

## **REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST FOR PROJECT TO BE INITIATED THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS (CESU) NETWORK**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Examining Commercial and Non-commercial Visitor Use on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River at Curecanti National Recreation Area

Response to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential partners for a research project funded by the National Park Service (NPS). This project will be administered through a CESU only upon mutual agreement and official authorization by both parties of the acceptance of the application of the CESU Network IDC rate (17.5%). Approximately \$184,476 is available to support this project (\$120,120 in the 2022 Fiscal Year, and \$64,356 in the 2023 Fiscal Year.)

### **BACKGROUND**

Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest of three lakes at Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE) that were created by the damming of the Gunnison River between Morrison and Gunnison, CO. Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest body of water in Colorado and is well-known for salmon and trout fishing. Immediately East of Blue Mesa Reservoir is a flowing section of the Gunnison River, which also offers outstanding opportunities for fishing, including wading and boat fishing. In 2021, CURE saw over 1 million visits. In addition to this high level of visitor use, CURE is also experiencing a change in types of visitor use. In 2007, the state record for Lake trout was set at CURE. Since then, commercially guided fishing increased in popularity.

### **OBJECTIVES**

This project seeks to develop descriptive information about visitor use types, amounts, and patterns as well as perceptions of visitor experience on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River at Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE). Limited data about visitor use and experience exist for Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River. Understanding current conditions, experiences, and associated relationships regarding visitor use on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River is essential for park planning.

This project will focus on water-based recreation on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent section of the Gunnison River at CURE. Access points, like launch ramps, to the lake and river will also be within the project scope. CURE also has an interest in understanding any differences that may exist between commercial and non-commercial visitors. Through this work, CURE intends to achieve: 1) a baseline understanding of visitor use patterns (spatial and temporal), types, and amounts; 2) seasonal differences, if any, in visitor use patterns, types, and amounts; 3) information about visitor experience, experience quality, and other visitor use aspects – including information to inform development of experience quality thresholds – from on-site visitors (OMB Programmatic Review Process and clearance likely required); and 4) a visitor use

management tool that merges the descriptive and evaluative components of the research together for future scenario planning.

NOTE: CURE and other NPS staff will have significant involvement with the project to ensure the deliverables meet the park needs and provide any background references, documents, research, and other guidance and logistical support needed to the extent of park capacity. The success of this project will depend on the collaboration of the cooperator and the NPS.

### **DELIVERABLES**

Deliverables shall include: 1) all data, protocols, and survey instruments used in data collection; 2) a report on visitor use types, amounts, patterns, and experience that includes descriptive and evaluative components, as well as associated statistical analyses and management recommendations; 3) an Excel-based visitor use management tool that merges descriptive and evaluative aspects of the research for future scenario planning; and 4) a presentation on the data and training session for the visitor use management tool for park staff.

### **START DATE**

August 1, 2022

### **END DATE**

July 31, 2024. An extension of timeline may be possible.

### **MATERIALS REQUESTED FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST**

Please prepare a 2-3 page summary of your vision for implementing this project. Include your name, department, university or organization, contact information, CESU affiliation, and a brief biographical sketch. Please include the same information for any collaborators, including staff, faculty, or students who would work on the project. Successful applicants will demonstrate expertise in visitor use management through relevant experience, projects, research, or other examples of their work. We are particularly interested in expertise related to visitor monitoring (type, amount, and pattern of use) in large dispersed systems like open water. Please also describe your approach to developing an Excel-based visitor use management tool that merges descriptive and evaluative aspects of the research for future scenario planning.

### **REVIEW OF STATEMENTS RECEIVED**

All Statements of Interest received will be evaluated by a board comprising one or more people with expertise related to the park unit or subject matter. Based on a review of Statements of Interest received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to prepare a full study proposal. Statements of Interest will be evaluated based on demonstrated experience and capabilities related to the project requirements.

Please submit Statements of Interest to Zach Miller by 5PM Mountain Time on 04/30/2022.

**PLEASE NOTE: A budget is not requested at this time.**

**Contact Information**

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