship will be ending in a year but would like to refund or find another way to fund it
  + Project spotlights, would love to develop these, about 2 pages and could be use online or in print
  + need photos for the website
  + Revise the roles and responsibilities documents
  + Creating outreach materials, videos, one-pagers to explain the CESU and showcases the system
  + National meeting in June 2020 at National Conservation Training Center (NCTC)

Question: Can for profit entities be partners? Generally, no

Question: Can inactive or unresponsive partners be dropped from membership? There is a provision that any partner can leave the partnership with 90 days’ notice, but that is initiated by the partner.

Question: Do Directors have the authority to terminate membership? Yes. If a partner does not sign at the 5-year renewal they are inactive until they turn in their signature page.

* + Discussed changing quorum adjustments because of lack of participation.
  + Discussed the possibility of having the ability to translate documents when working with international partners
  + Discussed developing a standard template for advertising the requests for statements of interest or funding opportunities to the Host university and other partners

Todd Chaudhry, Presentation

* Presented a program called Summit, which was developed by NAU computer science students for use by the CPCESU. It is a project management system that could also be used by other CESUs. Todd demonstrated several features of the program.
  + Allows multiple user accounts and various levels of access
  + Can initiate a new project; enter info from the federal partner. As more info becomes available you can add to it. Can drag and drop DOI project form to populate
  + Can modify projects and update as well as add forms to the project. Once you have added a modification it automatically updates the fields
  + Can search, track and export data
  + Can also use to look for partner expertise
  + Desktop and mobile accessible
* New internship agreement for $10k to hire students to continue working on this project, enable search on the CPCESU website
* Expanding the platform to other CESUs
* Something for interns at other CESUs to participate in potentially
* Does have a feature to setup user rights and withhold nonpublic information
* RMCESU and DSCESU are interested in using this program!

RMCESU student awardee

* Tom DeLuca presented Kimberly Verhoeven with the 2019 RM-CESU Student Award for her work on an architecture project at University of Colorado Denver, sponsored by the NPS-Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) program at a BLM archeology site in SW Colorado. Kimberly gave a presentation on her work using LiDAR imagery and archival drawings to document the remains of the prehistoric pueblo found at the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

Federal Partner Updates

National Park Service

* DOI review process is an administrative burden, but most projects still get funded
* The 3 CESUs average about $15m in projects every year
* Funding opportunities often support early career faculty
* Funding outlook; NPS expects to get quite a bit of funding for backlogged maintenance projects in FY20. There could be potential for projects like cultural resource surveys, road systems, potential disruption of migratory routes.
* Want to tap into student internships to help students meet park needs
* Administrative reorganization for the Department of the Interior. It isn’t disrupting the day to day operations

Bureau of Reclamation

* Mark McKinistry provided updates delivered by Todd Chaudry
  + BOR has specialized needs so usually use established relationships to provide funding instead of open calls for funding opportunities
  + Funding amounts per project are usually at least $100,000
  + BOR doesn’t use task agreements, just individual cooperative agreements

United States Geological Survey

* USGS does not have management or regulatory responsibilities. They engage in cooperative relationships with other research scientists and they look to university partners to compliment the work that we can do.
* DOI review usually adds 3-6 months to the funding process. The process hasn’t gotten easier overtime.
* Haven’t seen big budget cuts over the past few years
* Congress starting to provide more formal direction
* Have seen some reshuffling because of the DOI administrative reorganization but not much impact on the scientists and do not expect significant changes

Bureau of Land Management

* Challenges with getting modifications done
* Headquarters moving to Grand Junction and large restructuring, new districts

United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Matt Grabau

* Biggest challenge is planning far enough in advance to properly fund projects with DOI review
* Trying to prioritize actionable science
* Recently started working with some interns at NAU
* Usually single source for funding opportunities and trying to do more open funding announcements