



A PUBLIC - PRIVATE COLLABORATION

## CONNECTIONS

AN E-NEWSLETTER OF THE DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

DECEMBER 2013

### DRRP Bi-Annual Meeting—November in Grand Junction

The DRRP met in lovely Grand Junction, Colorado on November 21, 2013 and by most accounts, this was a “watershed” meeting. With over 35 people attending, the **DRRP now has a clear direction with agreement on the next phase.** The group decided that **protecting the investment** will be the group’s primary focus once completion of intensive restoration efforts are completed.

Since the meeting in Moab in the spring of 2011, the group has been pondering: *What do we work on next, if anything?* Many ideas have been generated including some through the recent survey. While each of these ideas is interesting and could be of potential benefit, the group agreed that the priority vision needs to be to protect the investment with monitoring, maintenance, and effective outreach.

While the specifics of this monitoring and maintenance phase are yet to be developed (i.e., roles, funding, strategies, details, protocols, etc.), the DRRP now has a consensus vision and a clear direction in the post completion of the DR-RAP era and that is: **We have accomplished so much, that now it’s time to take care of it. We will protect our human, financial, ecological and social investments made thus far through a robust, well-planned and adequately funded monitoring and maintenance program.**



*(Continued on page 2)*

*SCC Crews digging their way out of the flash flood at Rio Mesa Field Station.*

*See page 6 for details.*

(Continued from page 1)

Several presentations and sub-group discussions fleshed out the vision for long-term monitoring and maintenance. First, Jim Cagney and Mike Wight discussed the partnership's progress towards its four DR-RAP goals. Many of these milestones are captured in the DRRP 2009 – 2012 Progress Report which was emailed out to the partnership in November and can also be found at: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/DRRP/pdf/2009-2012-report-final.pdf> What cannot be found in those numbers is the big picture context and real meaning that Jim and Mike brought out of these figures. These accomplishments have been achieved by many people, lots of deliberations, planning, grit, and collective problem solving.

### Survey Results

A survey was sent to the DRRP via Survey Monkey this fall to inform and shape the phase of monitoring and maintenance. Daniel Oppenheimer, with the Tamarisk Coalition, summed up the results which were used to design the meeting agenda and will be used for strategic planning in the coming months. See page 7 for more on the survey results.

*Right: Daniel Oppenheimer, with the Tamarisk Coalition, discusses Long Term Maintenance with the group.*



### Updates and Tweaks to the Dolores River–Riparian Action Plan (DR-RAP)

The DRRP also agreed to some tweaks to the DR-RAP goals. In 2010, DR-RAP was created as a living document. (Find DR-RAP here: [http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/pdf/2010\\_Dolores\\_River\\_Riparian\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/pdf/2010_Dolores_River_Riparian_Action_Plan.pdf))

After three years of implementing DR-RAP, the partnership has shared many resources and enhanced understandings of success. The changes made to DR-RAP came about due largely to an evaluation by the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee (SMS) of the ecological goal as well as discussions in the Core Team about social, economic, and management goals. The following edits were suggested by the Core Team and agreed to:

1. A new benchmark for the ecological goals: in the original ecological goals, which focus primarily on looking at relative vegetation cover, a site that is almost entirely bare ground could theoretically be determined a success. As such, the SMS suggested adding a minimum (30%) total vegetation cover goal for actively treated sites.

2. When DR-RAP was completed in 2010, only one form of partnership tracking existed, that of 'Watershed-Wide Monitoring' (a statistically rigorous protocol based on detailed assessments of 40 representative sites located throughout the watershed). Since 2010, additional tracking mechanisms have been developed ('Rapid Monitoring' and 'Progress Reporting'), which provide additional information to land managers and help them meet their needs for assessing all actively treated project sites (not just the 40 representative sites). Land managers are utilizing this new information in combination with their professional judgment to determine when each of their sites has reached a satisfactory level of restoration (acceptable levels of native/desirable plants) where, assuming appropriate long-term maintenance by the private landowner or public land manager, it is reasonably foreseeable that a given site will continue to progress toward DRRP's long-term vision. There are several proposed sections in DR-RAP that address these advances in how we track/monitor our work.

3. In regards to the social goals, greater emphasis is proposed for emphasizing youth corps programs and increasing opportunities for the next generation of stewards.

4. Finally, clear metrics are proposed for the social, economic, and management goals in order to help the partnership better track our progress in these areas.

## THANK YOU, PARTNER!

**D** Dedicated to the cause  
**R** Revved up for the mission  
**R** Ready to serve  
**P** Patient and practical  
**P** Prepared for the work  
**A** Absolutely effective  
**R** Rallying towards a goal  
**T** Tamarisk be gone  
**N** Native plants are cool  
**E** Everybody wins  
**R** Riparian health



*The group participated in the first-ever Dolores Derby, a game where everyone answered trivia questions about the Dolores River, ranging from topics of outlaws (e.g., Did you know Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch spent time in and around Paradox Valley?) to herbicide application.*

### Implementation Subcommittee—Daniel Oppenheimer & Peter Mueller, Co-Chairs

The multi-year restoration projects on public lands in Disappointment Creek are nearly completed. This conclusion of work in Disappointment will represent a major milestone and is particularly rewarding, as this important tributary to the Dolores had been the focus of several seasons of Conservation Corps crews' work. Disappointment Creek cuts through the soft layers of Mancos shale and has an abundantly mobile channel, but the dynamic quality of this tributary and its variety of native vegetation has been hurt by tamarisk and other invasive species. As the conservation corps crews rounded their last bend this past November and made room for the cottonwood groves to thrive, it seemed fitting that the corps were able to wrap their work up when the autumn foliage was glowing in afternoon sunshine as if to say, *Thank You!*

Corps crews also made tremendous headway this fall with tamarisk treatments on public lands near Bedrock as well as south of Gateway where some of these stands represented the largest and densest tamarisk found on the Dolores; yet, the crews pushed and cut-stumped through, exceeding all expectations.

On the Utah stretch of the Dolores, Grand County, BLM staff, and Conservation Corps crews and interns advanced restoration efforts this fall at Stateline with knapweed treatments and in Roberts Bottom with knapweed treatments, basal bark treatments of tamarisk, and plantings of hundreds of native plants. Private contractors and corps interns are continuing work this winter in several stretches of the river, below the San Miguel confluence and around Gateway, while the Implementation Subcommittee fleshes out plans for the coming years.

To learn more or become involved in either the Private Lands or Implementation Subcommittees, contact Daniel Oppenheimer at [doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org) or Peter Mueller at [pmueller@tnc.org](mailto:pmueller@tnc.org).



*Freshly treated stumps: over 200 acres of initial stands of tamarisk were actively treated this year by cut-stump, girdling, and mechanical treatment methods.*

## Funding Subcommittee—Kristen Jespersen, Chair

Since the inception of the DRRP, the Funding Subcommittee has garnered over \$3.8 million from public and private sources to support the implementation and monitoring of restoration work. While most of the stands of tamarisk have been initially treated to date, there is still plenty of work that lies ahead. As such, the Funding Subcommittee is working with the other subcommittees to develop a set of long-term strategies to protect the investment—not only the millions of dollars spent on restoration efforts, but the blood, sweat, and tears of hundreds of partners across the Dolores River Basin.

Developing such strategies demands a number of steps: identifying all the needs (e.g., implementation, monitoring, outreach, capacity); firming up a budget for 2014 – 2018; exploring familiar and unconventional sources of grant funding; and developing a major donor fundraising strategy. At the recent biannual partnership meeting in Grand Junction, a break-out group of partners explored several new possibilities.

To learn more, share your ideas, or join the Funding Subcommittee, please contact Kristen Jespersen at [Kjaspersen@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:Kjaspersen@tamariskcoalition.org) or Rusty Lloyd at [rlloyd@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:rlloyd@tamariskcoalition.org).

## Upcoming Funding Webinar: Understanding Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)

On Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 12 pm, the Tamarisk Coalition will be hosting the next tutorial in its webinar series on funding opportunities and strategies for riparian restoration. During this webinar, representatives from the four LCCs operating in the southwestern U.S. will provide an overview of their regions' program goals and describe how they work with land managers to leverage financial resources. To learn more, either visit <http://www.riparianrestorationconnection.org/> or contact Kristen Jespersen at [Kjaspersen@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:Kjaspersen@tamariskcoalition.org).



*A WCCC crew takes a break in Bedrock, CO to discuss with the public a new mosaic-method for selectively treating tamarisk to create conditions optimal for native plant revegetation.*

## Private Lands Subcommittee—Peter Mueller & Daniel Oppenheimer, Co-Chairs

As we close out the year, we are once again excited about the progress being made on public and private lands. On private landholdings, ongoing restoration projects (e.g., follow-up treatments and active revegetation) were advanced this fall season on private lands in the following areas: Slickrock; south of the town of Gateway; and Lake Bottom.

New restoration projects (e.g., tamarisk removal & first knapweed treatments) were initiated with private landowners on Disappointment Creek, near the town of Bedrock, downstream of the San Miguel River in the northern portion of the Uncompahgre BLM Field Office, around the town of Gateway, and on Rio Mesa, the University of Utah's majestic working educational lab.

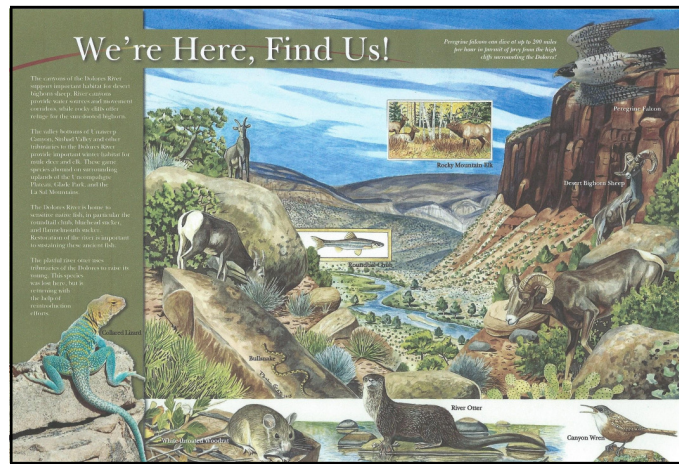
The Private Lands Subcommittee is continuing to support ongoing efforts and cultivate new relationships with private landowners in the basin.



*SCC crew members cut down a huge tamarisk just south of Gateway, CO.*

## Outreach and Education Subcommittee—Mike Wight, Chair

The partnership can look forward to the opening ceremony for the interpretive trail at Gateway Canyons Resort during the spring of 2014. Though it has been a long process to develop these signs, we can feel confident that the product developed will be the best it can be. A big thanks to all that have contributed recommendations, thoughts and editing assistance! Be on the lookout for the invite to the opening ceremony. In keeping with our original brainstorming, we will be requesting specific volunteer assistance from the partnership to make this event a memorable one! It's going to highlight many of the watershed's incredible values as well as celebrate all the great work by the local artist, volunteers, graphic designer, welder and bench maker who have all contributed to this partnership's legacy trail.



*Just one example of the signs to be installed this spring as part of the interpretive trail along the Dolores River in Gateway, CO.*

Volunteers have been a big part of the partnership's success on the ground and an important component of outreach efforts. The Implementation Subcommittee has been working diligently to identify projects for 2014. The partnership is looking forward to the potential for engaging with groups such as the Dolores River Boating Advocates, local schools and the general public on fun projects in the coming year!

For those of you who couldn't make the last partnership meeting in Grand Junction, it's important to note that much of the day was spent reviewing feedback from the evaluation survey and breaking out in groups to discuss how to continue to improve upon the efforts thus far. A resounding theme from these break-out sessions was increased outreach, both strategic and for funding purposes, and to continue to incorporate and educate the public in this meaningful project. As the Core Team assimilates the results of this brainstorm session, we'll look to communicate with the group regarding next steps and incorporate these into Outreach and Education Subcommittee priorities for the upcoming year.

## Science & Monitoring Subcommittee—Julie Knudson, Chair

The DRRP Science and Monitoring Subcommittee (SMS) accomplished a host of tasks on behalf of the partnership this year:

- coordinated and hosted a workshop in June called the Dolores River Plant Identification & Intro to Rapid Monitoring Training and developed an updated version of the accompanying Dolores River Plant Identification Manual;
- updated and revised the Rapid Monitoring Protocol;
- hired two Conservation Corps interns in August to conduct the 2013 Rapid Monitoring;
- released final versions of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Watershed-Wide Monitoring Reports; and
- the final 2012 Pilot Project Monitoring report is nearing completion and will be released in early 2014.

We plan to have an SMS meeting in early 2014. If anyone would like to join us, please contact [jknudson@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:jknudson@tamariskcoalition.org).

## The Cross-Watershed Network: Healthy Watersheds through Healthy Partnerships

This fall, over 60 practitioners from Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and California attended the Cross-Watershed Network's (XWN) first riparian restoration workshop in Cottonwood, AZ. Representing many watersheds and a diversity of experiences, these practitioners spent two days sharing challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned that focused on three critical components of riparian restoration: habitat enhancement, geomorphology, and long-term monitoring and maintenance.

The Tamarisk Coalition, one of the members of the XWN's core team, attended the workshop and will share some of the lessons learned (e.g., working with beavers, planting willows) at this winter's DRRP Implementation Subcommittee meeting.

To learn more about the XWN, visit <http://crosswatershed.net/> or contact Daniel at [doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org).



## Flooding at Rio Mesa—by Mike Wight

Literally, the flash flooding came out of nowhere. The crews were training for the fall season on Rio Mesa Field Station near the Dolores/Colorado Confluence. It had been one of those weeks where it rained heavily for part of each day, saturating the surrounding area. On the fourth day of our hands-on training, a storm cycled over us for 45 minutes, depositing a deluge of rain and hail accompanied by lightning directly overhead. As the crews retreated to the safest place available—our vehicles—the storm caused the Dolores River to rise from a mere 400 cfs to 5000 cfs in a half-hour's time! The USGS flow gauge broke. Our worksite was a lake of floating tents. A few saws were inundated and the two-mile access road became impassable due to wash-outs, extreme erosion and sediment transport. As the crews re-grouped, we were all stunned to see gigantic waterfalls appear off the cliffs, roaring like Niagra!

All of a sudden, the sun was shining and it was time to reprioritize our tasks. The next day and a half simply became a mission to dry gear and complete road work to be able to physically leave the remote site. Thankfully, we had 16 able-bodied and energetic folks that were ready to help. Many thanks to Hau Truong (the field site manager) and his tractor for his assistance in getting us out.



Though we were in awe and scrambling to re-assess, the crews kept their cool. Everyone was quick to look out for each other and were amiable about our changed work duties—from chainsaw practice to road improvement. Our groups stuck together and pitched in to collectively solve the problem at hand. These are the types of lessons that exemplify work ethic, community living, team-building and group-think. These tangible outcomes that our programs strive to achieve through conservation service and outdoor group living could not have been better achieved than through the unexpected!

## DRRP Long-Term Monitoring and Maintenance Survey

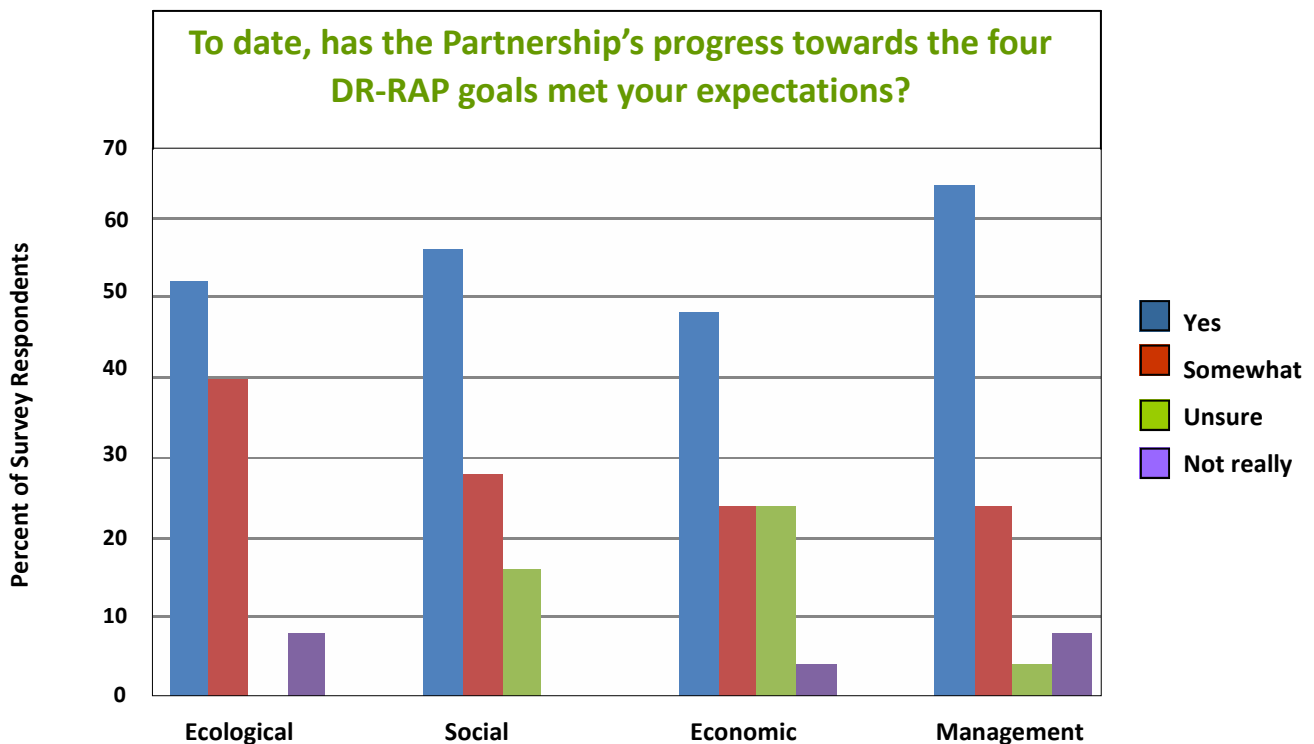
For some time, DRRP has been thinking about this idea of transitioning from heavy lifting and active restoration to less intensive monitoring and maintenance. This transition is not just about converting from big machines and chainsaws to backpack sprayers and spot treatments; it is also a question of how our governance structure and subcommittees respond to evolving needs and opportunities, how we raise funds, hire, and train workforces to meet these needs.

Given the magnitude of planning for the future, in October, the Core Team looked to the partnership to guide the next planning steps with a survey. The survey included a set of questions to spark thinking, identify the needs that remain for 2015 and beyond, and finally, determine how best to address these remaining needs with the multitude of skills, interests, and resources of the partnership.

Twenty-nine partners from county and federal agencies, one tribe, one corporation, and several non-profit organizations provided survey feedback that framed the November 21<sup>st</sup> partnership meeting and provided important direction for the future of the partnership. Some of the key takeaways from the survey include:

- Respondents generally felt pretty good about progress towards our four partnership goals, especially our ecological and management goals, while there was some notable uncertainty about progress towards our economic goals.
- For the coming years, the partnership priorities most emphasized included the need to: develop a framework that guides the maintenance phase of work; re-energize existing partners and engage new ones, especially youth and stakeholders in the basin; and continue to monitor our work.
- Most respondents felt that the partnership should continue its work at least 2 - 4 years after the 2015 milestone in order to achieve all our goals and share these experiences with others.

To learn more about the survey results, check out the presentation posted on the DRRP website at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/full-drrp-handouts.htm> or contact Daniel at [doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org).



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