



A PUBLIC - PRIVATE COLLABORATION

DRRP's First Annual Progress Report: Celebrating Achievements from 2009–2012

Partnership Overview

A testament to the diversity of riparian ecosystems found on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, the Dolores River winds down from its headwaters in the San Juan Mountains of western Colorado through deep canyons and broad valleys to join the Colorado River in eastern Utah.

Along its journey, the Dolores River crosses two states, four Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field office jurisdictions, six different counties, and numerous private landholdings. 175 miles of the Dolores River riparian corridor are impacted by tamarisk and other invasive plants that adversely affect the diversity and function of riparian habitat.

To address the impacts of invasive riparian plants, a group of stakeholders initiated the Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) in 2009. As a public-private collaboration, the DRRP shares a common set of goals and principles for restoring the riparian corridor of the Dolores River. Trust and good working relationships tie the partnership together and provide the foundation for decision-making.

While we have had many successes on the ground, perhaps the greatest achievement has been the partnership itself. In 2009 we realized that a piecemeal approach toward large landscape restoration along the Dolores was going to be insufficient. Collaboration and shared decision-making across public and private land parcels was necessary to achieve our goals of restoring health to streamside habitat. Today, the DRRP is comprised of local, state, and federal agencies, universities, not-for-profit organizations, landowners, foundations, local businesses and volunteers, all working towards a shared vision of a Dolores River riparian corridor that is more naturally functioning, self-sustaining, diverse, and resilient.



A Conservation Corps crew controls and piles tamarisk along the Big Gypsum stretch of the Dolores River

Progress on ecological goals to increase sustainable, healthy riparian plant communities

Since 2009, three different conservation corps programs, 14 private landowners, countless public land managers, and several independent contractors have collectively achieved great results on the ground. Of the 1,900 riparian acres prioritized for active tamarisk treatment, over 600 acres have already met management objectives, which is to say that native or desirable plants are restored in these sites to the extent that, assuming appropriate long-term maintenance by the private landowner or public land manager, it is reasonably foreseeable that plant succession will progress toward DRRP’s long-term vision.

Restoration activities have been conducted on 59% of the areas prioritized for active treatments, with initial treatments of tamarisk anticipated to be completed by 2015. Altogether, restoration activities, including tamarisk and Siberian elm removal, spraying of Russian knapweed, and planting or seeding of native plant species that may occur on a given project site, amount to work on 2,544 acres. This does not include the 1,400 acres of riparian habitat designated for passive treatment, in which the tamarisk leaf-beetle, a biological control agent, has substantially defoliated tamarisk.

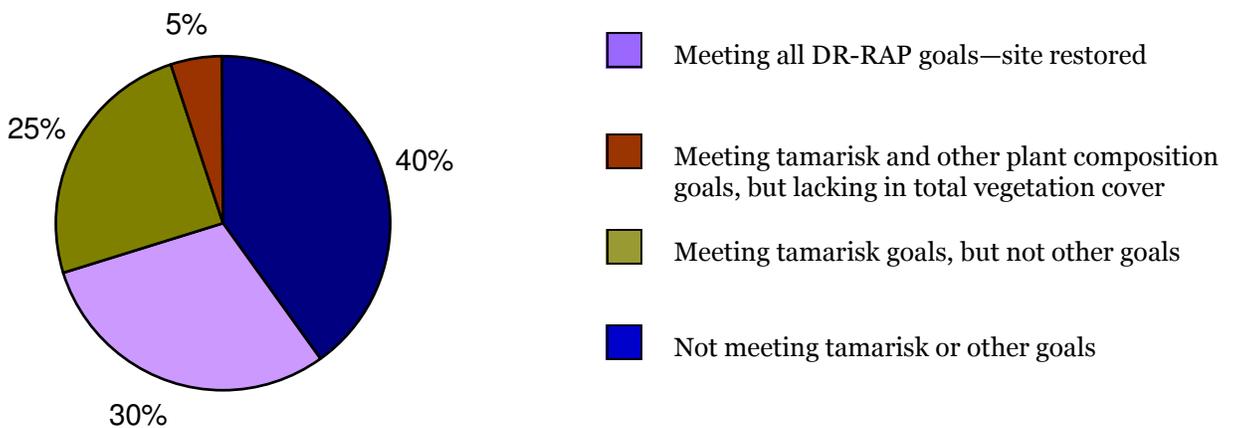


“I’m continuously amazed at how many people care about restoring the vegetation and habitat along the Dolores and am very hopeful about getting my property back to a vital state.”
 — Shane Burton, private landowner, Gateway, CO



“The focus on landscape restoration coupled with youth engagement makes the DRRP a unique opportunity to really feel that we are making a difference for the ecological community and our social communities as well—it doesn’t get any better than that!”
 — Catherine Robertson, Grand Junction-BLM, retired

2012 Watershed Wide Monitoring: Progress Towards Meeting DR-RAP’s Ecological Goals on Representative Sites with Active Treatment



Striving towards our social and economic goals to support youth conservation corps programs and create local jobs

Since our very inception as a partnership, the DRRP has recognized the importance of supporting the next generation of stewards in our restoration work to enhance their understanding and respect for public land management. We have done so through a variety of training and educational opportunities.

From chainsaw and first aid certification, to training in herbicide application, riparian ecology, plant identification, and land management, conservation corps crews comprised of youth and young adults have gained important job skills and exposure to conservation ethics through project work. With nearly \$75,000 of AmeriCorps Education Awards earned and several internships with the BLM fulfilled, these young adults are taking active steps towards civic leadership to serve in their communities long after their work on the Dolores has been completed.

Cultivating employment opportunities in our local communities is a staple of our economic goal. Whether it is the dozens of Conservation Corps crew members, the 11 interns hired and trained with advanced certifications, the 8 independent contractors that have either conducted invasive weed control activities or implemented monitoring protocols, or the artist, carpenter, and welder helping develop an interpretive trail in Gateway, CO, we continue to increase employment opportunities and invest in the local economies based in the Dolores River Basin.

In addition to hiring locally, the DRRP has also made strides to bring visitors to the Dolores River Basin. Fourteen river-side camp sites once overtaken by weeds are now accessible to rafters and other recreationists; more than 20 miles of the meandering river once hidden by tamarisk are now revealed to tourists driving along the scenic byway; and an interpretive trail scheduled to be opened in spring 2014, which features signage about the DRRP, geology, flora, fauna, and land use history, will provide an attractive and educational experience for passersby in Gateway, CO.

"The broadened perspective that I developed from the project has given me a greater sense of efficacy and a thirst for learning more about conservation work. I was lucky to land an internship position with the BLM through the Southwest Conservation Corps, which will allow me to continue working on the Dolores River Restoration Project. I am very excited to be able to monitor what we have already done and contribute more to an effort that I believe will better myself and the community and environment in which I live."

— J. Aaron Lewis, Southwest Conservation Corps

DRRP Corps Statistics Per Year

2009

Opportunities created for crew work	12
Hours of service	3,840
Hours of education & training/participant	122

2010

Opportunities created for crew work	40
Hours of service	12,800
Hours of education & training/participant	126

2011

Opportunities created for crew work	32
Hours of service	10,240
Hours of education & training/participant	128

2012

Opportunities created for crew work	44
Hours of service	14,080
Hours of education & training/participant	130

TOTALS

Opportunities created for crew work	128
Hours of service	40,960
Average hours of education & training (per participant)	126.5



Adaptive management goals for learning from and improving upon our experience

After three years of conducting restoration, we continue to improve our strategies for restoring riverside habitat. Learning from our experience, be it to improve our financial efficiencies or to bolster the survival rates of tree plantings, provides the basis for our adaptive management goals. Major accomplishments towards our management goal include:

- creating the Implementation Subcommittee in 2012 to share and build on lessons learned;
- applying learning from pilot projects to inform a new “mosaic” tamarisk method for enhancing revegetation potential;
- coordinating numerous site visits to support collective problem solving;
- hosting several workshops on a variety of topics such as sustainable riparian grazing management, revegetation in arid systems, plant identification, and rapid monitoring; and
- enhancing active revegetation by using a range of tools (e.g., water wells, salinity testing, rapid monitoring protocols, polymers, mycorrhizal inoculants, and cattle).



Gary Rushing, of Redvale, Colorado is pictured here with his family and Kubota machine at their home. A contractor for the DRRP, Rushing has completed several seasons of mechanical, tamarisk-control work along the Dolores River.



Learning by doing: Stan Young, pictured above, examines a set of custom teeth he designed based on initial tamarisk work along the Dolores. The enhanced mulching head on his excavator can now more efficiently and effectively mulch large stands of tamarisk.

What's Next

Looking back to 2008, when a partnership was merely an idea and 175 miles of riparian habitat called for restoration, we have come a long way in what we have accomplished and learned. Most of the acres of tamarisk prioritized for active control have been *initially* treated.

As we plan for the future, we will continue working across public and private boundaries to target tamarisk resprouts and secondary weeds as well as to build on initial active revegetation efforts. Concurrently, we will take thoughtful steps to foster and maintain this sustainable partnership: initiating long-term funding processes, building on existing relationships, and planning for long-term monitoring and maintenance to protect our collective investment in the Dolores River Basin.

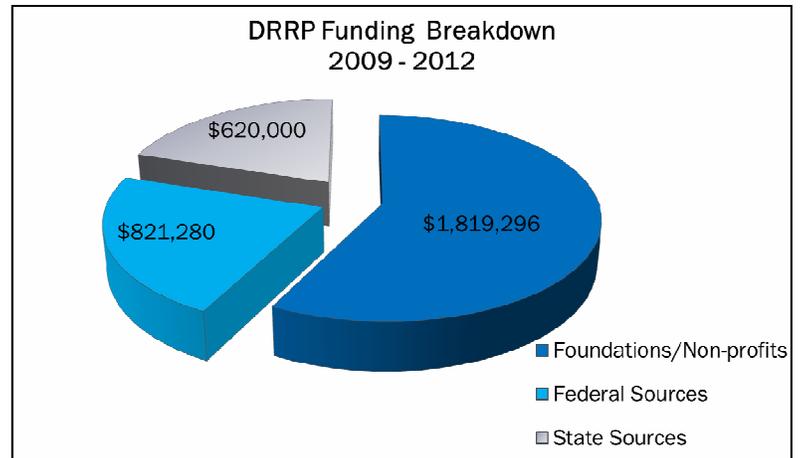
In July of 2012, Dr. Ken Lair met with DRRP land managers and a private landowner to provide technical assistance and initiate conversations with managers on a variety of issues surrounding active revegetation along the Dolores River. The lessons learned during these site visits have been incorporated in a variety of ways into future implementation work.

Here, land managers discuss the challenges and successes from a planting of coyote willow poles, seen in the foreground.



Financial Overview

To fund all the great restoration activities and the capacity needed to support this work, the partnership has placed great value on being targeted and strategic, as well as building and cultivating relationships with foundations, grantors, and corporations who wish to invest in our work. Building off this approach, we have been able to leverage and match additional funds that attract new sources of funds for future fiscal security of the DRRP.



Volunteers have played such a critical role in this partnership. To date, 184 volunteers (ranging in age from 5 – 75) have worked nearly 1,654 hours to harvest and plant 1,600 willows; cage 127 cottonwoods, plant thousands of native plants, and construct a 3,940 foot long interpretive trail. Thank you so much for your enthusiasm, grit, and continued support!

For a complete list of our key partners and to learn more about the DRRP, please visit us at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drrp/> and click on DRRP Partners at the top of the page

Our Sincerest Thanks

This partnership was built on a colossal amount of hard work, trust, and contributions from agencies, businesses, organizations, and individuals.

We want to recognize our many partners and supporters for their contributions of time, thought, funding, and exceptional service. Without your support over the last four years, this partnership would not be where it is today.

Questions?
Contact Daniel Oppenheimer at
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or phone 970-256-7400

DRRP Funding Contributing Partners:

Bureau of Land Management
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund
Colorado River Water Conservation District
Colorado State Forest Service
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
David & Lucile Packard Foundation
El Pomar Foundation
Hendricks Charitable Foundation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Resource Conservation Service
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Partnership for Environmental
Community Action
Partners for Fish and Wildlife
Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative
Walton Family Foundation