**DSCESU Annual Meeting 2024**

# **Welcome (0:00)**

# **Partner & Host University Introductions**

# **Overview & Updates (5:40)**

## Mission Statement

* Overview of DSCESU – map & # of partners
* List of federal, university, and non-federal partners
* Activities Summary
	+ 2025 DSCESU Renewal
	+ Target host university support: $16,200
	+ Student intern hired for administration & field or lab work
* Host university support
	+ This year (FY25) totaled $14,400
* Internship support
	+ This year (FY25) totaled $12,100
* Timeline of new partners 2021-2024
	+ Biodiversity Research Institute application vote due 12/4
	+ 2 weeks to vote yay/nay; provide reason why not; no response means we assume positive support
* Updates & Short Term Goals
	+ Updates Overview: added 1 new university partner (UTRGV), distributed 32 opportunities, hired student intern
	+ Short Term Goals: 5-year renewal application, update website database, review Biodiversity Research Institute partner, set up Expert Database on website
		- In contact with North Atlantic CESU to add Expert Database

# **National Updates - Tom Fish (12:50)**

* DSCESU 5-year renewal this year
	+ Number of steps, including tasks for host university and federal managers committee under guidance.
		- Federal managers group will get link to guidance for review due in March
		- Additional steps in interim i.e. identifying external reviewers
* Proposals for increasing level of funding for National Program and each of the host universities
	+ Interagency Council Meeting in late October discussed proposals
	+ Tom sent out formal memo that came back last month (November) with responses from federal agencies
		- Majority of agencies supporting proposed increase
		- So far, approved by 10 of 19 agencies; approved in concept by 4 agencies; 2 agencies indicated they could not provide additional funding; waiting on responses from 3 agencies
		- Meeting later this month and council meeting in January to finalize decisions on funding proposals moving forward
	+ Proposed increase for target host university funding: $16,200 target will increase this year. Each agency funding level = $22,500-$25,000 depending on number of participating agencies.
		- Proposal will elevate that to $100,000 per year
		- Hoping to have dedicated staff person to coordinate on behalf of host university
	+ National Program Office funding:Non-DOI bureaus is now included in funding cycle this year & future fiscal years for
		- Last 25 years, only DOI bureaus supported National Program Office
* Policy updates
	+ Working on formal policy with steps for federal agency to join CESU network
	+ Taking a look at existing policies in **CESU Project Criteria policy memo**, which went into effect 2013.

 Some CESU projects seemed out of alignment for expectations for CESU-funded projects

* + - Looking to see if elements within memo are satisfactory or need adjustments
* Diversity Equity and Inclusion Statement
	+ on CESU website and more activities that have to do with DEIA working group, and look at minority-serving institutes and opportunity to engage with historically black and tribal universities; look at geography of CESUs to identify them
* 25th anniversary year of CESU
	+ a few activities happening in terms of getting publications out. 25 years of collaboration and science stewardship through this program.
* CESU National Meeting
	+ Held each summer, and except for couple years under COVID, have held it over last 10 years in National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in West Virginia; we are on waiting list.
	+ Agenda focused on programmatic business and highlights from leadership
	+ No date set yet

# **DEIA Statement and Fellowship (24:30)**

* DEIA statement
	+ 1 year ago, posted on National CESU Website under Resources tab with other documents like how to do renewals - <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/materials/Memo_CESU_DEIA_Statement_2024.pdf>
	+ CESU Network is committed to DEIA, justice and sustainability highlighted 4 principles
		- Maintain culture
		- Foster sense of belonging
		- Enhance diversity with measurable actions
		- Promote opportunities for historically underrepresented and marginalized individuals
		- Embrace and value differences (30 examples listed)
* New fellowship program
	+ 2 agencies interested in starting a fellowship but no funding yet
	+ Can be funded two different ways:
		- Shared funding from different federal agencies
		- Or, agency-specific fellowship (most likely) because group not yet formed
	+ Fellowship would last a full academic year, 20 hrs per week, grad student at partner institution = $86,000 estimated when including stipend/tuition/travel waiver and indirect cost rate
	+ Description of fellowship is a work in progress
	+ If agency is interested, CESU Council is interested in moving forward and working out logistics
	+ Fellow would explore which CESU partners are doing what and share information across network, and would promote DEIA in CESU activities in alignment with statements and principles; each fellow would identify a mentor, who would be trained.

# **DSCESU 5-Year Renewal in 2025 (29:50)**

* What?
	+ Renewing cooperative and joint venture agreement; next one is 2025-2030
	+ Current agreement can be found on website under [Agreements & Amendments](https://cales.arizona.edu/dscesu/%3Cnolink%3E/agreements-and-amendments) page
* Why?
	+ Assess mutual consent in continuing the activities of DSCESU
	+ Evaluate activities, strengths and weaknesses of DSCESU
	+ Renew agreement with any suggested changes
* When?(p. 3 on guidance document)
	+ Federal Managers Committee timeline *(committee populated by representatives from all different agencies in the CESU)*
		- * Due Jan 20th
				1. Provide names of at least 2 external reviewers to Tom – send to Federal Managers Committee leader(s)
				2. list of CESU projects ASAP; all partners complete this task
			* Due March 1st
				1. Report and recommendations as to whether CESU should be renewed
	+ Host University & Non-Federal partner timeline
		- * Due Jan 31st
				+ Host University sends 4 review materials to CESU Network National Office
			* Due August 14th
				+ Sign new CESU Agreement
* How?(p. 4 on guidance document)
	+ Host University should email 4 review materials to Tom Fish by January 31st:

1. Letter of Interest

2. Self-Assessment Report

3. Compiled list of DSCESU Projects\*\*

4. Compiled list of DSCESU Partners

\*\*Need partner help for this item. Send project report to Ruth and Paris: ruthholladay@arizona.edu and pzapp@catworks.arizona.edu

The more projects reported, the stronger our application for renewal will be

* Compiling list of DSCESU Projects
	+ Which DSCESU project data should I include?
		- Follow template on Excel attachment or link to Google Sheet sent by email
			* Paris sends reminder to send project with link to Google Sheet every so often
	+ How do I know when an award is a DSCESU Project?
	Filter data by:
		- CESU Indirect Cost Rate
			* + CESU Council set IDC rate for CESU projects to **17.5%**; there are some exceptions:

US Forest Service projects **= 0%** rate

USDA NRCS projects = **10%** rate

* + - * + Will need to spot check so 0% or 10% rate doesn’t apply to projects sponsored by other federal agencies
				+ (from Q&A, 40:44) Non-federal partners may have used 17.5% IDC rate under *previous* Master Agreement with CESU; however, under more recent agreements, organization would need to have their own **federally-negotiated indirect rate** to be eligible – otherwise would be using default **de minimus rate (10%)** regardless of granting agency

De minimus rate changed on Oct 1 2024 to **15% rate**

This discrepancy in federal regulation has come to NPS’s attention

* + - * Award Title
				+ May or may not DSCESU, Desert Southwest CESU, etc in title
				+ Including CESU region in title is especially helpful when a member of multiple CESUs
		- Sponsoring Agency or Lead Investigator Organization
			* + **Sponsoring Agency** should be one of our federal partners, such as NPS or USGS
				+ **Lead Investigator Organization** should be one of our non-federal/university partners
				+ List of partners is on our website, under [**Partners and Project Information**](https://cales.arizona.edu/dscesu/%3Cnolink%3E/partner-and-project-information)page
		- Every organization and agency has a different system for pulling award data. U of A uses “UAnalytics” system.
		- Collaborate with your **administrative representative** and (if a university) **Sponsoring Program Office** to find and filter data.
* Call for Volunteer - Federal Managers Committee Lead
	+ Daniel Bunting & Sallie Hejl will co-lead
		- **daniel\_bunting@fws.gov** || **sallie\_hejl@nps.gov**
		- List of federal agency representatives contact information on website, under [**Partners**](https://cales.arizona.edu/dscesu/partners)page
		- Bureau of Reclamation still needs a representative

# Strategic Plan (47:15)

* Postponing Review of Strategic Plan
	+ Will revisit after we receive feedback from 5-year renewal
* Strategic Plan outline
	+ Introductions, Partner Institutions, Key Natural Resource of Desert Southwest Region Issues, Mission and Objectives, Goals and Actions, Monitoring Strategic Plan
		- i.e., Key Natural Resources issues may need to be revised

# Administrative Items (49:10)

* Expert Database
	+ Main database hosted on North Atlantic Coast CESU; can now support DSCESU updates
		- Looking into embedding database on DSCESU website
	+ Helps connect federal funding agencies to pool of non federal research partners
	+ Instructions for partners to add expert profiles forthcoming
* Updates to Contact Information & Website Feedback Form
	+ <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c1b536d1bab8406e99ebe0cdb71fe202>
	+ Website feedback is optional

# Other Announcements (51:00)

* Project Powerpoint Slide template
	+ Used to educate potential partners
* Share Story Form

<https://app.smartsheet.com/sheets/CGWvmmPX73xcPfcmPmmPj5vVrXJH9h93Wfp4Chq1?view=grid>

* + Paris reached out to partners who sent Powerpoint slide in 2023 to see if partner is interested in writing news story about featured project
	+ Includes basic questons (i.e. Contact Name), 100-625 word News Story text and Photo(s) upload
	+ Sky Island Alliance and Organization of American Historians submitted stories posted on front page of our website

# Federal Agency Updates (53:15)

* NPS - Sallie Hejl
	+ On Continuing Resolution thru Dec. 20th
	+ NPS initiated 31 new projects with DSCESU Partners in FY 2024
		- $4 million funded – more than past years!
	+ ½ projects are Natural Resource projects; ½ projects are Culture Resource projects
	+ Cultural Resource topics included:
		- Ethnographic overview of park
		- Historic structure reports
		- Museum collections assistance
		- Preservation of archeological field data
	+ Natural Resource topics included:
		- Native plant species restoration
		- Monitoring springs with sister parks in Mexico
		- Studying the effects of climate on southwestern rivers
		- Conducting an inventory of Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls
* BLM - Aaron Wilkerson
	+ Projects are conceived and funded out of districts
		- Grant Managements Officer processes these, but do not always find out about them within state office programs
		- Looking into screening projects upfront by defining science needs
	+ No outlook for budget or priorities of budget yet
	+ Science Coordination and CESU program does not have annual budgeted amount that can be spent each year; priorities based on research needs as they come
	+ CESU evaluation of livestock exclusion…
		- Example of type project that is currently prioritize is the project, *Evaluating Livestock Exclusion and Distribution in the Agua Fria National Monument*
	+ Grants Management Officer is contact person if awarded BLM agreement
* USACE - Sherry Whitaker
	+ Changing process for CESU projects
* US Fish and Wildlife Services – Daniel Bunting
	+ Continuing Resolution (CR) = Funding challenges
	+ AZ Game and Fish hoping to use funding for projects related to filling knowledge-gaps after findings from gutter snake surveys and projects for bullfrog eradication
	+ CCAST going strong and started with CESU funding; supporting graduate and undergraduate students
		- USFWS collaborates with Bureau of Reclamation
		- Hoping to support more students for carrying on case studies
	+ Grant Solutions can filter CESU projects, but need to filter out non-DSCESU projects
* US Geological Survey – Pamela Nagler
	+ Most projects from Southwest Biological Science Center are mainly CPCESU
	+ Pamela will ask groups based in Moab and Flagstaff to populate excel spreadsheet with any DSCESU projects, but Pamela’s projects may be only DSCESU projects
	+ Previously had soil/water/environment projects with SWES and SNRE, but last 7 years projects mainly going through Biosystems Engineering department for CESU agreements with University of Arizona.