

The Dolores River Dialogue (DRD): Frequently Asked Questions

History – How did the DRD begin?

- The DRD was begun in 2004 by Chuck Wanner, SJCA and John Porter, DWCD, who then invited other entities to participate (e.g. counties; MVIC; Division of Water Resources; Bureau of Rec.; Colorado Water Trust; USFS/BLM; CDOW; the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Dolores River Coalition, rafters, etc.)
- The DRD was built around the ideas that:
 - Discussions and actions should be science-based,
 - The group should engage a diverse array of interests.
- A Statement of Intent and Plan to Proceed (<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>) were agreed to in 2004.
- Two fundamental documents were produced in 2005: Hydrology Report and Core Science Report (<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>). The Correlation Report (<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>) then linked these two documents together.

What is the Purpose of the DRD?

At a retreat held November of 2009 the DRD-TC recommitted to the following purpose statement:

The DRD is a coalition of diverse interests, whose purpose is to explore management opportunities, build support for and take action to improve the ecological conditions downstream of McPhee Reservoir while honoring water rights, protecting agricultural and municipal water supplies, and the continued enjoyment of rafting and fishing.

What is the DRD doing?

- Planning and facilitating the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group (LDPWG) process.
- Field and literature-based investigations, to address the following questions:
 - How does new scientific information produced (by DRD, partners and/or others) since 2005 relate to spill and base flow management out of McPhee Reservoir?
 - How does riparian vegetation vary across the Big Gypsum Site? What areas can be flooded by spills out of McPhee and how frequently?
 - Is soil salinity likely to be limiting to riparian plant species in the Big Gypsum Study Site, and how do flows affect salinity?
 - What changes have occurred to the river channel at the Big Gypsum Study Site pre- and post-dam?
 - What flows correspond to the establishment of cottonwoods growing along the Dolores and San Miguel Rivers?
 - How do the flow and the level of release of water from McPhee Reservoir affect temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity and pH in the cold and warm water reaches below McPhee? Could the Selective Level Outlet Works be used to improve water quality downstream?
 - Are temperatures, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, and turbidity downstream of McPhee likely to be limiting to trout? Natives? Non-native competitors and predators?
- Implementing outcomes of the Fall 2009 DRD Retreat:
 - Revisiting and clarifying DRD structure for proposal to full DRD on March 23.
 - Developing a systematic process for evaluating opportunities for flow management in light of anticipated benefits, drawbacks and sideboards. A new Framework of questions has been developed and proposals will be “run through” the Framework.

What is the connection between the DRD and the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group (LDPWG)?

The DRD convened the LDPWG in order to engage a broader, community-based group of stakeholders in discussions about the long term management of the Dolores River Landscape.

The 2007 San Juan Public Lands Draft Land Management Plan addressed Wild and Scenic issues in a manner responsive to a DRD comment letter of June 2006. The Plan recognized the role of the DRD in finding alternatives to Wild and Scenic Suitability: "The DRD process shows great promise in achieving enduring protections for this stream reach. Should the DRD make substantial progress in identifying and securing needed protections of the ORVs, the recommendations of the group could be used to supplement or replace this preliminary finding of suitability." [Appendix D, page D-20]

In order to respond to this opportunity, the DRD sought and received funding for creation and facilitation of the LDPWG from the Colorado Water Conservation Board. While the DRD-TC helps plan the LDPWG meetings, it does NOT speak for or make decisions for the LDPWG.

One of the key questions before the LDPWG is "How should the ORV's and other values of the Lower Dolores be protected?" Three of the ORV's, the roundtail chub, the New Mexico wild privet, and rafting, are closely connected to flows in the river. While the DRD doesn't have all the answers, it is working with renewed focus to advance science and science-based actions for the improvement of the downstream environment, while honoring water rights, on the Lower Dolores River. The DRD has been and will continue to work on the tough issues surrounding flows, and welcomes any flow-related ideas arising from the LDPWG.

How can I get more informed about and/or involved in the DRD?

- All DRD meetings are open to the public and time is on the agenda for public comment.
- DRD-TC recently recommitted to twice a year full DRD meetings. Next one: March 23.
- Check out the DRD website: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/>