

Dolores River Restoration Partnership: ~Core Team Winter Retreat~

Monday, January 27th, 2014 from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Desired Outcomes

- Consensus around key needs and strategies for transitioning into the long-term monitoring & maintenance phase
- Confirmation of direction, next steps, and timelines

Attendees: Julie Knudson, Rusty Lloyd, Kristen Jespersen, and Daniel Oppenheimer (Tamarisk Coalition); Mike Wight (Southwest Conservation Corps); Sue Bellagamba & Peter Mueller (The Nature Conservancy); and Marsha Porter-Norton (facilitator)

The Core Team of the DRRP met in Grand Junction on the 27th of January for a one-day retreat.

Purpose of Retreat: *This is the time to think about the mandates from our November 2013 biannual partnership meeting: specifically, what do we need to do to transition the partnership into long term-monitoring and maintenance?*

Actions:

- 1) *Overall Transition Plan:* The “Transition Plan” will be drafted.
- 2) *Entering, Planning, Funding and Carrying out the Monitoring and Maintenance (M&M) Phase:*
 - Continue to refine M&M numbers.
 - As part of M&M phase, the group will continue to assess how M&M will be carried out including the “strike team” concept or use of interns and/or other means. It is important to work with each BLM Field Office. (Comment: Mike noted that using interns is time intensive – more intensive than a team of Corps Members –and asked everyone to keep this in mind.)
 - Gain an accurate fundraising goal to include costs of M&M and DRRP capacity necessary in this new phase. This may include hiring a development and communication expert (s) or otherwise securing these resources through existing partners and supporters.
- 3) *Telling our Story and Strategic Communications:* Complete a Communications Plan focused initially on fundraising. Sue will ask Peter to solicit PR help from TNC with a goal of developing a Communications/PR plan asap. If this doesn’t work, the group will need to figure out how to secure professional Communications/PR help for a plan and may need to raise funds to hire someone. The Communications Plan needs to include all audiences but initially it will be drafted with those who might partner around resource development.
- 4) *Capacity:* Continue to have the conversation about capacity in the M&M phase; the structure of the DRRP and if any tweaks needs to be done; and the role and abilities of all the CT members and their organizations as well as the larger DRRP and possibly new partners.
- 5) *Spring DRRP Meeting:* Bring this work, framed up, to the spring DRRP meeting (April). DO and PM will vet ideas for April meeting dates with Field Offices.

- 6) *Walton Family Foundation*: A response to the recent Walton Family Foundation phone call around measuring success and their consultants' reports will be formulated.

Key findings from November partnership biannual meeting: Marsha summed up what she heard at the full DRRP meeting as well as from the survey. She encouraged everyone to also state their perceptions.

Sum: There is lots of pride (and some fatigue) with this partnership. People feel good about coming to meetings and feel **very** good about the progress made to date. Other:

- Tweaks to DR-RAP goals were approved
- Protecting the investment (M&M) for the long-haul was agreed upon as the focus moving forward into the monitoring and maintenance phase
- We need to better tell our story in strategic ways focused on specific outcomes; we need to better communicate results (i.e., a mandate around communications, internally & externally came out of the four small groups held in the afternoon of the full DRRP meeting)
- Survey results: re-engage partners and find new ones for M&M; and other ideas/themes were raised too
- Developing a new funding plan for transition into M&M
- Engaging young people and stakeholders in the watershed was important

The Path(s) Forward:

Communications: The group discussed communications in general and the mandate from the larger DRRP to “tell our story better.” There are various issues in play:

- a) Our story is changing and the messaging need to be honed/refined in the M&M phase; (comment: a ‘good story’ relates to our lives...it focuses on people.) (comment: our message in this new phase isn’t around M&M...it should be around ‘protection of the investment’, ‘we are taking care of a restored river corridor’ and ‘reaching the finish line’ and ‘we are engaging youth and communities in doing this’we cannot focus on the mechanics of M&M because people’s eyes glaze over...that topic can be un-interesting for some)
- b) We need to work on this collectively, not just in the Outreach & Education Subcommittee and it may be time to assess the role and function of the O/E Subcommittee;
- c) We need professional communications/PR help ; and
- d) There are many audiences...what we emphasize with funders may be different than land owners and different than elected officials so, there are a variety of stories to be told – each with their own objectives. (comments: we need to answer: who are the DRRP’s customers and what are their needs/interests/perceptions? We have a long list of customers and what they will respond to could be very different than what we think they need to know (i.e., not everyone thinks like us)...We might need 5 scripts, and then a crisp elevator speech than synthesizes these scripts.)

Initial objectives for our communications plans were outlined as follows:

1. Create a legacy for DRRP’s work / share lessons learned with other partnerships
2. Increase funding capacity (first priority in a phased communication plan)
3. Improve restoration work/on the ground achievements
4. Internal motivation/keeping everyone on the same page
5. Foster political support from decision makers (which can also tie to fundraising)
6. Applaud/celebrate partners

The group brainstormed our audiences (this list will be given to whomever does the PR plan):

- #1: People/organizations who can give funding
- #2 Influential decision makers (be strategic about this)...to build political will, keep momentum up
- #3 Internal communications for the DRRP to stay motivated and to keep on the same page
- #4 Focus in on 3-4 key audiences: people who live near and care about and take care of the river and surrounding lands; youth and young people ; telling our stories to other partnerships; and like-minded groups

Steps for moving forward:

1. Developing a Communications Plan directly tied to fundraising initially. Do this ASAP.
2. Capacity: The group decided to ask TNC to help us. If this doesn't come to fruition, the DRRP may need to hire a communications/PR consultant to do a plan. The main point is that we need to dramatically step up communications; we need capacity to do it; and we need to communicate very strategically in this phase with an overall goal of securing resources (money, political/public will for the M&M phase). We also need to keep ourselves and the DRRP motivated. HOW this all gets done is a process.
3. Two key themes that seem to resonate across all audiences are: the youth/young people's engagement and progress in addressing an environmental or resource issue (aka "we have restored a river corridor)
4. The idea of targeted videos was raised. For example, we might have a generic video; one focused on the role of the BLM; or one focused on young people/corps members
5. Everyone was asked to review the existing O/E Plan the subcommittee developed several years ago (comment: Mike said that was a very good plan but the O/E Subcommittee has lacked capacity to carry it out fully)

[Parking Lot Issues and How to Handle Them](#)

The DRRP has brainstormed a list of "other" issues to work on. This has been done over several DRRP meetings and in the survey. However, at the last DRRP meeting, there was consensus to focus on M&M phase as a priority. Ancillary topics are ones we'd like to be informed about and will try, when possible/appropriate, to connect people with other ongoing initiatives, but we are not the DRD.

[What will our transition plan look like?](#)

The group disused the M&M phase and the conversation led to realizing that a detailed transition plan needs to be developed. The group discussed this at length and decided the plan will have several components:

- **Updated DR-RAP Goals:** approved at the November 2013 biannual meeting
- **Monitoring & Maintenance Strategies:** preliminary planning through 2015 complete, initial strategies (e.g. using interns, SWAT teams, volunteer groups) already discussed at recent Implementation Subcommittee meeting
- **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 (e.g. so we know when we're done)
- **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)

We will have a draft plan sent to the partnership to discuss at our spring partnership meeting, then address the feedback/comments and send final plan to partnership and WFF in May 2014. **TNC, TC, SCC will work together to develop this plan.**

Funding: looking at the Straw man

- With funder fatigue and declining agency budgets, there is a need to diversify our funding
- We have struggled with how much we need to raise, but are continuing to refine these numbers
- Communications is integral to implementing the funding straw man (see above)
- Given our conversation about communications planning, we may need to re-visit the proposed timeline in the straw man document (e.g. identify what we can do before we have a communications plan v. what comes after, e.g. in 2015)
- The group discussed securing a Development Director to focus on the non-grant fundraising areas (e.g. donors and corporations). There wasn't full agreement on this and everyone felt more information was needed (e.g. how much would this cost and who could do it and how has this worked for other groups?). However, the group did agree the capacity for this resource development function needs to be dramatically stepped up. Mike will talk to Charlotte Overby who serves in a similar position of fundraising for a broad collaborative.
- Rusty said that he feels the Funding Subcommittee can handle the grants. However, developing a broad-scale donor program that includes reaching out to corporation and business, and working through community foundation(s), is going to take a lot more capacity than we currently have. A VISTA could help but probably the person implementing this new donor campaign needs to be experienced. This is a "to be continued" discussion. The group discussed the amount necessary to potentially hire a development person. There was not a firm number agreed upon due to a need for more information especially how much would be raised.
- The group also discussed how much would need to be raised from donors and corporations. Again, a number is not firm at this time. It could be ~\$300,000 or it could be much more.

Long-Term Monitoring and Maintenance:

- What do we want out of monitoring in the long-term and who is going to do that? For instance, do we want the interns to do rapid monitoring or land managers or citizen scientists in 2017?
- Challenge of interns and strike teams: concern that in the future, organizations like TC and SCC do not have the capacity to make all this happen; would the BLM be willing to be the project sponsor?
- What model should we aim for? Can a team of interns be shared across field offices; if so, who supervises that? What if we train a team project leader (a Justin Marler) and they can rove across units?
- Based on this vision for long-term monitoring and maintenance, do we want to meet in 2017? Are you still willing to make presentations and open to learning from each other?

- Next steps: Develop the M&M plan as part of the “Transition Plan” mentioned above.

Governance:

We now have a better idea of what we are doing, what our needs are, and that the partnership (from the survey) wants to continue the partnership for 5-7 years.

For our next team call, we will consider: Do we still have the right structure? Does this still work for transitioning into M&M? What sort of energy, after 2015, are we willing to commit to fundraising for our own capacity?

What does the core team look like for 2017?

Spring partnership meeting in first half of April in Moab between 7th – 11th (Jeep Safari and Spring Break). Daniel and Peter will vet ideas on dates with the field offices.