

The Public Lands History Center Newsletter

Volume 4, Number 1, Summer 2013

Messages from the PLHC Council



Dear Friends,

During the past year, the Public Lands History Center improved its ability to conduct research, train students, and organize programs for our fellow citizens. Although we have a ways to go before the Center is permanent, we believe that we are closer than ever to that all-important goal. Thank you for your encouragement, advice, and help, and thanks to the students, staff, faculty affiliates, and external partners who have given the PLHC its enormous potential.

More changes are afoot. Mary Swanson, a former graduate student who returned to help us in the Center during the past year, will be leaving, and we wish her luck as she pursues a career using skills that she sharpened while working on our behalf. Most important, on June 1, I stepped down as PLHC Director, and Ruth Alexander assumed the new position of PLHC Council Chair. This will give me more time to devote to PLHC projects in which I have been involved, and it will enable Ruth to devote her considerable administrative and intellectual abilities to the Center as it enters a new phase. I look forward to working with Ruth and everyone else interested in the PLHC—including all of you—as we continue to claim the future!

—Mark Fiege

Dear Friends,

The past year has been rewarding and challenging for everyone involved in the work of the Public Lands History Center. Our research activity in the national parks has continued to expand; indeed, in the past few weeks we've received funding to conduct research in environmental history, social history, and cultural resource management at Zion National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and Scotts Bluff National Monument. As you'll see below, we're also hard at work developing an innovative hybrid field course called "Parks as Portals to Learning" that will launch this August at Rocky Mountain National Park.

We've also made it a priority to develop programming on the history of public lands and resources that has appeal to diverse audiences. "Coping with Extremes: A Western Water History Symposium" drew historians Jay Taylor, Patty Limerick, DC Jackson, and Louis Warren to CSU on March 1, 2013, to speak to scholars, students, water managers, city attorneys, and members of the public. We'll be planning similar events, designed to engage diverse citizens and professionals in discussions of the history of public lands and resources, over the coming years.

Finally, we've made a concerted effort this past year to ensure the longevity of the Public Lands History Center by establishing an Advisory Board and a governing Faculty Council. We have also gained the support of faculty affiliates from across the university and have benefited greatly from the strategic support of the College of Liberal Arts. As I take on the leadership tasks involved in serving as Council Chair, I thank all the colleagues and friends of the PLHC who have helped to clarify the Center's vision and purpose.

—Ruth M. Alexander

On the Trail

Working Together: 2012-2013 in Review

New Collaborations

Teamwork encapsulates much of the Center's work over the past year. While collaborations between faculty, staff, and students have always been part of the PLHC's core mission, in 2012 and 2013 the PLHC formed a number of new partnerships that will enable it to expand its mission, further its public outreach, and continue to provide CSU students with new research opportunities.

Western Water History Symposium

In March, the PLHC joined forces with the Water Resources Archive at CSU Libraries to host *Coping with Extremes: the 1st Annual Western Water History Symposium*. The event featured Patty Limerick, Louis Warren, Jay Taylor, and Donald C. Jackson, four prominent historians who have written extensively about water resources in the American West.

In a humorous lecture that established the tone for the afternoon, Patty Limerick, a Professor of History at CU Boulder and Director of the Center of the American West, asked audience members to rethink six common assumptions about water and development in the U.S. West. The first, and perhaps most common, was that water supply and population growth are "inherently and inevitably" intertwined. She encouraged the audience to think of the relationship between water and population growth as casual, not causal, and reminded attendees that water issues in the American West confound and contradict precisely because environmental and political conditions vary widely by place.

In some cases, water scarcity can spur action. Louis Warren, the W. Turrentine Professor of Western History at UC Davis, explained how an extended drought in the Great Basin Region helped spark the Ghost Dance of the 1890s. In other cases, water shortage can lead to tragedy. Donald C. Jackson, a professor of history at Lafayette College, detailed how competition over water rights and political



Patty Limerick lectures at the 1st Annual Western Water History Symposium.
Photo courtesy of Maren Bzdek.

corruption caused the collapse of the St. Francis Dam in 1928—a disaster that killed over 400 individuals living outside Los Angeles.

In a lecture that covered natural resources more broadly, Jay Taylor, a professor of history at Simon Fraser University, traced disagreements between preservationists, conservationist, and states' rights advocates through the life his great-grandfather, Edward T. Taylor (also the architect of the Taylor Grazing Act)—ultimately concluding that the political wrangling of the Progressive Era hindered resource management throughout the twentieth century.

The Public Lands History Center (PLHC) and the Water Resources Archive at CSU Libraries would like to thank Professors Limerick, Warren, Jackson, and Taylor for sharing their work at CSU. The PLHC and Water Resources Archive hope that by gaining a better understanding the past water challenges, faculty, students, and the larger CSU community will continue to work together to ensure sustainable water issue across the Front Range.

Scotts Bluff National Monument Historical Research

On the south side of the North Platte River near Gering, Nebraska, a series of large rock formations tower above the plains. These bluffs, first seen by Europeans in the 1770s, served as a major landmark for thousands of people who traveled West during the nineteenth century.

The largest of these formations, Scotts Bluff, rises more than 830 feet in elevation and is the second-most mentioned site in pioneer-era diaries written along the Oregon Trail. At the urging of local Nebraskans, President Woodrow Wilson signed a presidential proclamation on December 12, 1919 protecting Scotts Bluff and placing it within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

Today, Scotts Bluff National Monument is one of Nebraska's most significant historical sites and an important stop for tourists traveling through the Northern Great Plains on Interstate 80. Every year,



Scotts Bluff National Monument.
Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

at least 120,000 visitors learn about the site's history and rock formations.

Visitors also encounter some of the oldest museum exhibits in the entire NPS. Installed in the 1960s, the Visitor Center's exhibits have become historical artifacts in their own right. Unfortunately, this also means that they often fail to represent the complexity of history and neglect the role of under-researched groups such as women and Native Americans along the trail.

Last year, the regional NPS office—aware that the exhibits were long overdue for replacement—asked the agency's Harpers Ferry Center to renovate the space and redesign the exhibits. In February, Ken Mabury, Superintendent of Scotts Bluff NM, asked the PLHC if it could help Scotts Bluff NM conduct research that would provide in-depth, local and regional information that would aid the efforts of the Harpers Ferry team.

There was one problem. The funding provided by the NPS regional office did not cover the local research Mabury proposed. Park staff feared that information specific to western Nebraska would be noticeably absent from the new exhibits. Patricia Bean, Scotts Bluff NM's integrated resource manager, helped the PLHC

develop a creative solution to this dilemma. She identified two Nebraska foundations, the Cooper Foundation and the Peter Kiewit Foundation, interested in funding the archival research needed to tell local stories that represent the diversity of life along the trail. Bean worked with PLHC staff members, Maren Bzdek and Mary Swanson, on two grant proposals that would allow PLHC faculty and graduate student researchers to work on the project.

In June, Scotts Bluff NM and the PLHC learned that the Cooper Foundation and Peter Kiewit Foundation decided to fund the project. The generous support of these two foundations will support research that conveys the comprehensive and multidimensional history of the Scotts Bluff area up to the present, to serve the interests and needs of youth visitors in the tri-state area, and to compel more tourists to visit the monument.

Parks as Portals to Learning

The Public Lands History Center has spent the last year developing an innovative and interdisciplinary educational program called Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL).

The concept for the program originated from a 2011 conversation between PLHC Council Member Mark Fiege and Ben Bobowski, Chief of Resource Stewardship at Rocky Mountain National Park. Fiege and Bobowski discussed the disconnection between academic preparation of students in the classroom and the realities of working in professional natural resource management in the public lands agencies. Many of the obstacles they noted—cuts to government support, antiquated disciplinary barriers, and inadequate experience and training—were common to both higher education and land management agencies.

Fiege and Bobowski wanted to create an educational program that solved these problems by capturing the synergy of three perspectives—academics, practitioners, and students. They discussed creating a field course or series of courses that would allow students to apply their academic knowledge to hands-on, real-world problems, in the process

developing professional networks and individual capabilities.

In the fall of 2012, the PPL team expanded to include Ben Baldwin, a Research Learning Specialist at RMNP's Continental Divide Research Learning Center; Maren Bzdek, the PLHC's Program Manager; and Mary Swanson, the PLHC's Marketing and Development Coordinator. By the spring, the team expanded to include Jim Barborak and Ryan Finchum from CSU's Center for Protected Areas Management and Training, Melinda Merrill, PLHC Advisory Board Member and Director of the Estes Institute (an environmental non-profit), and PLHC Council Chair Ruth Alexander, as well as several guest instructors from Warner College of Natural Resources and the College of Liberal Arts.

As the team grew, so did the vision for PPL. The team felt that PPL would have the greatest impact if it strengthened environmental research and education at every level in the state. Rather than limiting participation to CSU undergraduate and graduate students, the team decided that PPL field courses should include students and teachers from local high schools and community colleges.

The idea behind this is twofold. First, the PPL team hopes that by pairing advanced students with those at an earlier educational stage, PPL can provide a built-in mentoring program for students interested in environmental studies. Second, the PPL team feels that elementary and high school teachers who enroll in the course will bring the applied knowledge they acquire in PPL back to their STEM and social studies classrooms—helping students too young to enroll in the field school benefit from the program.

The PPL pilot course, August 18-23, will include students from local high schools and CSU undergraduate and graduate students from the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Natural Resources, and Business. Participants will explore Moraine Park, Rocky Mountain National Park's most visited site, and learn about the biodiversity and conservation problems that NPS staff confront there. They will learn how environmental problems in the park affect Estes Park and its tourism-dependent

economy and will consider the history of the site and its environmental issues in a global context.

Participants will conduct research on a specific problem at Moraine Park such as the growing elk population, a drying climate, fire events, invasive species, high visitor use, complex partnerships with stakeholders, and legislated ecosystem mandates. Participants will collect data from the park's library and archives and consult with staff. Field course participants will also be invited to work on an environmental history of invasive species in RMNP and to work on slash pile restoration sites, thus learning more about hands-on resources management.

Once the pilot course is complete, the team plans to hold future courses in Rocky Mountain National Park and other protected areas around the world.

Through the PPL team's existing connections to protected areas in other countries, future courses may be held in Costa Rica's Santa Elena Cloud Forest and Poland's Tatra National Park. The international component of PPL will foster a global exchange of ideas and attract international students to CSU. Protocols established with the assistance of Santa Elena Cloud Forest students and Rocky Mountain National Park to gather air quality and species data will serve as the basis for research endeavors.

The PPL team hopes that these courses will strengthen professional competencies, improve career pathways, and meet the educational needs of today's global economy by offering students, researchers, teachers, resource managers, and industry professionals the benefits of an immersive, interdisciplinary, and process-driven learning experience.



Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo courtesy of Maren Bzdek.

Research Projects

Water History Projects

This year PLHC faculty and graduate students have worked together on three different water histories in the state of Colorado: an administrative history of the Fort Collins Water Utilities, an administrative and environmental history of the Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation Company (FRICO), and a digital history project detailing agricultural and urban water use on the Cache La Poudre River. Each of these histories provides water managers with information and questions that can help them understand their history and explain and improve their practices.

Fort Collins Water Utilities

PLHC researcher, Christy Dickinson (MA, 2013), recently completed a revised history of the Fort Collins Water Utilities.

Dickinson worked with Dr. Mark Fiege and PLHC Program Manager Maren Bzdek to integrate the utility's thirty-year-old history into three new, chronological chapters. Each one traces how shifting political forces, scientific assumptions, and environmental conditions informed utility policy. She writes, "Dr. Fiege helped me envision how the natural element of water connected all of the departments and how they truly shared deep and dynamic relationships to each other, much like a natural ecosystem." She hopes that by illuminating the connections between the Utilities' four sub-divisions, her research will help inform future management decisions.

FRICO

PLHC researcher, Hayley Brazier (MA, 2013), continues her history of the Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation Company (FRICO). Brazier has been studying the company's expansive reservoir and canal system. FRICO's water system spans more than four hundred miles and supplies water to several

municipalities including the cities of Thornton, Westminster, Broomfield, and Northglenn. One of the most interesting things about FRICO is its survival. While many other Colorado irrigation companies have closed or have been purchased by cities to become public entities, FRICO has remained a private corporation for 111 years.

When the project is completed in spring 2014, FRICO will have a detailed history that will preserve the company's institutional memory and guide contemporary managers as they consider the consequences of past decisions.



In 1971, the City of Fort Collins acquired Michigan Ditch, pictured here, and Joe Wright Reservoir near Cameron Pass to plan for the city's growing water needs.
Photo courtesy of Christy Dickinson.

Poudre Digital History

The Poudre digital history project is now entering its third year. Funded by the Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station, the Poudre history website will present digitized historical information about the watershed including archival resources, maps, and photographs and will make use of digital tools

such as image analysis, digitized maps, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and animations.

PLHC graduate student researchers Hannah Braun and Ashley Baranyk spent the first year assisting Maren Bzdek with collecting and organizing a significant amount of site content relating to the Poudre River watershed, water diversion and transfer projects, water management, and the agricultural-to-urban landscapes in the Fort Collins area, as well as investigating and evaluating various digital tools to “tell the story” through a website.

The PLHC has created a prototype website and PLHC graduate student researcher Blake Stewart is working with geography professor and GIS expert Steve Leisz to combine aerial and satellite photography, census information, land use and land cover data to present interactive, visual representations of the Poudre watershed’s over time.

A primary focus of this effort, Stewart explains, is to show how—through ditches and canals—the Cache La Poudre River extends into the city of Fort Collins. The PLHC hopes that the new website will elevate and inform public debate when water use in the community is contested. The site will be live by June 2014.

Current and Upcoming Projects

Theodore Roosevelt National Park Historic Research Study

In the fall, PLHC researchers will begin a Historic Resource Study of Theodore Roosevelt National Park under the direction of Dr. Janet Ore, Dr. Mark Fiege, and Dr. Jared Orsi. Researchers will examine Roosevelt’s nineteenth-century experiences in the badlands of North Dakota, its impact on his physical and intellectual development, and how it influenced his conservation ethic. They will examine agents of change, such as subsequent ranching, energy, and other resource development, explain how this added different layers of cultural imprints on the land, and how development threatens the Badlands landscape as witnessed by Roosevelt. The completed report



Bison grazing at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.
Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

will help the park identify and manage the historic resources for the benefit of the public and assist with the interpretation of these resources.

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site Oral History

This fall PLHC researcher Janell Nelson will begin to conduct a series of interviews for Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site under the direction of Dr. Janet Ore. Her efforts will help Grant-Kohrs staff understand and interpret the history of twentieth-century irrigation and ranching practices in the region and the Montana site’s larger context in the U.S. West.

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site Museum Internship

In June, Lori Nohner, a 2013 graduate of the history department’s MA program, will begin an internship at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Deer Lodge, Montana. Nohner will inventory the site’s collections, catalog artifacts, and maintain and update artifact storage areas. This is the sixth year of the PLHC’s cooperative internship program with Grant-Kohrs NHS.

Forest Service Retirees Oral History Collection

This summer PLHC researcher, Janell Nelson, is transcribing 11 interviews with 37 Forest Service retirees that the PLHC research team conducted in Vail in September 2012. These interviews build on the collection of approximately 300 interviews collected in 2005 during the centennial anniversary of the Forest Service. The collection will be housed in CSU's Agriculture and Natural Resources Archive and will complement a digitized collection of interviews conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Oral History Program with current and former employees of the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

History of Mortgage Banking Industry in Colorado and Kansas

Diane Sanders, a PLHC researcher who worked on the Murie Ranch's Historic Furnishings Plan at Grand Teton National Park, is helping Mike Rosser, a PLHC Advisory Board Member, prepare a history of the mortgage banking industry in Colorado and Kansas. The report will highlight the important role of financing in the settlement and development of the U.S. West.

Murie Ranch Historic Furnishings Plan

Diane Sanders is finishing the Murie Ranch's Historic Furnishing Plan for Grand Teton National Park under the direction of Dr. Janet Ore. The report documents the current and historic appearance of the ranch buildings' interiors and makes recommendations for future use. It also provides background information on local furniture craftsmen whose pieces are found at the ranch, a National Historic Landmark that was home to conservation activists Olaus and Mardie Murie and Adolph and Louise Murie.

Zion National Park Historic District Amendment

In 2013-2014, Dr. Janet Ore will supervise an inventory and significance assessment of landscape features associated with the historic structures in Zion's CCC-era Oak Creek Historic District and prepare an amendment to the existing Multiple Resource Area National Register nomination form based on newly documented landscape features and the history of use for the remaining existing structures. Dr. Ore will supervise a student researcher for the completion of this project.

History of Invasive Plant Species in Rocky Mountain National Park

Under the direction of Dr. Mark Fiege, Dr. Ruth Alexander, and Dr. Adrian Howkins, PLHC researchers will produce information about the history of invasive species introduction into the region prior and subsequent to the establishment of the park in 1915 to provide greater context for considering management alternatives. This project will give particular emphasis to the most problematic species, including Canada thistle, leafy spurge, diffuse knapweed, spotted knapweed, field bindweed, leafy spurge, musk thistle, and yellow toadflax. This research will support prioritization of species for removal, prevention of reintroduction, and communication with adjacent landholders, other stakeholders, and visitors regarding invasive species management in the park.

PLHC student researchers involved in this project will also have the opportunity to work as paid interns performing site restoration within the park. The restoration work the student researchers will perform will focus on areas where slash piles were burned as part of the hazardous tree removal program at the park.

Grad Student Spotlight

Christy Dickinson, a PLHC researcher who worked on the history of Fort Collins Water Utilities and a 2013 graduate of the History MA program, is now a historian for the National Park Service's Heritage Partnership Program.

Dickinson is working on a number of projects for the NPS including a history for the Bureau of Reclamation, National Historic Landmark designations in Montana and Utah, and the Japanese American Confinement Sites program. She writes that her work on the Fort Collins Utilities helped her understand the value of the "public" aspect of research projects and is grateful for the supportive environment the PLHC provided her as a graduate student.



Christy Dickinson

Upcoming PLHC Events

Parks as Portals to Learning Pilot Course

August 18-24, 2013

Rocky Mountain National Park

Public Lands Speaker Series Lecture

Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America

Dr. Susan Schulten, Professor of History, CU Denver

November 20, 2013

Colorado State University

Book Launch Reception

Citizen Explorer: The Life of Zebulon Pike (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Dr. Jared Orsi, PLHC Council Member and Associate Professor of History, CSU

Spring Semester, TBA

Colorado State University

2nd Annual Western Water History Symposium

March 2014

Date, Time, and Speakers TBA

Colorado State University

PLHC News

Dr. Ruth Alexander was appointed to a two-to three-year term as PLHC Council Chair on June 1, 2013.

Former PLHC researcher **Avana Andrade** (B.A. History, CSU, 2012) will begin the Master's program in Environmental Management at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies this fall.

Ashley Baranyk, a former PLHC researcher and 2011 graduate of CSU's M.A. History program, recently accepted a position as collections aide and archives assistant at the Greeley History Museum.

Former PLHC researcher **Jim Bertolini** (M.A. History, CSU, 2011) recently completed an internship as a SCA Conservation Associate with the NPS's Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation in Boston. Jim is now the Historic Preservation Coordinator at the Arvada History Museum.

Hannah Braun, a former PLHC researcher and 2012 graduate of CSU's M.A. History program, recently accepted a position as curator of the Museum of the Mountain Man in Pinedale, Wyoming.

PLHC researcher **Hayley Brazier** received an M.A. in History on May 17, 2013. She is a full-time employee of the PLHC while working on the history of FRICO.

Christy Dickinson, a former PLHC researcher who worked on the history of the Fort Collins Water Utilities, received an M.A. in History on May 17, 2013. She has accepted a position with the National Park Service as historian for the NPS' Heritage Partnerships Program.

Dr. Mark Fiege will be promoted to full professor on July 1, 2013.

Former PLHC researcher **Kelsey Matson**, a 2012 graduate of CSU's M.A. History program, will begin a Ph.D. program at Montana State University this fall.

Dr. Jared Orsi received a 2012 Best Teacher Award from CSU.

Help Support the PLHC

The Public Lands History Center gratefully accepts donations from those who wish to support our efforts to produce historical knowledge that is of vital importance to resource managers, scientists, and citizens who bear responsibility for understanding and protecting public lands and resources. All donations are tax deductible.

<https://advancingcolostate.edu/PLHC>

Your contributions support:

Student Research Opportunities

Environmental Education Efforts

Public Lands Speaker Series

Student and Staff Professionalization

The 2nd Annual Western Water History Symposium

Thank you to all of our recent supporters!

**Maren Bzdek
Dirk Hobman
David Rich Lewis
Kim Corbin Lewis**

**Michael Rosser
Greg Silkenson
Brian Werner**

PLHC Council

Ruth Alexander, PLHC Council Chair and Professor of History
Mark Fiege, Professor of History
Adrian Howkins, Assistant Professor of History
Janet Ore, Associate Professor of History
Jared Orsi, Associate Professor of History
Sarah Payne, Assistant Professor of History

PLHC Staff

Maren Bzdek, Program Manager
Hayley Brazier, Researcher
Andrew Cabrall, Researcher
John Kochanczyk, Researcher
Janell Nelson, Researcher
Lori Nohner, Intern
Diane Sanders, Researcher
Joel Scherer, Researcher
Blake Stewart, Researcher
Clarissa Trapp, Researcher

PLHC Affiliates

Jim Barborak, Center for Protected Area Management and Training
Janet Bishop, Archives and Special Collections
SueEllen Campbell, Professor of English
David Cooper, Forest and Rangeland Ecology
Ryan Finchum, Center for Protected Area Management and Training
Steve Leisz, Assistant Professor of Geography, CSU
Kelly Long, Associate Professor of History, CSU
Linda Meyer, Agriculture and Natural Resources Archive
Patty Rettig, Water Resources Archive
Jason Sibold, Assistant Professor of Geography
Peter Taylor, Associate Professor of Sociology
Mary Van Buren, Associate Professor of Anthropology
Reagan Waskom, CSU Water Center



From top left to bottom right: Maren Bzdek, Adrian Howkins, Ruth Alexander, Jared Orsi, Janet Ore, Sarah Payne and Mark Fiege

PLHC Advisory Board Members

John Albright, Professor Emeritus, History, CSU
Georgianna Contiguglia, Former President, Colorado Historical Society
Loren Crabtree, Former Dean of Liberal Arts and Provost, CSU
James Hansen, Professor Emeritus, History, CSU
Melinda Merrill, Director, Estes Institute
Michael Rosser, Managing Director, The Mortgage Investment Company
Robert Tate, CSU Supporter and Student
Wade Troxell, Associate Dean, Engineering, CSU

Agency Liaisons

Ben Bobowski, National Park Service
Lincoln Bramwell, USDA Forest Service
Christine Whitacre, National Park Service

On the Trail staff for Vol. 4, No.1

Executive Editor: Maren Bzdek, Program Manager

Editing and Design: Mary Swanson

Text: Mary Swanson, Ruth Alexander, Mark Fiege, and Maren Bzdek

Public Lands History Center

Campus Delivery 1776

Fort Collins, CO 80523-1776

www.publiclands.colostate.edu



Like us on Facebook!