



DOLORES-RIVER
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016

CONNECTIONS



COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP RISES TO THE TOP

At our last annual meeting, the partnership agreed to elevate the importance of community stewardship. No longer something done on the side (i.e. opportunistically and when time permits), community stewardship has been prioritized as a key strategy towards protecting and building on the partnership's shared, long-term investment in restoration.

To move this initiative forward, a group of partners met this summer to develop a DRRP plan for community stewardship. Well, at least to begin the process.

Gathering at the Four Corners School of Outdoor Education in Monticello, UT, partners from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Canyon Country Youth Corps, The Nature Conservancy, Tamarisk Coalition (TC), University of Utah's Rio Mesa Center, & Four Corners School met on June 22nd to draft stewardship goals, strategies, and an organizational structure.

A range of stewardship activities were discussed, including: using interpretive signage and brochures to inform the general public; developing citizen science programs (e.g. to monitor presence of river otters); working with landowners to steward private lands; and partnering with schools (e.g. through service learning projects & developing restoration-focused curriculum).

During this forum, partners affirmed that the DRRP Outreach & Education Subcommittee should transition into the new DRRP Stewardship Subcommittee. Partners from over 20 organizations (one business, three schools, four agencies, and fifteen non-profits) have already engaged in this subcommittee, which will ultimately improve the thoughtfulness and effectiveness of stewardship activities towards achieving the partnership's long-term vision for a healthier, diverse, and resilient Dolores River.

To engage in the new Stewardship Subcommittee or learn more, contact Daniel at doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org.



Third grade students from the Dove Creek School spent the day with DRRP partners this past spring, learning how to plant and protect cottonwood and Box elder trees near the confluence of Disappointment Creek and the Dolores River.

Photo credit: Mike Wight (above), and Erika Nortemann (front cover)



Developing a DRRP stewardship program. From left to right: Jake Deslauriers, Marsha Porter Norton, Hau Truong, Daniel Oppenheimer, Derrick Bladwin, Mark Grover, Celene Hawkins, and Janet Ross.

Photo credit: Mark Ahlijanian

ANNUAL DRRP PLANT ID WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

On Friday, June 10th, thirty local community members and agency partners from the region met in Bedrock, CO for the annual DRRP Plant ID workshop. This year's workshop was co-hosted by Amanda Clements (Uncompahgre BLM), Julie Knudson (TC), and Judy Pentz (Rimrocker Historical Society of Western Montrose County). Participants learned about common native and non-native riparian plant species, ongoing restoration work along the Dolores River, and local history.

Did you know that during the beginning of the 20th century, the town of Bedrock was booming from copper and silver mining? In fact, during its heyday, the town had two hotels, two saloons, a store, and 500 residents. To learn more about local lore and history of Western Montrose County, visit <http://www.rimrocker.org/>.



Workshop attendees stop at the confluence of the Dolores and San Miguel River, where they learn about the hanging flume and riparia plants such as the coyote willow in the background. Photo credit: Ann Marie Aubry

BIRD CONSERVANCY KICKS OFF AVIAN MONITORING

This spring, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, a non-profit, began conducting bird surveys along the Colorado-portion of the Dolores River. Using the same monitoring protocol as the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, which is concurrently monitoring the bird community along the Utah-portion of the Dolores River, the Conservancy surveyed nearly 50 sites: some where active tamarisk removal and active revegetation have both occurred; some where only active tamarisk removal has occurred; and some where no active treatments (tamarisk or revegetation) have occurred.

Field technicians enjoyed the beauty of the Dolores River, especially getting to float through the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area. Staff from the Conservancy are currently analyzing the data and will share their findings with the partnership in the coming months.

To learn more, contact Nick at nick.vanlanen@birdconservancy.org.

RAPID MONITORING TRACKS PROGRESS & INFORMS PROJECT PLANNING

While those of us reading this newsletter are probably doing so in a climate-controlled house or office, there are two people who most certainly are not. Chris Jones and Emily Kasyon, members of the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) Strike Team, are in the midst of implementing the annual DRRP Rapid Monitoring program.

For two months, Chris and Emily will be visiting dozens of sites across the DRRP project area to track sites' progress towards the partnership's ecological goals and gather information that will inform project planning for future restoration work.

Recent additions to the rapid monitoring protocol include gathering information on natural recruitment of willows and cottonwoods and looking for presence of species of interest (e.g. desert bighorn sheep and canyon tree frogs). To learn more about DRRP rapid monitoring and/or restoration workshops, contact Julie at jknudson@tamariskcoalition.org.



Julie Knudson, TC staff scientist, mentors SCC interns Emily Kasyon and Chris Jones, before they begin two months of implementing the DRRP rapid monitoring program.

Photo credit: Mike Wight

CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

The Core Team continues to work with Third Principle, a firm based in Denver, to improve our marketing & communications. To date, the firm has helped refine and strengthen the DRRP's Communications Plan & developed several key products (e.g. new DRRP logo, the 2015 annual report, a new brand guide, and the new template for this newsletter).

Hopefully everyone has seen the 2015 DRRP Annual Report. If not, check out http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/pdf/2015_DRRP_Annual%20Report_Final.pdf. At our next annual meeting, we'll share & discuss the communications tools and strategies that Third Principle has helped develop for the partnership.



UPCOMING EVENTS

While still a few weeks away from scheduling our annual partnership meeting (sometime in November, TBD), here are a few upcoming events--with corresponding contacts--that may be of interest.

July 26th:

Dolores Water Conservancy District hosts public meeting to discuss the 2016 reservoir release and boating season in Dolores, CO. mpreston@frontier.net

August 16th

DRRP Stewardship Subcommittee meeting in Monticello, UT. doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org

August 25

Avian Habitat Project Prioritization & Funding Strategies Meeting in Grand Junction, CO. shatch@tamariskcoalition.org

September 12th - 15th

Annual Conservation Corps training at University of Utah Rio Mesa Center. mike@conservationlegacy.org



A crew leader from Canyon Country Youth Corps instructing new crew members at the 2015 DRRP Conservation Corps training.

Photo credit: Daniel Oppenheimer

RAFTING RELEASES FROM MCPHEE RESERVOIR

Beginning in early June, river enthusiasts from across the West descended upon the Dolores River to take advantage of the first rafting releases from McPhee Dam since 2011.

Hundreds of people—including a few DRRP partners—rafted through the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area, between the Big Gypsum boat ramp and the Bedrock take-out. Rock art images of birds, ungulates, and bear paws; entrenched meanders separated by crumbling canyon walls; and several Class II - III rapids made for a remarkable experience through one of the most remote stretches of the Dolores River.

Rafters entering the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area during the beginning of this spring's rafting release.

Photo credit: Daniel Oppenheimer



FUNDING OUTLOOK: 'RESTORE OUR RIVERS' CAMPAIGN AND NEW BLM ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

Members of the DRRP Funding Subcommittee and Core Team continue to work with the Tamarisk Coalition (TC) on its new Restore Our Rivers (ROR) Campaign. The ROR campaign is designed to assist nine partnerships (including the DRRP) to secure funding from private donors and foundations to support needs that are typically more difficult to support with governmental grants (e.g. monitoring and coordinating capacity). The goals of the ROR campaign are consistent with the DRRP's long-term diversification and fundraising goals set out in the 2014 Transition Plan for Monitoring & Maintenance and 2015 Communications Plan.

As part of its involvement in the ROR campaign, several DRRP partners hosted an event in Gateway, CO, on June 9th to express gratitude to current funders and build relationships with new private donors. The ROR campaign has already met nearly half of its \$2 million fundraising goal. If fully successful, the campaign will provide the DRRP with a total of \$155,556 by March 2018. This funding will be critical in helping DRRP continue to coordinate new restoration projects, plan long-term monitoring and maintenance, and develop its community stewardship program.

In other funding news, the CO State Office of BLM has created a new Assistance Agreement to support DRRP restoration work for the next five years. Funding will be co-administered by TC and Conservation Legacy's Southwest Conservation Corps on behalf of the partnership. These BLM funds will be leveraged by grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Department of Agriculture, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, and Southwestern Water Conservation District. To learn more about ROR or the Funding Subcommittee, please contact Kristen at Kjespersen@tamariskcoalition.org.

ENHANCING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Improving river-side recreational opportunities is central to DRRP's economic goals. To date, DRRP has improved over 20 campsites and picnic areas along the Dolores River through fuels reduction and restoration work. A new partner, the Dolores River Boating Advocates (DRBA), has committed to sustaining and bolstering this work.

Joining BLM resource specialists on June 14th for a multi-day float, DRBA members inventoried campsites between the Dolores-San Miguel Confluence and the town of Gateway. Several existing sites were improved (e.g. clearing ramps & installing camp posts), while the group spent much of their time vetting potential new campsites. To learn more about this work, contact Edd at efranz@blm.gov.



BLM staff, DRBA board members, and a local landowner inventoried campsites during a multi-day float trip. Photo credit: Daniel Oppenheimer



CONTACT

Daniel Oppenheimer
DRRP Coordinator
doppenheimer@tamariskcoalition.org

DRRP website:
<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/>