



A PUBLIC - PRIVATE COLLABORATION

CONNECTIONS

AN E-NEWSLETTER OF THE DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

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Cottonwood Suitability Assessment

On February 3rd, Mike Wight, with the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC), and Julie Knudson, of the Tamarisk Coalition, met with two new SCC interns to initiate the Cottonwood Suitability Assessment. This initiative, the result of months of planning, coordinating, researching, and head-scratching, is currently assessing dozens of prioritized sites along the riparian corridor to determine if conditions (e.g. salinity, soil texture, pH, and depth to water table) are appropriate for planting cottonwoods; in sites considered to be appropriate, cottonwood poles are being planted this winter! Julie notes, "the results thus far demonstrate how important it is to collect some very basic baseline data on a site prior to cottonwood planting. Several sites that seemed perfect for cottonwood planting ended up having soils that were highly saline or a water table depth that was inaccessible in the low season – both conditions that you would not want to plant into."

To learn more about the effort, contact Julie at jknudson@tamariskcoalition.org.



Julie Knudson, TC Staff Scientist and chair of the Science & Monitoring Subcommittee, introduces interns Tess Ruswick and Kelly O'Neill to the cottonwood suitability assessment protocol near Gateway, CO.

Core Team Winter Retreat

Planning towards Long-Term Monitoring and Maintenance: A Recap

On January 27th, members of the Core Team held a winter retreat to integrate and build off of the feedback from our biannual partnership meeting back in November. Specifically, the Core Team thought through the process for developing the partnership's plan for transitioning into long-term monitoring & maintenance. As discussed back in November, this transition is not simply about backpack sprayers and seed mixes. It encompasses how the partnership's structure can evolve to respond to evolving needs.

During its retreat, the Core Team identified seven key components to a transition plan. These include the following:

- **Updated DR-RAP Goals:** approved at the November 2013 biannual meeting
- **Monitoring & Maintenance Strategies:** initial ideas already discussed at recent Implementation Subcommittee meeting (see page 4 for more details)
- **Long-Term Funding Plan:** draft already developed by the Funding Subcommittee
- **Communications Plans:** will be developed in phases in 2014, focused first on fundraising, followed by sustaining support from key decision makers, engaging stakeholders in the watershed, and internally keeping the partnership energized & on the same page
- **Progress Reporting:** this effort, currently being refined, will illustrate status & key restoration accomplishments across the river to date
- **Streamlined Governance & Sustained Capacity:** concepts will be developed in winter-spring 2014
- **Continued Connections:** continue coordinating with other relevant initiatives (e.g. Dolores River Dialogue, Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic & Historic Byway Corridor Management process)

Based on the survey feedback and discussions at the last biannual meeting, the Core Team will develop and share a DRAFT transition plan with the partnership in early spring, so that the plan can be discussed and vetted at our spring biannual partnership meeting. To learn more about the retreat and transitions to long-term monitoring and maintenance, contact Daniel at doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org.



Piles of Tamarisk thaw on a warm afternoon in February at the Rio Mesa Center.

Rio Mesa Center Moves Forward with Restoration

On February 6th, Hau Truong, the manager of the University of Utah's Rio Mesa Center, met with Clint Wirick, of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife to assess last year's restoration work and to plan next steps. Future efforts will include hosting volunteer projects to reduce the ribbon of tamarisk along the eastern side of the center, conducting treatments of Russian knapweed, and selective plantings of shrubs and trees. There is much to learn at Rio Mesa and we're excited to be a part of it! To learn more about the Rio Mesa Center, contact Hau at hau.truong@utah.edu.



Hau and Clint discuss several ongoing research projects at Rio Mesa.

Conservation Corps Programs and Mike Wight Receive Award

If you know anything about the DRRP, you probably know about the Conservation Corps programs. Working with numerous partners, Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC) out of Grand Junction, Canyon Country Youth Corps (CCYC) out of Monticello, and Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) out of Durango have created hundreds of opportunities through 8-person crews and internship programs to plant native flora, treat invasive weeds, install fencing, and conduct rapid monitoring.

Recently, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) announced that Mike Wight, WCCC, CCYC, and SCC received TNC's Phil James Conservation Award for their exceptional role in restoring the Dolores River riparian corridor. This award is given out to an individual or organization for extraordinary contributions or achievements that further the mission and work of the Nature Conservancy. Congratulations to Mike and the Corps programs; we appreciate all that y'all do!



Mike Wight, a man who wears many partnership hats—and in this case has many chain saws— transports two Corps crew members and equipment to their pre-season training to hone saw and herbicide application skills.

Spring Annual Implementation Subcommittee Meeting: Some Highlights

The Implementation Subcommittee met for its third annual meeting to vet its annual implementation plan, share lessons learned, and explore opportunities to bolster future restoration efforts. This year's implementation plan spans the gamut. A few sites are already shifting to a less-intensive maintenance phase; several sites are receiving their first tamarisk treatments and most are somewhere in the middle, receiving follow-up treatments for tamarisk resprouts, secondary weeds, and/or active revegetation.

After vetting the 2014 – 2105 implementation plan, the subcommittee discussed lessons learned from the field. Attendees discussed challenges (e.g. washed out roads), their successes (e.g. improved methods for planting cottonwood poles, willow whips, and longstems), and lessons learned (e.g. strategies for working with beavers and how to apply biochar to plantings) with each other.

The meeting wrapped up with discussions about strategies for transitioning into long-term monitoring and maintenance. New partners, labor forces such as roving strike teams, and other resources successful for this transition were outlined.

To learn more about this meeting and/or the Implementation Subcommittee, contact Daniel at doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org or visit

http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/implementation/implementation_committee_resource_documents.asp



During this year's Implementation Subcommittee meeting, attendees discussed needs and opportunities, including future workshops on dry land revegetation and sagebrush plant community identification. Pictured above: the 2013 rapid monitoring and plant ID training in Bedrock, CO.

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Photos compliments of:

- Mike Wight, Southwest Conservation Corps
- Daniel Oppenheimer, Tamarisk Coalition