

**Great Plains Cooperative Ecosystem  
Studies Unit  
FY 2016  
Annual Report to the Cooperative  
Ecosystem Studies Unit Council**



**Director's Report**

FY 2016 (October 1, 2015-September 30, 2016) was the first full year of the new 2015-2020 Cooperative and Joint Venture Agreement between our partners in the Great Plains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU). This year was marked by several new attempts to be proactive and work on behalf of our partners.

Staffing remained constant during FY 2016. Dr. Tanya Shenk served as the Great Plains CESU's National Park Service (NPS) Research Coordinator (RC), and Tanya also filled in as Interim RC for the Great Rivers CESU who had a retirement. Kat Bickert served as the office associate.

Our web site with its searchable database went live in FY2016, providing partners with information on projects to stimulate ideas or find information on previous work. We continued our quarterly newsletter, and Kat documented projects funded through the Agreement with the assistance of many of our federal partners who provided data. Our staff members were active in calls with our National Network (Director's calls: Larkin, Research Coordinator calls: Tanya, Office Coordinator's calls: Kat).

The Institute of Natural Resources (IANR) of the University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL) continued the second year of their support to the Great Plains CESU office, providing \$14,000/yr in administrative support, \$15,000/yr in office support for Kat's position, and \$1,000/yr in support of office communication (phones, internet). We did not receive support from the national CESU network as well, which appears to be a logistical hurdle of funneling funds from various federal agencies through the National Park Service and receiving the promised funds from our federal partners.

We did not add any partners to the Great Plains CESU during FY 2016, although we are working with several non-federal partners who have interest in joining during FY 2017. We remained at a level of 12 federal agencies and 21 university/non-federal partners.

Our office instituted a new project to recognize the role that graduate students play in CESU research partnerships—we created the first Great Plains CESU Graduate Student Award. During FY 2016, we asked academic partners for nominations for the award, to be presented at our Annual Meeting in 2017.

**CESU Meetings**

The Great Plains CESU played a significant role in the Biennial Meeting of the National CESU Network, which was held June 13-16, 2016 at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia and was attended by Tanya and Kat. Kat helped the national office coordinate logistics, created registration forms, coordinate and facilitate 15 CESU PowerPoint presentations and sharing of information. Tanya helped develop the agenda. Meeting accomplishments included:

1. A CESU Directors meeting and the Council Members meeting both addressed the issue of potentially raising the CESU indirect cost rate from 17.5%; the status of the annual host support funding; status of the national database of CESU projects; and the engagement of tribal partners and minority serving institutions.
2. The joint meeting of the Directors and Council Members shared input on all the issues from their perspective viewpoints and each CESU presented highlights for their CESU.
3. Special sessions were held on 1) Coordinating across agencies, programs and institutions, 2) Multi-scale partnerships and 3) Landscape-scale partnerships.
4. A plenary session on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was presented by Chris Korlesky, Director of the Great Lakes National Program Office for the EPA.
5. Tom Fish, the National CESU Coordinator presented a State of the CESU Network address and presented awards.

The National NPS CESU Research Coordinators Biennial Meeting was held at NCTC June 12-13 in conjunction with the National CESU Biennial Conference. Tanya helped develop the agenda, lead sessions and compile meeting minutes. Meeting accomplishments included:

1. Articulation of a shared vision and mission for NPS engagement in the CESUs.
2. Identification of needs, opportunities, constraints, and practical plans for productive collaborations between CESUs and other science programs at the NPS, DOI, and interagency levels.
3. Identification of opportunities and barriers for achieving the developed vision and mission for NPS involvement in the CESUs, and developed a list of recommendations for collaborating with NPS Directorates and advisory groups to be presented at the July 2016 meeting of the NPS Natural Resources Advisory Group.
4. Identification of concerns, problems, and development of solutions related to ongoing policy impacts on inter-regional task agreements that are inherent to the CESU program.
5. Fostered a sense of community among the RCs as well as with CESU Directors and Partners that attended the National CESU Conference that was held immediately after the RC meeting.

### **Other Meetings**

During FY2016, we participated in the local Water for Food Conference at UNL's Innovation Campus, during which Kat presented a poster on the CESU system to encourage federal agencies partners related to water resource planning and management.

A scoping meeting for creating a Great Lakes, Rivers and Gulf Inter-Unit CESU Consortium was held March 29-30 at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center in East Alton, Illinois and attended by Larkin and Tanya. The purpose of the proposed inter-unit CESU consortium is to optimize collaboration on complex, system-scale challenges and build an institutional arrangement and integrative synergy in support of federal agencies and higher education institutions whose missions and programs contribute to informed policy and management of the Mississippi River watershed. The inter-unit cooperation would foster scalable efficiencies by engaging multiple partners and broad institutional knowledge around a shared set of research and stewardship objectives. Preliminary discussions identified a focus for the consortium to be higher education specific to the research, education and technical assistance needed to support resiliency of this watershed.

As FY2016 drew to a close, our office spent time planning for an Annual Meeting to be associated with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in February, 2017. This will be the first Annual Meeting in which we have actively participated or supported in many years, and we are able to do

this because of the support for office staff. The Annual Meeting is a requirement for the Host University.

## Financial Report

The following projects were documented during FY2016 using Great Plains CESU's Cooperative Agreement. *It should be noted that USFWS does not keep internal documentation that allows them to distinguish projects that are funded through the CESU agreement. And, we did not receive information from the majority of our federal partners, which continues to be a limiting factor in our effectiveness to document the impact of the National CESU system. Certainly, the total of \$1,543,198.06 in new agreements should be viewed as conservative.*

*Agreements with \$0.00 funding levels indicate no-cost modification agreements.*

### 2016 NEW Agreements

Agency	Task Agreement Number	Academic Partner	Funding
USGS	G16AC00050	Oklahoma State University	\$132,695.11
USGS	G16AC00271	North Dakota State University	\$45,000.00
USGS	G16AC00412	North Dakota State University	\$109,300.00
USGS	G16AC00430	University of North Dakota	\$67,929.00
USGS	G16AC00444	North Dakota State University	\$79,900.00
USBR	R16AC00065	University of Wyoming	\$10,895.00
USACE	W912HZ-16-2-0026	Oklahoma State University	\$94,000.00
NPS	P16AC00001	University of North Dakota	\$111,562.89
NPS	P16AC00194	Kansas State University	\$143,445.00
NPS	P16AC00369	University of South Dakota	\$16,455.00
NPS	P16AC00449	Kansas State University	\$37,367.00
NPS	P16AC00679	University of Wyoming	\$204,223.00
NPS	P16AC00864	Texas Tech University	\$74,094.00
NPS	P16AC01045	Texas Tech University	\$120,000.00
NPS	P16AC01215	North Dakota State University	\$41,000.45
NPS	P16AC01250	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	\$98,549.00
NPS	P16AC01378	University of Wyoming	\$91,873.61
NPS	P16AC01385	Colorado State University	\$20,000.00
NPS	P16AC00504	Kansas State University	\$44,909.00
			<b>\$1,543,198.06</b>

**2016 Modifications**

Agency	Task Agreement/MOD Number	Academic Partner	Funding
NPS	P14AC00804-0002	University of South Dakota	\$0.00
NPS	P14AC01383-0002	Oklahoma State University	\$69,195.00
NPS	P15AC00499-0001	Oklahoma State University	\$43,500.00
NPS	P15AC01334-0001	University of Wyoming	\$54,049.74
NPS	P15AC01605-0001	Kansas State University	\$85,600.00
NPS	P15AC01750-0001	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	\$0.00
NPS	P16AC00001-0001	University of North Dakota	\$25,000.00
NPS	P16AC00369-0001	University of South Dakota	\$30,000.00
			<b>\$307,344.74</b>

Respectfully submitted,



Larkin Powell  
Professor, School of Natural Resources  
Director, Great Plains CESU  
February 3, 2017

*With grateful thanks to Kat Bickert for her work to document projects with agencies and to develop information contained in the financial report.*