

DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP
Biannual Meeting
Nov. 21, 2013

What happened in this meeting?

- The DRRP identified **monitoring and maintenance** as the key activity of the partnership in the post DR-RAP completion era (2015 and beyond with some activity starting now). This is also known as “protect the investment.”

- The group brainstormed solutions and ideas for four key issues arising from the DRRP member survey via small group sessions.

- A recap of progress towards attainment of DR-RAP goals was given. The partnership discussed and agreed to tweaks/adjustments to the original DR-RAP goals.

- A funding report was given with a charge to the DRRP to continue the work and raise the necessary resources to complete this phase.

- The group identified “telling our story” and reaching many audiences with targeted messages as a key goal.

- All attendees received an award for their many years of work, sweat, dedication and collaboration.

Next Steps:

- The Core Team will be taking ideas generated in the meeting and will develop a draft planning document for the next phase. Be looking for a discussion of this document at the next DRRP meeting to be held in Moab in the spring of '14.
- The Subcommittees will continue to meet (all are welcome to serve on them).

Welcome: Jim Cagney, Bureau of Land Management Northwest District manager, welcomed the group and said the BLM strongly supports this project. He gave the welcome as Katie Stevens, the BLM Center Manager for the Grand Junction office was out of town.

Building on accomplishments to date

Recap of last partnership meetings: Facilitator Marsha Porter-Norton said the progress report that was sent out via email presents a summary of discussions at the last meeting in Montrose about where the partnership stands.

Synthesis of partners' feedback: Daniel Oppenheimer, restoration coordinator with the Tamarisk Coalition, discussed long-term projections for the partnership. He said DRRP has struggled with issues of long-term monitoring and maintenance for some time. The question

isn't just a matter of transitioning from using hydro axes down to backpack sprayers, it's about taking the partnership's structure and making sure it's responsible to emerging needs. He said the reasons to raise this issue now are:

- DRRP is approaching a major milestone – finishing the third of five years of DR-RAP.
- Millions of dollars have been spent in the Dolores River Basin and the partnership wants to make sure it is protecting the money and effort everyone has put into this project.
- This is a collective effort and it takes time to identify what should be brought to the table as it transitions from active, intensive work into less-intensive maintenance.

Daniel gave a PowerPoint presentation showing results of a survey about the partnership. The survey had three objectives:

- How is the DRRP doing? What has it achieved thus far?
- What are some of the needs that need to be addressed as the partnership shifts to low-intensity maintenance?
- What is the partnership's vision for after 2015?

Daniel said 23 of the 29 people who started the survey completed it. Respondents included representatives of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, a private contractor, officials with four BLM field offices, and representatives of nonprofits, two county agencies, and several federal agencies.

One question was: *To date has the partnership's progress toward the four DR-RAP goals met your expectations?*

- Regarding ecological goals, more than 50% said yes, 40% said somewhat, 8% said not really, and none were uncertain.
- For social goals, about 55% said yes, 28% said somewhat and 17% were uncertain.
- For economic goals, approximately 49% said yes, 23% said somewhat, another 23% were uncertain, and 5% said not really.
- For management, 65% said yes, 22% somewhat, 8% not really and 5% were unsure.

Other survey questions asked about other opportunities to enhance the partnership's work toward these goals; what would be most important to accomplish by 2015; what resources the respondent was willing to commit toward achieving those goals; possible challenges the respondent faced in continuing to participate in DRRP; and the vision for the partnership after 2015 and how to achieve it. The complete survey and results will be posted online on the DRRP's web site at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/>

Other thoughts and suggestions voiced by survey respondents as important issues to consider for post-2015 planning included:

- Impacts of a listing of the yellow-billed cuckoo
- Better use of the DRRP web site
- Developing a plan that keeps us all accountable
- Public awareness
- Tributaries, fish, flows, etc.

Working towards DR-RAP goals

• **Jim Cagney of the BLM Northwest District** said while the partnership has considerable information on facts such as acres treated, there are two problems with such statistics. One is

that the partnership is about long-term successes, not just numbers of tamarisk killed, so reporting simple facts such as acres treated doesn't really relate to DR-RAP's goals. The other is that a critical piece was missing, particularly for grant applications, which was an estimate of how close the partnership was to being finished. Another yardstick was needed that took into account the fact that plant succession and time does some of the work.

A definition was developed: Native plants are restored on a given site so that assuming appropriate long-term maintenance by the prior landowner or public-lands manager, it is reasonably foreseeable that plant succession will progress toward DR-RAP's long-term vision.

Jim broke down the project's progress according to polygons:

- *No restoration needed* – 18 acres as of August 2013
- *No active treatment planned* (because biological controls/beetles are judged sufficient treatment, the landowner is not willing or the land is too inaccessible) – 635 acres out of the total of 4,445 (14%)
- *Active treatment scheduled* – 640 acres (14%) – no work has been done yet
- *Actively treated* – the partnership has treated a polygon through one or more of the following methods: manual treatment of woody invasives, mechanical treatment of woody invasives, treatment of woody resprouts, treatment of secondary weeds, revegetation
- *Objectives met through active treatment* – 604 acres (14%)

Jim said the Tres Rios FO has finished nearly all its work, an outstanding accomplishment.

He was asked what "objectives met" means regarding knapweed. Jim said managers believe the proper conditions are in place so that, over time, the site will meet DR-RAP goals.

▪ **Mike Wight, river-restoration director with the Southwest Conservation Corps**, said the economic, social, and management goals represent the HOW of what the DRRP does.

Social goals: Mike said the partnership is approaching the landmark of 200 positions created, not including people in this room. The conservation corps tries to keep stewardship at home by employing youth from the local area, Native Americans, the under-served, etc.

Economic goals: The partnership has had tremendous success garnering public and private funding. Through 2012 it has spent more than \$3 million. This is the result of having a holistic picture of shared goals. Mike said there are many secondary benefits inherent to this project, such as recreation and scenic enhancement.

Management goals: The partnership has presented workshops and started pilot projects to create lessons learned. It has produced an interpretive trail, better training and education for the young, an internship program, and national attention. Developing the progress report was a good exercise. He thinks it has drawn attention to the need to review and use adaptive management to examine the partnership as a whole and adaptively manage its goals.

▪ **Nikki Grant-Hoffman of the BLM Grand Junction Field Office** gave a PowerPoint presentation about revisiting DR-RAP goals. She briefly reviewed proposed changes to the five-year ecological goals. One key change is to add a total-vegetation requirement of 30 percent for actively treated

sites. The original ecological goals focused on relative vegetation cover, which meant that a site that was bare ground could have been judged a success. Under the proposed change, if a site has less than 30 percent vegetation, a manager will have to decide whether that is reasonable.

Another key change relates to monitoring. At the time DR-RAP was completed, only watershed-wide monitoring (a protocol based on assessments of 40 representative sites) was utilized. Since then, two additional types of monitoring have been developed: rapid monitoring and progress reporting. Under the proposed amendments:

- Representative sites, whether passively or actively treated, will be monitored through watershed-wide monitoring.
- Active treatment sites will be monitored utilizing progress reporting and rapid monitoring.
- Passive-treatment sites where tamarisk biological control is the main control mechanism will be monitored utilizing watershed-wide monitoring and Colorado Department of Agriculture monitoring.

Daniel praised the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee for being responsive to emerging needs by developing new protocols.

▪ **Peter Mueller of The Nature Conservancy** discussed proposed updates and changes to DR-RAP goals and metrics. He said the more substantive changes tend to be focused on ecological goals, while the others primarily relate to measurements.

Social goals: Peter said the changes are designed to put more emphasis on the conservation corps and developing the next generation of stewards. Although the creation of 128 jobs from 2009 through 2012 is very significant, the idea is to have a much greater set of outcomes, so the changes provide for other measures such as:

- For developing the next generation of stewards: Service hours, education credits, AmeriCorps Education Awards earned by members of the corps
- For educational opportunities and improved aesthetics for recreationists: Number of restored treatment sites in public areas (such as interactive interpretive sites and increased access to restored streamside areas)
- For increased public safety: fire mitigation near buildings or structures and improved lines of sight on highways.

Economic goals: Peter said the amendments would establish economic goals and associated measures including:

- Increasing employment opportunities for contractors and youth (measured by number of people engaged in restoration work)
- Investing in local communities (amount invested and projected roll-over)
- Improving the effectiveness and financial efficiency of treatments, and enhancing recreational experience (how many campsites improved, how many people visit interpretive trail, etc.)
- Raising and leveraging money to fund work (amount raised).

Management goals: Peter noted that the partnership's management received high accolades in the survey presented by Daniel. People tend to work in "silos", but this partnership has enabled

them to get out of those silos and share work and lessons learned. The amendments would establish management goals including:

- Facilitate communication between land managers and partners
- Incorporate educational and interpretive practices to enhance public understanding of restoration actions.

Peter said next steps will include:

- Collect, interpret and disseminate additional monitoring and measurable outcome information to improve adaptive management
- Share the lessons learned
- Use data, resources, outreach and education to ensure long-term restoration successes along the Dolores River.

Tim said lessons learned are already being shared outside the DRRP. A watershed group for the Upper Gila that is just starting is using DR-RAP as a template and it has helped them progress faster. Much of the partnership's management structure is being copied in different watersheds.

David Kauffman of the BLM Uncompahgre Field Office said there is an opportunity to increase the stewardship aspect of DR-RAP. Everyone has done great work with putting projects on the ground, monitoring and maintenance, but he believes the partnership needs to improve its capacity in regard to stewardship, possibly through expanding the internship program. Peter agreed that building the internship program is a good idea.

Marsha asked if there was consensus to accept the amendments and there was.

Rusty Lloyd of the Tamarisk Coalition said some of the suggestions made by survey respondents are already being implemented, but others will take more time. He asked whether the partnership has taken steps to incorporate those.

Daniel said the need to protect the investment is first and foremost. However, some people have said there may be other things this group can work on, so in addition to finishing this work the partnership wants to be responsive to emerging needs. For example, some survey respondents suggested the partnership work with endangered fish and flows on the Dolores, or do restoration work on additional tributaries. Deciding these questions will require a collective process and in time the partnership will have to talk through it. These are not decisions that a few people can make. He said first the group has to figure out how to protect this investment and when that has been accomplished, the group can start to look at secondary issues.

Marsha said the Core Team discussed this issue at its last meeting and agreed that the first priority is to protect the investment, so the next steps will be to finish the original work, then monitor and maintain. Decisions about other work should not be made by the Core Team alone.

A question was raised as to whether climate-change modeling has been incorporated into the ecological goals. Peter said the generic answer is that the partnership is creating resiliency and diversity; however, the question of long-term adjustments to management as a response to climate change has not been tackled. Nikki said different ecological goals were left open to some degree, for example by using the term "native or desirable" plants in one of the ecological goals.

Daniel said climate change will be considered in terms of revegetation. The Tamarisk Coalition will be offering a workshop next year on dryland-revegetation strategies for areas that will likely get even drier and hotter.

DRRP Long-Term Implementation Projections

Marsha said beginning around 2015 the partnership would like to have monitoring and maintenance as its collective work. If an issue arises there would have to be associated funding and capacity to work on it.

Daniel gave a PowerPoint presentation on long-term projections and discussed what work remains to be done.

- Regarding areas to be actively treated (either manually or mechanically) for woody invasive plants (tamarisk, Russian olive, Siberian elm):
 - Tres Rios FO has fewer than 5 acres remaining to be treated
 - Uncompahgre FO will have approximately 40 acres by 2014
 - Grand Junction FO has approximately 70 acres
 - Moab FO will have 40 acres by 2015
 - On private lands fewer than 100 acres are estimated remaining (there are many unknowns).

- On areas planned for first treatments of woody invasive resprouts, Daniel said approximately 900 acres of tamarisk resprouts are to be treated. Most of these sites will have received the first treatment by 2015. Spot treatments would continue for some time afterward

He was asked whether trees treated with the tamarisk beetle are showing resprouts. Daniel said the insectary reported seeing defoliations of about 85 percent of beetle-treated areas.

Sparky Taber of the BLM Grand Junction Field Office said some observations have found that on big stands of tamarisk, where trees were cut with a saw or mulched, at least 50 percent did not resprout because they were already severely weakened by the beetles. However, smaller trees are more difficult to kill. When the effects of the beetles are combined with efforts by humans, the mortality is high. Sparky said a major factor in deciding what to do with standing dead trees is whether there is a need to open up the area in order to spray knapweed.

- Regarding treatment of secondary weeds, Daniel said about 1,100 acres of Russian knapweed is to be treated; this remains an intensive focus through 2017. Spot treatments would continue for some time afterward. Russian knapweed isn't the only secondary weed, but it is the one of most concern.

- On areas scheduled for active revegetation (including planting, seeding, and cottonwood caging):
 - Prioritized sites: About 130 acres will be completed by 2015
 - Passive revegetation sites: These will be monitored to determine whether additional efforts are warranted in 2016-18. These are sites that managers believe will be fine on their own, but it's possible some may need active revegetation.

Daniel said he believes the partnership did a remarkable job this year dealing with challenges including major floods and the government sequester.

Daniel discussed when the partnership will shift from active to less-intensive management. The Tres Rio Field Office is already starting to make that shift. In other places it will happen later. It is projected to happen in most places by 2017. The exceptions are some private lands and individual sites that need special management.

Tim asked about the shape and structure of long-term efforts. Will monitoring and maintenance be done together? He said there will probably be more-intensive efforts initially that taper off. The structure drives the funding.

Daniel said there are many issues involved such as how many people will be needed. The Tres Rios FO has shown what can be done with a three-person team. Daniel said Amanda Clements of the BLM Uncompahgre FO and Peter Mueller will be co-leading a group that takes on that issue.

Fundraising outlook and strategies: Kristen Jespersen of the Tamarisk Coalition, co-chair of the Funding Subcommittee, gave a PowerPoint presentation about funding as follows, noting that all figures are estimates:

From 2008 through 2013, the partnership has raised about \$3.9 million from the following sources:

- Walton Family Foundation – 38%
- BLM – 23%
- State and local agencies – 19%
- Other nonprofits – 20%

These figures don't include in-kind contributions because such tracking is very difficult.

Marilyn Kastens of S.M. Stoller Corp., a contractor with the Department of Energy, said it is important to note that the DOE is another federal agency that has provided funding.

Kristen said some of this funding is expected to disappear, leaving 37 percent of the total. She discussed the projected budget for 2014-15 as follows, taking into account the cost of implementation and monitoring:

| <u>2014</u> | | <u>2015</u> |
|-------------|---|-------------|
| \$813,689 | Cost of implementation and monitoring | \$809,650 |
| \$463,000 | Funds confirmed raised | \$128,000 |
| \$337,960 | Pending funding | \$252,960 |
| \$112,729 | Projected deficit | \$428,690 |
| \$350,689 | Deficit if pending funds are not received | \$681,650 |

She said funding for 2014 has been secured from the Walton Family Foundation, Colorado Water Conservation Board, BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Hendricks Charitable Foundation. Funding for 2015 has been secured from the CWCB and BLM. Applications for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Pulling Together Grant, Colorado State Forest Service's State Forestry Grant, and Colorado Collaborates grant were turned down. Funding for 2015 is pending from the WFF and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Regarding the 2016-18 budgets, the projected cost of monitoring and maintenance is about \$150,000 per year, for a total of \$450,000, although more may be needed. No funds have been confirmed yet. Kristen said funding needs could total \$2 million to \$3 million for coming years, so the Funding Subcommittee has been pursuing long-term strategies, including:

- Develop a funding plan
- Ask BLM to replenish assistance agreements
- Work with Partners for Fish and Wildlife to renew Species Conservation Trust Fund monies
- Work with foundations to create an endowment or a place to fund
- Solicit major donations and leverage them through the fund

Next steps:

- Firm up budget estimates for 2014-18
- Meet with department heads, e.g., the BLM state director
- Apply for traditional and new grants, e.g., Daniels Fund, Desert Ecosystems Analysis and Restoration, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, etc.
- Figure out major-donor fundraising strategy
- Recruit more participants for the Funding Subcommittee. Anyone is welcome and it is not necessary to come to every meeting. Anyone interested should contact Kristen or Rusty.
- Anyone who knows of a grant opportunity should bring it forth.

There was consensus to support this direction.

Tim said the WFF's funding will not be available indefinitely, so it's critical that the Funding Subcommittee be successful and be very active.

Small-group sessions

Participants broke into small groups to discuss different topics. After finishing discussions, each group reported its takeaways. They were as follows:

▪ Public Awareness Breakout Group:

- Incentive-ize youth participation – school credit, community service, gift cards
- Public create opportunities – get people excited about the area
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Eagle Scout project
- Capacity, VISTA – local recruitment via volunteer projects
- Strategize outreach to higher-ups to increase funding
- Home Depot, etc., volunteer work
- Re-energize counties (weed managers)
- Letter-writing to landowners with county participation
- New partners to increase funding, satisfy outreach/education goals

- Universities – senior thesis projects.....
- Adopt a stretch-type concept, DRBA, VOC, WRV
- Involvement of partners in crew experiences, care, buy-in
- Objective of outreach? Is it funding or simply awareness?

Three key points were:

- Engage strategic partners; re-engage old ones
- Increase our capacity (e.g., universities, VISTA)
- Adopt a project/site

▪ **Monitoring and Maintenance Breakout Group:**

Reviewed existing monitoring efforts:

- Watershed-wide monitoring
- Rapid monitoring
- Dept. of Agriculture monitoring tamarisk leaf-beetle
- Progress reporting GIS-based maps that will inform where maintenance will need to happen

Partners then discussed the different components and phases of implementation work and how the corps-BLM program has been a great tool for much of the maintenance phase. The group discussed developing a strike team to handle both monitoring and maintenance.

Interns will be used this spring with the cottonwood suitability assessment across the river basin; perhaps this could set the precedent for a crew of interns working across the four BLM field offices? Currently, there is too much maintenance work, but perhaps in a couple of years the work would be such that one strike team of interns could handle the entire river. BLM would provide the oversight and supervision, while the corps programs would do the hiring. Given the realities of capacity constraints, some field offices may be able to provide more training and support than others.

There are also opportunities beyond the conservation corps programs to provide interns. If funding is limited, where and how will maintenance be prioritized?

In addition to developing a strike team to address long-term monitoring and maintenance needs, the group also discussed how best to engage other interested groups such as the Dolores River Boating Advocates to address monitoring and maintenance needs. Perhaps interested groups can augment the efforts of the strike team (e.g., with an adopt-a-river type program). Maybe they can help with citizen-science or river-watch-style monitoring, where data could be sent to a central data clearinghouse and displayed on the DRRP website. Monitoring was discussed further: Does watershed-wide monitoring sunset? Could it be stretched out more? Maybe to 5, 10, 20 years?

▪ **Invigorating the Partnership Breakout Group:**

This group discussed some of the challenges of burnout and opportunities for engagement:

- Perhaps recruit a new member to the Core Team?
- With transitions from active and intensive work to monitoring and maintenance, this may require skill sets and talents on the Core Team and subcommittees

- Engagement should be gradual: While working the current players on active, intensive, work, we're starting to reach out to additional people to help with monitoring and maintenance in the coming years
- As we shift to long-term monitoring and maintenance, is our structure of subcommittees appropriate (i.e., do we still need all the subcommittees)? We need to take a hard look and ask, *Is there some re-configuring that needs to happen?*
- In terms of education and outreach, this needs to be stepped up to target city councils, county commissioners, BLM staff
- Outreach needs to be clear (e.g., there are several groups working on the Dolores, which can be confusing in and of itself) and be relevant to target audiences (if talking to a county commissioner, package work by work in that county)
- The story needs to be told to ourselves as well as others; messaging our maintenance should tie back to our focus on success, protecting the investment, and finishing what we started (e.g., it's the right thing to do)
- Perhaps there are corporations looking for ways to support their communities; this sort of fundraising takes time, but may be worth pursuing
- As far as engaging new partners or existing but inactive partners, perhaps one-on-one conversations need to happen. Maybe some need the door opened so they understand where and how they can fit it to the emerging opportunities

▪ **Funding Sub-group:**

- BLM has untapped resources such as the Healthy Lands Initiative - DRRP is being designated an area of focus and we should make sure we tap into this resource.
- DRRP should meet with the UT State Director too.
- The DRRP needs to develop a communications strategy that taps into existing channels (e.g. BLM) to get the word out about the work of the partnership. This strategy will help to reach out to new audiences. We need a prepared slideshow of before and after pictures that partners can use to spread the word.
- The DRRP should organize field trips for the different funding sources/potential donors to get out on the ground and see the nature of the work that is being done.
- The DRRP needs to focus on targeted audiences such as hunters, birders etc. (Intermountain West Joint Venture, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Pheasants Unlimited, etc.)... to solicit interest and investment.
- Need for each partner to have a script so they can speak to the public and donors about the importance of this work.
- Need to solicit ideas of possible donors in the region from the entire partnership - donations are given because of relationships.
- Need to identify corporations and possibly local utility companies that have a stake in the region and might be interested in supporting the DRRP.

Marsha summarized: Overall takeaway themes from the groups were:

- Tell the story in a more strategic way
- Have a message that can lead to awareness and money

- Engage different groups
- Structure might change a bit regarding the web site, subcommittees, etc.
- There is still much enthusiasm for the partnership
- Streamline now while there is still capacity and funding so there is no “cliff”.

Mike said the effort may need to be distilled to see what is more doable, how to create goals and a timeline, and where to find funding. The Core Team could take some next steps.

Peter said in order to raise money the partnership needs to reach out to new audiences, refine its message, and then ask for funding. The story of the partnership is very positive, but the message needs to be consolidated so everyone can tell the same story about how much progress the partnership is making, what is needed to close the gap, etc.

It was agreed that there should be a simple, two-minute message that everyone can use. Different groups can be targeted as necessary, but the message should be consistent. The Core Team will be the “distiller”.

Announcements

- Daniel said the Tamarisk Coalition is playing an active part in the Cross Watershed Network, an emerging meta-partnership of rivers across the arid West and Southwest designed to facilitate the sharing of resources in person and online. The network held a riparian restoration workshop in Cottonwood, Ariz., that was attended by 63 people from five states. Information and ideas were consolidated. Daniel will be sending these out in a newsletter.
- The Tamarisk Coalition will have a research and management conference Feb. 18-20, 2014, in Grand Junction.
- The Tamarisk Coalition is planning a dryland active-revegetation workshop in 2014. Daniel asked whether it should offer a plant-identification/rapid-monitoring training component. There were several comments that plant-identification training is helpful for new crews and seasonals.
- Peter said he would like to do an assessment around herbicide application at the DRRP’s next biannual meeting. TNC would coordinate the work.
- Tim said the WFF is seeking a full-time foundation employee to replace him and some of the work done by Margaret Bowman. He is transitioning out of his current job to retirement. They hope to have someone hired by March, and that person will transition with them. Tim said he believes the new person needs to be from the Colorado River watersheds. Marsha thanked him and said he and the WFF have been so helpful, such great advocates and advisors.
- Sparky said for four years he has been living this project and he is tired, but this is a big project and a lot of good work has been done, so everyone should hang in there.