

# Introduction to the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit



**University of Idaho**

College of Forestry, Wildlife  
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Moscow, Idaho 83843



## Introduction

In August of 1979, the University of Idaho and the National Park Service jointly agreed to sponsor a Cooperative Park Studies Unit. This development is due to the growing realization that scientific research is a useful tool for land managers, and in many instances is necessary for sound stewardship of recreation resources. This is a brief description of the University of Idaho's Cooperative Park Studies Unit (CPSU); its purpose is to introduce recreation professionals, resource managers, and interested scientists to the Unit's activities.

## Location

The CPSU is housed on campus at the University of Idaho, at Moscow. Administratively, the Unit is within the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences. The College includes approximately 65 faculty, 180 graduate students, and 325 undergraduates. Students and faculty are actively involved in many CPSU projects.

## Funding and Staff

Both the National Park Service and the University of Idaho contribute to the support of the CPSU which is divided into two projects; one devoted primarily to sociological studies, a second dealing with biological studies. The sociology project is under the direction of Dr. Gary E. Machlis. Dr. R. Gerald Wright directs the biology project. In addition, the faculty of the College serve as associates for special research efforts.

## General Scope

The University of Idaho CPSU is involved in the application of sociological and biological research to the management of parks, preserves, and recreation areas. Major funding for the CPSU comes from the Pacific Northwest Region of the National Park Service, and accordingly, the Unit has a primary responsibility to Park Service areas in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. A growing number of projects have been undertaken in the Rocky Mountain Region.

The Unit is also involved in several research projects of national and international scope. Research grants from outside sources are also pursued, and sponsors have included the Environmental Protection Agency, World Wildlife Fund, Association of National Park Concessioners, and the State of Idaho.

## Research Activities

Projects in the social sciences have included studies of foreign tourism, energy issues, techniques for mapping visitor activities, concessions management and interpretation. Biological studies have included evaluations of habitat use, carrying capacity, or behavioral characteristics of ungulate species, including elk, mule deer, and mountain goat. Studies are also underway to characterize habitat use in riparian zones, and to examine plant succession on cinder cones. Interdisciplinary studies combine the efforts of the sociology and biology projects, and the Unit is currently involved in developing ecosystem models of parks that include biological and socio-economic values.

The CPSU communicates research results to recreation professionals, scientists, and resource managers in a variety of ways. A technical report series distributes useful information to managers and the public. An annotated bibliography of publications is available. Training sessions and short courses held at the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences or at NPS Training Centers also facilitate communication and extension. Scholarly papers, derived from CPSU-sponsored studies, are presented at meetings throughout the year, and biology projects, and the Unit is currently involved in developing ecosystem models of parks that include biological and socio-economic variables.

## Extension

An important mission of the CPSU is extension, working directly with resource managers to help solve resource management problems. This program draws upon the expertise of faculty members from the University. Extension activities have included the development of programs for the control of noxious weeds, rodents, or insect pests, recommendations regarding social conflict at urban parks, and plans to identify and rehabilitate unauthorized roads and trails. Several areas have been supplied with baseline vegetation maps and herbarium collections. The CPSU is initiating a program to help parks develop and maintain computerized data bases.

## **The CPSU Leaders are:**

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CPSU/UI SB-83-2