



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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To: AFOs

From: State Director

Subject: Update on How to Use the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network

The Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) network is a partnership among 13 Federal agencies and over 100 universities and other partner organizations that can be used by participating Federal agencies to obtain research, education, and technical assistance from the partner institutions. Seventeen Units have been established at strategic locations throughout the country to provide participating Federal agencies with research, education, and technical assistance on resource management issues in an ecosystem context. Portions of California overlap with the biogeographical boundaries of four CESUs: (1) [Californian](#), (2) [Desert Southwest](#), (3) [Great Basin](#), and (4) [Pacific Northwest](#). BLM is a member of all CESUs except the North Atlantic Coast CESU.

The University of California-Berkeley is the host university for the Californian CESU. All nine UC campuses are participating institutions. Six California State University campuses are also partner institutions: San Francisco State University, California State University Fresno, California State University Los Angeles, CalPoly San Luis Obispo, Humboldt State University, and California State University Chico. The cooperative agreement for the Californian CESU can be viewed at http://nature.berkeley.edu/cesu/documents/CA-CESU_agmt_w-signatures.pdf. For more information about the Californian CESU, click on <http://nature.berkeley.edu/cesu/>.

The host universities for the other CESUs that overlap portions of California or its adjacent waters are: University of Arizona (Desert Southwest CESU), University of Nevada-Reno (Great Basin CESU), University of Washington (Pacific Northwest CESU), and University of Hawaii-Manoa (Hawaii-Pacific Islands CESU).

Details about the CESU Network, including a Fact Sheet, Program Brochure, Briefing Statement, Strategic Plan, Slide Show, Map, Interagency MOU, list of Council Members, Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, and recent Annual Reports are available on the national CESU Home Page at <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>.

The basic criteria for doing projects through the Californian, or any other, CESU are (1) that they involve research, technical assistance, or education and (2) that they are collaborative in nature.¹ CESU projects may address any physical, biological, social, or cultural resource issue. Participating universities have agreed to accept an indirect cost rate of 17.5%, as established by the national CESU agreement. Such indirect charges need to be incorporated in the total project cost and are non-negotiable.

It is important to note that all CESUs operate under a cooperative agreement. The laws and regulations governing cooperative agreements (and what is appropriate under them) are different from the laws and regulations governing grants and contracts. Regular grants and contracts cannot be funded through the Californian CESU or any other CESU.

If you would like to utilize any of the CESUs, keep in mind the following:

- The CESU host university and other university partners are linked to BLM and the other participating federal agencies through a cooperative agreement.
- Under the CESU cooperative agreement, project funds may be transferred from agencies to their university partners and partner institutions but not directly between the agencies.
- Substantial Federal involvement is required. Projects are collaborative in nature, not contractual. Cooperative agreements cannot be used to circumvent applicable Federal acquisition laws and regulations.
- BLM field offices are able to use any of the established CESUs (except the North Atlantic Coast CESU), not just the CESU closest to their administrative boundaries.
- Until notice is given to the contrary, all CESU projects must be posted on Grants.Gov.²

The procedures for BLM personnel to follow when initiating projects through the Californian CESU are outlined in Attachment 1. The key BLM contacts for Californian CESU projects are Traci Thaler (916-978-4529 Traci_Thaler@ca.blm.gov), who is the Grants Management Officer and Ed Lorentzen (916-978-4646 elorentz@ca.blm.gov), who is BLM's technical representative to the Californian CESU (CESU coordinator). In FY 2007, there were six new BLM projects or modifications to the master cooperative agreement (#BAA033001). A list of all BLM projects that have been, or are being, conducted pursuant to the Californian CESU cooperative agreement is shown in Attachment 2.

¹ Any project funded through a cooperative agreement, such as the Californian CESU Cooperative Agreement, must include substantial involvement by both parties. It cannot, for instance, simply involve the Federal agency providing funding for a project and then receiving a final report. There does not have to be substantial involvement throughout the duration of the project but there has to be such involvement at some stage. For instance, there might be collaboration on developing the study design, collecting data, interpreting data, writing the final report or articles for publication, organizing workshops, etc. There does not need to be collaboration on all project aspects, but there does need to be collaboration on at least one.

² In an e-mail message dated July 31, 2006, Mike Ferguson (Assistant Director, Business & Fiscal Resources) stated: "We are working with the Department to resolve our concerns regarding revisions to 505 Departmental Manual 2, Grants Administration, and the Sonderman memo of June 7, 2006. Helene Aarons, Dave Hunsaker, and John Haugh were designated to work with WO 850 to request an exception to "Grants.Gov" through the DOI to the OMB. One exception we are looking at is for all transactions less than \$25,000 because that is the threshold at which contracts are posted on FedBizOpps, the central Government Web site for posting contracting opportunities."

The approval time for projects undertaken through the Californian CESU has generally not been excessive – even considering the additional time required to comply with Grants.Gov. Although recent BLM budgets have been lean, and are likely to remain so in the future, there may be opportunities for doing projects through a CESU using partnership contributions or directed funding. For example, the Ukiah and Surprise Field Offices recently developed agreements for projects involving the Californian and Great Basin CESUs, respectively, using partnership or directed funding to obtain needed technical assistance. And the Wyoming State Office is using Department of Energy funds to support a research project being carried out through the Californian CESU by a UC Davis scientist.

If you have opportunities to collaborate on projects that could be done through the Californian CESU, please contact BLM’s technical representative to the Californian CESU to discuss the proposed project. If the prospective Principal Investigators are affiliated with partner institutions of another CESU, the Californian CESU coordinator can help communicate your inquiry and expression of interest with BLM’s CESU coordinator for that CESU.

Questions regarding the steps outlined in Attachment 1, and the templates and standard forms referenced therein, should be directed to Traci Thaler (California-BLM’s Grants Management Officer) at 916-978-4529. General questions about the CESU network may be directed to Ed Lorentzen (BLM’s technical representative to the Californian CESU) at 916-978-4646 or to John Haugh (BLM’s alternate on the National CESU Council) at 202-452-5071.

Signed by:
James Wesley Abbott
Associate State Director

Authenticated by:
Richard A. Erickson
Records Management

Attachment

- 1 - Steps for Processing Projects through Grants.Gov under the Californian CESU Cooperative Agreement (2 pp.)
- 2 - Californian CESU Annual Report for FY 2007, California-BLM (1 p.)

Distribution

WO-210 (Attn: John Haugh)
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