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**Award Number: P12AC10731**

**Project Number: PC-11**

**Park/NPS Unit: SODN**

**Title of Project:** Pilot Field School for Desert Research Learning Center (DRLC)

**Administered through the:**  Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Cooperative Agreement Number H1200-09-0005

**CESU Partner (pick from drop down list):** Prescott College

**Project Contacts**

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**Fund Source (e.g., ONPS, FLREA, CRPP, CESU, etc.): I&M**

[x] NPS Funding

[ ]  Is this funded using a reimbursable account number? If yes, IMR contracting needs a copy of the Interagency Agreement.

**Project Dates:**

**Start Date:** *June 15, 2012*

**End Date:** *August 31, 2013*

**PROJECT ABSTRACT:**

“Pilot Field School for Desert Research Learning Center” is a collaborative environmental education pilot project of the National Park Service’s Sonoran Desert Network (SODN), Saguaro National Park (SNP), and Prescott College’s Center for Children and Nature (CCN). SODN is collaborating with SNP and CCN to develop pilot programs aimed at building a field ecology institute within the Desert Research Learning Center (DRLC). This pilot project's objectives are to:

1. Link local teens with National Parks, and give them the opportunity to establish meaningful connections with the scientists, educators, and managers who work in the National Parks, with a particular focus on ecosystem monitoring and science communication.
2. Evaluate the potential for curriculum-based, citizen-science involvement in ecological monitoring efforts within the SODN Inventory and Monitoring Program.
3. Assess the potential for collaborative hands-on, outdoor science education programs within the nascent Desert Research Learning Center.

**BACKGROUND**

Ironwood Tree Experience (ITE) is an experiential environmental education program that is based within the Center for Children and Nature at Prescott College, that serves approximately 100 Tucson teens annually from ethnically and economically diverse communities across the Tucson urban community. ITE emphasizes biodiversity, ecology, historical and cultural awareness, as well as systems thinking. It is foundational to ITE that hands on experiences in nature foster an appreciation of scientific study and active stewardship of our natural resources. ITE serves another 300-400 youth and adults per year by means of community action projects in urban areas designed to establish green spaces for kids, wildlife, and community.