



A PUBLIC - PRIVATE COLLABORATION

## 2013 ANNUAL REPORT



In 2013, the Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) reached a new level of maturity. While completing a full year of restoration activities on over 910 acres of the Dolores River's riparian corridor—creating 59 job opportunities along the way—we also looked far ahead.

We thought through complicated subjects such as what the transition point looks like when the DRRP steps back as a partnership and hands a restoration site back to a land manager. We revisited and updated our shared goals as well as added several metrics to track our progress, which is reflected in the following pages.

We agreed that, after implementing the Dolores River-Riparian Action Plan, we needed to protect our investment of dollars, time, and good working relationships by developing a plan for long-term monitoring and maintenance. And now we are taking steps to make that plan a reality.

### ***Ecological Goals: Increasing Healthy Riparian Plant Communities***

Completing our fifth year of intensive implementation, the DRRP had many skilled hands working on the ground to enhance riverside habitat. Conservation Corps crews, smaller strike teams of interns, contractors, individual private landowners and public land managers, as well as dozens of volunteers together completed over 910 acres of restoration treatments along the Dolores River and its tributaries, from the expansive basin invigorated by Disappointment Creek all the way down to Lake Bottom, located just above the Dolores River's confluence with the Colorado River above Dewey Bridge.



## Riparian Restoration by the Numbers:

**284.5** the number of acres of tamarisk stands initially treated by Corps crews with chain saws or contractors with excavators

**76** the number of acres of tamarisk re-sprouts treated by agency staff and strike-teams of interns

**156** the number of acres where private landowners, volunteers, agency staff, and Corps crews planted and seeded native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees

**394** the number of acres of secondary weeds (e.g. Russian knapweed) treated by strike teams, private landowners, private contractors, and agency staff

**767** the number of acres where native or desirable plants are restored to the extent that, assuming appropriate long-term maintenance, it is reasonably foreseeable that plant succession will progress toward a more naturally functioning, self-sustaining, diverse, and resilient riparian corridor





## ***Social Goals: Supporting Youth, Enhancing Public Safety and Aesthetics***

In our commitment to the next generation of stewards, we created 50 opportunities for youth and young adults through 8-person Conservation Corps crews, small strike teams, and internships.

**19,100** the number of hours these 50 young individuals contributed to restoring the Dolores River

**126** the average number of hours of training that each Corps member received

**\$30,000** the total amount of AmeriCorps Education Awards that nearly 30 of these individuals garnered

**460** the number of hours of service that volunteers provided working side-by-side with Corps crews and other partners to manually treat tamarisk and cage cottonwood trees

To date, we have reduced tamarisk fuel loads and associated risks of wildfire around more than a dozen structures—from homes in Gypsum Valley and Slickrock, to the water treatment plant north of Gateway, to a developed camp site at the Rio Mesa Center—as well as along over 25 miles of the Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway. Restoration work along the scenic byway has, in turn, revealed to travelers the river and scenic vistas previously concealed by dense stands of tamarisk and Siberian Elm.



*“This kind of work attracts the kind of hearty people who can deal with uncertainty and roll with the punches, day in and day out. It may not be for everyone, but if you finish a season, you finish it with new skills and abilities that can benefit all aspects of your life.”*

*—Chris Panawa, 2013 SCC Crew*

### ***Economic Goals: Committing to Local Investment, Efficiency, and Recreation***

In addition to creating 50 jobs for Conservation Corps crew members, interns, and strike teams, an additional 9 job opportunities were created for local contractors for activities ranging from graphic design of the signs to be installed as part of an interpretive trail along the Dolores River to mechanical treatments of dense stands of tamarisk.

**\$993,575** represents our 2013 economic footprint, in terms of the expenditures and partnership resources invested in local economies.

Having several years of active implementation under our belts, we have continued to increase efficiencies in our restoration efforts:

- Showcasing project success to enlist new private landowners
- Hiring, training, and mentoring highly capable interns
- Adopting new site-specific strategies informed by pilot projects and lessons learned from the field

In addition to enhancing the view shed, the DRRP has also improved more than 20 dispersed and developed campsites along the Dolores River by clearing out weeds and making these assets once again accessible and inviting to outdoor enthusiasts.



*“The DRRP is a sustained program capable of meeting a wide range of social, ecological, and economic goals. We will be looking to capitalize on the partnership’s effectiveness whenever the opportunity arises -- in my 36 year career, the DRRP has been the most reliable and productive partner.”*

*– James Cagney, BLM Northwest Colorado District Manager*



## *Management Goals: Learning, Sharing, and Improving*

Building on lessons learned is the essence of the DRRP's management goal, to improve the likelihood of long-term, large-scale success. We have pursued this process-based goal in a variety of ways. Some highlights from this year include:

- Hosted a Plant ID & Rapid Monitoring Workshop in Bedrock—attended by 22 people
- Coordinated a field trip to Watson Island in Grand Junction for partners to learn about irrigation methods, a new pollinator garden, and other restoration practices—attended by 12 partners
- Held a panel discussion on revegetation science and practice at a biannual meeting—attended by 35 people
- Held an annual Implementation Subcommittee Meeting for practitioners to share lessons learned—attended by 23 people
- Conducted rapid monitoring on 279 acres to inform short-term adaptive management

In addition to sharing lessons learned within the partnership, the DRRP also continued to share its experiences and resources with other watershed groups. Resources that were shared with groups in Arizona, Colorado, and Utah included: the Dolores River Riparian Action Plan, our rapid-monitoring protocol, cottonwood planting techniques, and tools we have developed for planning towards long-term monitoring and maintenance.



## *Looking to the Future*

While active restoration of sites is anticipated for several more years, across the watershed we are starting to see some sites where objectives have already been met. In these sites, land managers are shifting to a less intensive maintenance mode, which can mean a number of changes, in terms of planning, labor forces, equipment, and training needs.

In the coming months, the DRRP will finalize and begin to implement its Transition Plan. This Transition Plan will not only address emerging on-the-ground opportunities and needs, but also include a variety of new strategies—from fund-raising to streamlining our governance—to ensure successful restoration of the Dolores River.



## *Many, Many Thanks!*

A public-private partnership like the DRRP fundamentally relies on trust, reciprocity, and good working relationships to achieve shared goals. From the decision-makers that rally their staff, to the non-profit grant-writer, to the private landowner working remotely on a patch of Russian knapweed, to the land managers providing technical assistance, to the volunteers chipping away at tamarisk, this effort requires people's time.



Thank you to everyone for your time, grit, candor, thoughtfulness, and continued commitment to making the Dolores River increasingly more naturally functioning, self-sustaining, and resilient.

*Left:* Jim Cagney, on the left, with Governor Hickenlooper

We would like to thank Jim Cagney, BLM, for his many contributions to the DRRP. Retiring from the BLM this spring, Jim has provided us with leadership from which we will benefit for years to come.





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Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Hendricks Charitable Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, North American Partnership for Environmental Community Action, U.S. Department of Energy, University of Utah, Walton Family Foundation

To learn more about the DRRP and how to get involved, please visit  
<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/>  
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