

DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP
Biannual Meeting
Nov. 8, 2011

Overview of how the Partnership is structured

Facilitator Marsha Porter-Norton provided a brief overview of the Partnership. She discussed the MOU that formalizes the players and organizations, and said the signing of the MOU is nearly completed. She passed out a briefing paper that was given to BLM Director Bob Abbey on his recent visit and tour with the BLM Grand Junction Field Office in September. That document needs some updating; anyone with corrections should inform Stacy Kolegas.

Welcome by BLM Grand Junction Field Office

Field Manager Catherine Robertson said the DRRP has grown unbelievably over the last two years and is providing accountability to its funding sources, both public and private. The past year in particular has seen a maturing of the Partnership. Nikki Grant-Hoffman of the GJFO has played a key part in helping to coordinate the assistance agreement that allows the Partnership to compile sources and funding across states. Catherine said the recent visit by Bob Abbey was a great success. He spent the day with the GJFO observing tamarisk-eradication efforts and spoke of the DRRP as a model. He was especially impressed by the role of the conservation corps, as well as the effort's landscape orientation.

Catherine said she believes after this year, DRRP will morph into other projects on other landscape units. A key question to be answered is: How can we replicate what we've done here?

She said the local BLM Resource Advisory Council will be meeting in Gateway at the end of the month and will be touring other sites.

DRRP Accomplishments and Milestones in 2011

- **Funding Subcommittee:** Stacy Kolegas said in 2011 DRRP had needs totaling about \$450,000; funding well surpassed that. The Walton Foundation, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund, BLM field offices, El Pomar, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado River Water Conservation District and Colorado Parks and Wildlife all provided funding.
- **Grazing Management Subcommittee:** Clark Tate noted that grazing is an integral part of economic productivity in the region. This subcommittee was started last year and had its first meeting in May. Their work includes:
 - They have made a good start on a Best Management Practices document describing the different grazing-management practices of different federal agencies.
 - They will be working on an agenda for a grazing training to be offered in 2012.
 - They will gather annual operating plans for the allotments.
- **Science and Monitoring Subcommittee:** Clark also reported on the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee. She discussed the two types of monitoring being implemented: a watershed-wide protocol to track impacts and successes of the effort on a watershed scale; and a rapid-monitoring protocol that primarily involves photographs. The Monitoring and Implementation subcommittees come together to analyze the results of the watershed-wide monitoring in order to ascertain what is happening on the ground and decide how to adaptively manage if needed.

The subcommittee has yet to decide how rapid monitoring can be used over time, but the first such monitoring was completed this year.

The Science and Monitoring Subcommittee is also working on an action plan and wants to look at compiling all the information coming from the watershed.

▪ **Private Lands Subcommittee:** Rusty Lloyd and Peter Mueller are co-leading this subcommittee. While the vast majority of work being done by DRRP is on public lands, there is a significant private portion too, so both public agencies and private landowners are involved. The Private Lands Subcommittee started as an ad hoc subcommittee in late 2010 and was formalized in 2011. They have worked on writing principles and strategy and have decided to split the watershed into four focuses: Mesa County, San Miguel/Montrose, Dolores County, and Utah, based on Natural Resources Conservation Service offices.

The subcommittee's approach is to identify demonstration projects that they can then show to the landowners. They want to minimize impacts to landowners and maximize benefits. Rusty thanked Shane Burton??, a private landowner, for his help and input at subcommittee meetings.

Rusty and Peter said partnerships are critical in achieving success on private lands:

- NRCS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, and the counties are key partners. DRRP is depending on these partners to be the point people for contacting landowners because this is a sensitive matter and people's livelihoods are involved. The question of how best to engage the landowner is key to success.
- The conservation districts in conjunction with NRCS have been an important conduit to the private landowners.
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife and the Walton Family Foundation have also provided critical monetary and planning resources.
- The subcommittee is currently implementing projects in conjunction with the Colorado State Forest Service on some private lands, and CSFS has provided grant monies. There is a possibility of partnering with CSFS on other private lands.
- There are partnerships with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to create trainings and workshops for private landowners so they can gain resources in removal or revegetation. The goal is to get resources on the ground from the people who know it to the people who need it.

Grand Junction Field Office: Sparky Taber said the GFO has been focusing on a 9-mile stretch of the Dolores. One year ago they did mechanical treatment of approximately 100 acres of tamarisk on Paloma ranch and followed up by planting willows; however many of the willows died because of a late freeze and beaver predation. In 2011 work was done to combat re-sprouting on those acreages. Several hundred acres of Russian knapweed were also treated on that stretch. Sparky said the biggest lessons learned involved the herbicides used and the timing of their efforts.

▪ **Moab Field Office:** Ann Marie Aubry said the MFO has about 23 miles of the Dolores. Most of the land along that stretch is BLM, but there are two private parcels. At the state-line area near the border, approximately 100 acres of tamarisk was cut last fall. A phased treatment is planned. In a couple of years it will be re-treated, possibly by mechanical cutting and then chemical treatment of stumps. Other work by the MFO includes:

- The MFO had a planting day in March at some of the treated areas, organized by the Tamarisk Coalition and DRRP. About 600 trees were planted and about 40 people participated.
- A mile of riparian area adjacent to a grazing lease was fenced to keep cattle out. Their range specialist has developed a management rotation with a permittee to move cattle around on restored areas. The Wild Turkey Federation has provided money for some seeding of native grasses in that area.
- Some shallow groundwater-monitoring wells, 10 feet deep with 2-inch PVC pipe, were put in to measure seasonal fluctuations that affect planting. That is an ongoing project.
- There are plans to treat Roberts Bottom, about 100 acres of river bottom further downstream, in 2012. Roberts Bottom was initially treated in 2004 but has ongoing problems with non-native species.
- The MFO is funding ongoing monitoring work on birds and bats in the area – in particular the yellow-billed cuckoo, southwest willow flycatcher, and different bat species.
- The Moab FO has initiated a major programmatic EA to address riparian restoration on the Dolores as well as the Colorado and other tributaries.

Ann Marie discussed lessons learned. She said they ran into some challenges and she is not sure they have the answers yet. They had poor success with the trees from their planting day so they are re-evaluating. They also learned there is a need to tackle Russian knapweed that grows underneath the tamarisks.

▪ **Uncompahgre Field Office:** Amanda Clements said there is about 22 miles of the Dolores in the UFO and it is very degraded down to the confluence with the San Miguel River, because of sediment and salinity. The UFO is taking a “go slow” approach. In other rivers in their jurisdiction they have found that merely removing tamarisk may not achieve restoration, so they want to advance cautiously and incorporate lessons learned. They have adopted a pilot-project approach with phasing; pilot projects first, then full-scale implementation. This year they put into place the pilot plots, which are designed to look not only at the effectiveness of removal techniques but at various restoration techniques.

They are operating under a programmatic weed EA that is quite old, so they will be developing an EA this fall that will cover large-scale tamarisk removal.

Their wildlife staff is concerned about the impacts of wholesale changes in vegetation on birds, so they had a bird study done.

▪ **Tres Rios FO (formerly Dolores Public Lands Office):** Mike Wight, river restoration director for the Southwest Conservation Corps, said about 35 acres was treated this year on the Dolores District. The majority of the work was on Disappointment Creek, and all of it was done by the conservation corps. Work is nearing completion in the Dolores District except for Disappointment Creek. Retreatment and combating knapweed will be important focuses.

→ **Action steps:**

- Two FOs expressed concerns about birds, so BLM staff need to ensure that their biologists have good information-sharing and a consistent approach.

- The on-the-ground people will prepare a “lessons learned” PowerPoint for the next meeting that also spells out research needs. One research need is biological controls for knapweed other than Russian.

Stacy said workshops put on by the Tamarisk Coalition have had good attendance. They are looking for opportunities to bring more of those resources to this partnership and others. In the next two weeks they are launching a web site that will be an online bulletin board on which to post restoration trainings and workshops and to review them. There can be a blog to discuss what needs exist.

Web site

Marsha asked for feedback on the web site. Some comments were:

- There should be more pages and information, maybe informal discussions regarding what’s going on and what is working. The Tamarisk Coalition gets numerous calls from contractors; it would be helpful for them if there were information on the web site regarding planned projects.
- A button is going to be added to allow the public to donate money through the site. It should be up by the end of the year.
- A scenic byway is involved, so perhaps the web site should show what work has been done where along the byway so drivers will know what was treated.
- There should be a section showing before-and-after photos.
- The web site is very helpful for a new person.

→ **Action steps:** Marsha said a “What’s Happening Now” section can be added and anyone with information about what is happening on the ground should send that to her. Marsha urged DRRP members to mention the web site on their newsletters or e-lists and at meetings.

Announcement of award

Catherine announced that Sparky Taber received the Colorado Riparian Association’s 2011 Riparian Manager of the Year Award. Sparky said it was a team effort and many of those in the room were responsible for the award.

Reports from other partnerships

▪ **Friends of Verde River Greenway:** Chip Norton, president of the Verde Watershed Association, said this NGO works on cooperative management along approximately 100 miles of the Verde watershed in Arizona. The Forest Service is the biggest landowner in the area, but there are 1,700 private landowners involved as well, which creates a challenge. The group has formed a Steering Subcommittee, which is very active. The Walton Family Foundation provided funding for them to develop a plan for their watershed. The plan was done by an environmental consulting firm and was completed in April 2011.

▪ **Southeast Utah Tamarisk Partnership:** Sue Bellagamba of TNC said this partnership was formed in March 2006 in response to concerns about Russian olive and tamarisk in the Colorado River watershed (excluding the San Juan River) in Grand and San Juan counties in Utah. The Dolores is one of their major tributaries. The tamarisk beetle was first released in 2004 in Grand County. This partnership has treated about 2,500 to 3,000 acres. They completed an over-arching plan in July 2007 and have about 30 different projects operating. This is a large, comprehensive effort that looks at not only riparian restoration but also flows, grazing, aspen,

beaver, and restoration of the entire watershed. Stacy said the Utah portion of the Dolores is an overlapping link between DRRP and this partnership and there is a need to work together.

▪ **Northwest Colorado Watershed Partnership:** Season Martin of the Tamarisk Coalition said this partnership was formed in January 2010 and covers the Yampa, Green, White and Little Snake rivers in northwest Colorado. The majority of land is private. They completed their plan this September. They began with four demonstration projects, one on each of the river systems, and are trying to track these projects. After that, they will decide how to move forward on a watershed scale.

▪ **Escalante Watershed Partnership:** Shannon Hatch of the Tamarisk Coalition said this partnership was originally formed 2 1/2 years ago to focus on Russian olive, but has expanded to become more encompassing. Its mission is to restore and maintain the natural ecological conditions of the Escalante River and its watershed in Utah. Much of the terrain is remote and difficult to access, so the conservation corps are doing most of the work.

Getting the work done in 2012

Nikki said the BLM has set up a five-year assistance agreement to allow it to partner with DRRP. The agreement was jointly awarded to TNC and the Tamarisk Coalition; they put in a joint application, saying they had different, complementary strengths. The agreement gives the agency more flexibility in providing funding for the Partnership. TNC and TC will act somewhat as management agencies that can hire contractors and the youth corps. If the BLM were managing this effort directly, it would have to have a different contract for each person or entity doing work. This agreement is currently out for public comment.

BLM Northwest District Manager Jim Cagney said much of the funding relates to the success of the September tour with Bob Abbey and the efficiency of the youth crews. This is a special project, combining a youth component with the physical work being done. Four FOs generated that money, and they must be able to show work completed to provide accountability. Jim warned that BLM funding will at some point be cut. He will meet with the Implementation Subcommittee after this meeting.

Stacy said the Partnership has received funding from numerous entities. Costs were originally estimated at \$3.7 million. So far, counting monies received and pending grants, funding is at \$2.4 million. The Funding Subcommittee is working with the Implementation Team to ensure that implementation plans match with where the funding is being allocated. It is important to be strategic in what funding is sought to fill the actual gaps that exist. The collaborative effort and having a forum to talk about it every month have been key in overcoming some of the hurdles of working with different entities with different funding processes.

Tim Carlson of the Walton Family Foundation's Freshwater Initiative said WFF has been working with the National Fish and Wildlife Fund on a new youth initiative, and the work being done on the Dolores fits perfectly into the initiative's requirements. The WFF is thinking about going back to NFWF to propose a non-competitive, signature program in which NFWF could provide funding to a variety of watersheds that are attacking the same problem, instead of having the DRRP compete for funding with other efforts such as the Verde and Escalante.

Tim said requesting funding for a combined, non-competitive effort requires an OK from the Partnership, and asked if there were concerns about proceeding this way. There were none.

→ **Action steps:**

- Stacy will send an email to the Funding Subcommittee to check with its members as well.
- Tim will approach NFWF before it begins taking funding proposals to make sure this idea is acceptable.
- Anyone who is interested in learning more about this should contact Stacy or Mike.

Documentation of projects: Clark said plans for 2012 implementation will be fleshed out immediately following this meeting. Clark went over a spreadsheet showing projects, contractors, funding request, time frame and other factors.

Jim said the BLM has its own codes and would like to get those attached for tracking purposes.

Stacy said in-kind (non-monetary) contributions from BLM need to be tracked but are not being tracked at present. There will be more discussion about tracking in the Implementation Subcommittee.

Stacy emphasized the importance of maintaining a high standard regarding accountability.

→ **Action steps:**

- Develop a simple summary document saying what has been done and what needs to be done. Revisit the projects that have been started to see how well they worked, what still remains to be done and what costs are estimated.
- Have someone from the Funding Subcommittee contact someone on the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative to learn how they overcame the challenges of tracking multiple sources and projects.

Implementation Subcommittee: Clark said the subcommittee has been informal till now but members believe it needs to be formally established.

→ **There was consensus to create a permanent Implementation Subcommittee to deal with income and reporting needs of all the entities involved.**

Volunteers: Mike Weight said one of the opportunities the Outreach and Education Subcommittee has been looking into is enhancing work with volunteers. There is interest in working with the BLM's land-management specialists such as Sparky and Amanda to identify volunteer opportunities on public lands.

Outreach and education

Mike said the Outreach and Education Subcommittee was established this spring and has been drafting a master communications document. Since the subcommittee was formed there have been numerous events related to outreach and education:

- DRRP hosted a booth at the Dolores River Festival.
- DRRP had a volunteer project at Gateway School.
- Many in the Partnership have been working with the Escalante and Verde partnerships.
- A presentation was given to the Rocky Mountain Conservation Alliance.
- The GJFO hosted a treatment tour with Bob Abbey.

- There was a Russian-knapweed treatment day hosted by the Tamarisk Coalition.
- There was a planting day in the Moab FO.
- The web site is up and running.
- The newsletter has been coming out.

Mike gave a PowerPoint presentation on outreach and education. He asked the group why these are important to DRRP. Comments were:

- To get community buy-in.
- Because education was identified as a goal in DR-RAP.
- So people can make informed decisions. All environmental problems are social problems.
- Internal communication is critical in projects this large so that everyone has the same message. External communication is important to show why our work is important and needs funding.
- If people have misconceptions it can cause problems. It is better to have communication to prevent this.
- Sustainability of the effort. If we want to continue we will need money so people outside the choir will need to know about us.
- "Stewardship". There is information about how the environment is suffering but little about how people can help.

Mike asked who the targeted audiences should be. Suggestions were:

- Private landowners
- School groups where appropriate
- Media
- Elected officials
- Funders
- Communities of Grand Junction, Moab and the San Miguel watershed
- Recreational users/river groups
- Resource conservation districts
- Local governments
- Certain environmental/conservation groups that actually do things
- Congress (a tour)
- Club 20

→ **Action step:** A suggestion was made to develop a PowerPoint on DRRP that anyone could give. Mike said that can be done.

A question was raised about the objective of the outreach. Several people made the point that sometimes what are you trying to achieve guides you to the audience that needs to be reached, although there are other parties that need to be educated at all times.

Mike said outreach needs to be attainable and focused. It should enhance the other subcommittees' ability to meet their goals. Coordination is needed to make this happen. Mike went over the different subcommittees' objectives, which are based on their goals. He discussed ways to enact this long-term stewardship. Answers he had prepared along with audience suggestions were:

- Web site, logo, newsletter, one-page handouts (existing)
- Opportunity to do an interpretive trail with Gateway Canyons Restoration
- Watershed-wide educational signage about DRRP
- Creation and distribution of cards or brochures
- Volunteer projects
- Outreach at different events like the Dolores River Festival
- Press releases – it might be a good goal to have a press release in every newspaper in key towns.
- Educational programs
- Signs as drivers enter a watershed
- Other watersheds' outreach efforts
- Conferences
- River trips with leaders

Marsha said the feedback seems to be that this is a good plan but it is too general and needs specifics. Education needs to have an objective.

Mike said he will create more specific steps; get feedback from subcommittees; see how that fits within the objectives; prioritize opportunities; and move forward. He said they would like to make some forward movement before the partnership meets again, and suggested the following time line:

- Dec. 9 – The subcommittee will have a revised plan and will put it out to the subcommittees.
- Dec. 16 – Subcommittees will give their input.

It was noted that some target audiences, such as media, may not involve a particular subcommittee, so the Outreach Subcommittee can handle identifying those.

Private landowner Shane Burton?? was asked for his feedback on how to reach landowners. He suggested using the simple handouts and putting them up at post offices and on bulletin boards; also, contacting landowners directly.

Contracting of monitoring work and linking with the Implementation Team

Clark said there are 16 sites on the Uncompahgre District allowing for comparison of four tamarisk-removal methods. This year it was decided that after the removal work was done, the monitoring compromised the information, so researchers want to get funding to choose eight new sites within the UFO to monitor and come up with a new protocol for these test plots.

→ There was consensus to move forward and seek funding.

Clark said the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee also has been talking about working collaboratively with a lab rather than contracting out for watershed-wide monitoring. They have sent out a request for letters of interest from universities and labs.

Dr. Anna Sher of the University of Denver, speaking by phone, said she agrees a different model would be beneficial and her lab is interested in putting in a bid.

Master communications documents

Marsha said preparing and hosting the e-newsletter is costly and asked whether this a value. Comments were that it may be better to have interested parties go to the web site for news. There can be a button for "Current Happenings." If something is important, an email can be sent out with a link to the site. This could reduce costs.

Longevity and future of DRRP

Marsha said the project period ends after 2014 and asked what participants envision for the Partnership after that. Comments were:

- Not all objectives will be met by the end of that period, so we can either abandon the effort or continue for longer.
- The system didn't get sick overnight, so it won't get better overnight. Long-term documentation of what's happening in the system is needed. Ten years from now we should monitor the treated sites.
- This is the kind of project that needs to be finished or all the work that went into it will be lost.
- This might be a stepping-stone to looking at more issues that are important to the watershed as a whole.
- Start looking at expanding to other tributaries. We will need a long-term ongoing maintenance program.
- Moving on to other areas would in some way signal the completion of our work.

Marsha said eventually DRRP will need to decide whether to continue having these meetings. Marsha suggested thinking about this issue and maybe having the core team discuss it at its next meeting.

Announcements

- The 2012 Tamarisk Symposium will be Feb. 15-17 in Grand Junction. Anyone interested in presenting or attending should email smartin@tamariskcoalition.org.
- The Tamarisk Coalition just finished the 2011 tamarisk-beetle distribution map and will be doing a public presentation at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction in January.
- Stacy said Clark will be leaving the Tamarisk Coalition in February, and thanked her for the hard work she has done. Daniel Oppenheimer?? has been hired to replace her.