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Inspiring the future: The next 100 years of research and learning at Rocky Mountain National Park

By Ben Bobowski

Key words

adaptive management, biosphere, citizen science, environmental history, science literacy

AFTER A CENTURY OF RESEARCH

and resource stewardship in Rocky Mountain National Park, we have learned from our successes and mistakes. We know better than ever that the way forward is through persistent investment in science and people to build understanding and coalitions of support for difficult decisions that lie ahead of us. We have learned that science literacy among park staff, citizen scientists, visitors, and communities cannot be taken for granted. We appreciate better that concepts of adaptive management and organizational learning can be difficult to understand and implement. The sooner we embrace these concepts as integral to our management, however, the more successful we can be. We have learned that inclusiveness and integrating the public—from youth to retirees—into our work make us a more resilient organization. We know that to conserve species and

systems in the park we must work with others beyond park borders to include landscapes and continents far from our daily experience. To understand a way forward with clarity we will benefit significantly by discovering the history of how we arrived at where we are today.

The area we know as Rocky Mountain National Park has been used by people for more than 10,000 years as a place of *re*-creation. It became a park because the people thought it was worth protecting. As we look toward the future we will be most successful if we embrace the idea that the biosphere is forever intertwined with the ethnosphere. As ambassadors of science and stewardship, we have endless opportunities to inform the values that drive the protection of Rocky Mountain and to make a difference.

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