

DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Annual Meeting

Nov. 16, 2016

draft – 11 pages

All PowerPoint presentations mentioned in this summary (delineated by a * next to the topic) will be made available at the new DRRP website: drpartnership.org/

Welcome: Joseph Meyer, Colorado Southwest District manager for the Bureau of Land Management, thanked the group for their attendance. He said BLM Colorado's three districts have been reorganized, effective Oct. 1, because they had become unbalanced, with the Northwest District larger than the other two combined. There are still three districts, but the Grand Junction Field Office is now part of the Southwest District instead of the Northwest and the Gunnison Field Office is now part of the Rocky Mountain District. He was district manager for the Northwest in Grand Junction but is now the Southwest manager. He is still working in Grand Junction although his district office is in Montrose. The new boundaries mean the Dolores River in Colorado is entirely in one district, the Southwest. Joseph said he has been in this business 30 years and he cannot bring to mind another partnership that has lasted as long as this one with so many different organizations involved. He said the Partnership is doing good work on the ground and his office is pleased to be part of the effort.

Agenda: The agenda was approved with no changes.

Announcements: Facilitator Marsha Porter-Norton noted the large number of attendees at today's meeting and the presence of representatives from the Colorado Department of Transportation and BLM Fire Crews. She provided a brief background on the DRRP. Its vision is: "The Dolores River watershed is dominated by native vegetation, where the threats from tamarisk and other associated invasive species have been mitigated and the riparian areas of the watershed continue to become more naturally functioning, self-sustaining, diverse, and resilient over time." The Partnership involves five counties, four BLM field offices, two states, and numerous NGOs. It has been in existence since 2009 and is currently in the transition phase, as much of the initial restoration treatments have been completed. The Partnership now meets once a year.

The Partnership has agreed on three strategies going forward:

- New restoration projects
- Maintaining and taking care of this shared investment with existing restoration sites
- Fostering a longstanding culture of riparian stewardship

Marsha recommended reading the 2015 annual report, which was available in hard copy at the meeting, for a good overview of the Partnership's work. A more formal, signed MOU among numerous parties is available on the website. (It was noted that this is a new URL.)

Implementing the 2015 Communications Plan*

▪ Daniel Oppenheimer of the Tamarisk Coalition gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2015 Communications Plan.

He said the Partnership excels at completing work on the ground but historically did not excel at communicating this work to partners, decision-makers, potential funders, and people

throughout the river basin. In 2013 the Core Team was tasked with developing a communications plan. They brought the draft to the full DRRP and it was approved in 2015.

Priorities include:

- Obtain financial support from new and existing funders
- Bolster a lasting constituency of local stewards and advocates for the Dolores River
- Share lessons learned to enhance restoration outside the river basin
- Keep DRRP partners motivated and engaged.

In 2015, the DRRP completed all 23 of its prioritized action items. In 2016 it completed 17 of 18.

In 2016, the Core Team contracted with Third Principle of Denver, a marketing agency that works with nonprofits and foundations, to develop a brand and materials. These materials include a new logo and URL, brochure, rack card, sticker, decal, banner, and brand guide, and templates for the annual report, newsletter, and PowerPoints.

This winter the Core Team will reassess and update the Communications Plan and capacity needs.

Discussion:

A question was asked about offering group river trips. Daniel said the Partnership did organize a short trip for thanking funders. He believes that is a very good strategy.

It was asked what goal was *not* accomplished in 2016. Daniel said the Partnership is trying to diversity funding, especially private funding, and was hoping by 2016 to connect with Chambers of Commerce. That has not happened yet but it remains a goal.

Other comments were:

- Four or five years ago, this group seemed to be looking for an exit strategy. Now it appears that DRRP has totally shifted gears and has a long-term vision. DRRP is not just appealing national-level funders. It seems to be committed to the long term.
- Zeb Miracle of Gateway Resort said he has been in Gateway only a couple of years, but already he sees the vast change in the landscape resulting from DRRP's work, and it has been amazing. Three or four weeks ago the resort worked with the Partnership on a program and did a planting of 30 trees and shrubs with the Gateway School. Zeb said the team excelled at the educational component and he was impressed with everything from top to bottom.
- Marsha said for her one of the lessons learned is the value of listening to people. The result of having so many hands involved over time has been a good product.

Southwest Conservation Corps Strike Team report

SCC crew leader Emily Kasyon and Dallas Fitzgibbon and Colton Klemperer, interns with SCC, discussed project work, monitoring, and personal development.

Emily said she began working on the river last year as a member of a chains crew. She loved the work and wanted to come back. She was hired as an intern for the strike team and was promoted when there was an opening. She has earned her Colorado certified applicator's license. The experience has been great for her personal development.

Emily gave a brief synopsis of work done this year. The first two months of the season, the team did rapid monitoring out of the Tres Rios Field Office, evaluating the makeup of vegetation cover (percent tamarisk, native, non-native, etc.). They mapped invasive secondary weeds and examined passive recruitment of cottonwoods and willows. They also did cottonwood monitoring. This year an average of about 50 percent of cottonwoods remain alive, a good overall success rate, although the percentage varied by site. When the spraying season arrived, the crew did considerable work on Disappointment Creek. They have also been working on a site at Bedrock and have worked with Marilyn Kastens of the Navarro Association on a stretch of river in Slickrock.

Emily said the team will finish the season in mid-December and will continue to spray in coordination with the Tres Rios FO, depending on weather. They are also finishing paperwork and working on a project to compile all monitoring data from past years into a single report.

Colton said he graduated from Fort Lewis College two years ago as an environmental studies major. He said it is difficult to find employment with a government agency, but this project has served as a steppingstone for him. He likes working with the BLM and learning about natural resources, and a side benefit is being paid to go camping.

Dallas said she has a degree from the University of Georgia with a major in general biology. It is difficult to find a job in the Atlanta area, so she sought out the conservation corps and is glad she did. She had never traveled to the West before and didn't know what a cottonwood was. She has loved the work and finds it unlike anything she has ever done before.

Mike Wight of the SCC gave more details about the effort to compile monitoring data into a comprehensive report. A few years ago it was decided to monitor every site that was treated. As of this year work has been completed on 98 percent of the total polygons within the 175-mile river corridor. They have a three-year picture of the status of the vegetation in the corridor. Once the SCC receives data from the Grand Junction FO, there will be a full picture of the watershed as a whole at every site. They will be sharing this as soon as it is completed.

Jenny Fausey of the Western Conservation Corps said WCCC held a joint training with SCC in September. Her crew started cutting tamarisk at Gateway at Salt Creek and relished the work.

Others praised the efforts of the strike teams.

Funding Update*

Kristen Jespersen of the Tamarisk Coalition, chair of the Funding Subcommittee, gave a PowerPoint presentation on funding. She said fundraising is one of the many tiers of stewardship.

2016 in review: The Partnership spent at least \$739,500 in 2016. In years past the amount has been upwards of \$1.1 million. This change reflects a shift in the type of work being done. The biggest source of funding was the BLM, but funding came from a broad variety of sources. At present just 5 percent of funding is from the Walton Family Foundation, vs. 50 percent some years ago.

Daniel noted that this report focused only on *cash* contributions, but there have been tens of thousands of dollars of in-kind contributions from everyone in this room as well.

2017 funding snapshot to date: Kristen said the total need for 2017 is \$649,860. Of that, \$374,200 has been secured. That leaves a shortfall of anywhere from \$0 to \$277,600, depending on the outcome of pending requests. The Partnership is reaching a point where types of funding that have been relied on in the past are no longer available because the work DRRP is doing now doesn't always mesh with the purposes of many grants.

The future (2018 – 2020): Kristen said \$1.07 million needs to be raised by 2020. Of that, only about \$143,444 is pending, and nothing is secured. The Funding Subcommittee is mulling strategies to meet that gap.

Current funding: Funding is currently coming from the following types of sources:

- Federal
- State and local
- Private
- Walton Family Foundation

Kristen said ideally the types of funding would be evenly balanced among state, federal, in-kind and private sources. One goal is to expand the private "slice of the pie".

Restore Our Rivers: Kristen discussed the Restore Our Rivers campaign, a \$2.4 million fundraising effort coordinated by the Tamarisk Coalition. The goal is to help river-restoration partnerships overcome their historic over-reliance on public funding and help ensure their long-term viability. The Tamarisk Coalition wants to build relationships to raise private money for nine such river-restoration partnerships, including DRRP, throughout a sizable portion of the western United States. The \$2.4 million goal includes matching funds from each of the partnerships. The campaign has raised about \$1.06 million so far as a whole, including from the partnerships. The monies will be distributed in March of 2017 and March of 2018.

Kristen said the other piece of the equation is to build the partnerships' comfort level and capacity in fundraising even though this may not be their area of expertise.

DRRP's current private fundraising strategies:

- Apply to private sources (Telluride Foundation and National Turkey Federation)
- Do outreach to donor prospects (the Partnership hosted a boat tour)
- Ask for support from local governments (a grant was received from the Southwest Water Conservation District)
- Develop and distribute outreach materials (brochures, rack cards, etc.)

Future strategies:

- Continue to identify donor prospects
- Host outreach lunches in Durango (with local philanthropists)
- Invite partners to make a voluntary personal contribution (to the Tamarisk Coalition or via the Combined Federal Campaign)

- Build capacity (identify possible local ambassadors, engage partners and recruit new people to the Funding Subcommittee).

Kristen said anyone who has suggestions for potential donors should inform someone with the campaign. She also suggested that DRRP participants donate personally to the campaign, or recruit friends and family, because that shows support for the effort. She said the Tamarisk Coalition and The Nature Conservancy (but not DRRP) are part of the Combined Federal Campaign. Anyone wanting to contribute can donate to TC or TNC and earmark the money for DRRP.

Here's How to Help - Per Kristen's presentation at the partnership meeting here are some tools for getting more involved in DRRP's fundraising.

- Join the Funding Subcommittee by emailing Kristen at kjespersen@tamariskcoalition.org if you are interested in being a part of the Funding Subcommittee, which meets 3 to 4 times a year over the phone.
- Help us identify prospects - think about people you know personally, work with on the river, rotary clubs, local foundations, etc... that might be interested in donating or getting more involved in DRRP. Send names and contact info to Daniel or Kristen.
- Give a voluntary personal contribution (every bit counts) to the DRRP and/or Restore Our Rivers - here are some ways to give:
 - Schedule a donation on Colorado Gives Day (12/6) by going [here](#).
 - Include Tamarisk Coalition in your Charitable Federal or Charitable State Campaign giving lists.
 - Donate to Tamarisk Coalition after 12/6 by going [here](#).
- Listen to some of the Restore Our Rivers fundraising training webinars:
 - <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3jKixlZJr0mRFdqRmhqSFNycnc>
 - <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3jKixlZJr0mUFZ6ak51bUo2N1U>
- Reach out to friends and family about DRRP using new brochures etc...
- Help organize outreach events such as DRRP awareness lunches, floats, etc....

Progress of the NEW DRRP Stewardship Subcommittee*

Celene Hawkins of The Nature Conservancy gave a PowerPoint presentation on community stewardship. She started with TNC in January and has been working with the Core Team, Marsha and Daniel, and others.

This community stewardship effort was identified in November 2015 as one of three priorities. The Core Team held a meeting in March of this year. Realizing there were not many educators and outreach experts on the team, they did not believe they had the expertise to draw up an effective plan. They decided to organize a forum on community stewardship. This was held in June 2016 at the Four Corners School of Outdoor Education.

Objectives of the forum were:

- Develop a shared understanding of existing stewardship efforts in the Dolores River Basin
- Refine the goals and objectives for a Partnership Community Stewardship Program

- Begin to develop appropriate structure for the stewardship program.

At the forum:

- Key leaders were identified (University of Utah Rio Mesa Center, Four Corners School)
- Capacity and interests of partners were identified
- Draft goals and strategies were developed
- The Partnership’s Community Stewardship Subcommittee was established
- Participants agreed to conduct a survey to help with stewardship scoping.

The subcommittee has had two other meetings since then. At least 14 different organizations have actively participated and there is interest from 10 other organizations.

The staff is actively recruiting participants. Their next meeting is January 2017.

Accomplishments this year:

- Formed the committee and identified champions and capacity
- Developed draft vision, goals and strategies
- Developed draft approach of short-term stewardship activities with a 1-3-year timeline
- Held a stewardship day with the Gateway School.

Draft Vision for Stewardship:

Celene said the draft vision is “a shared passion and commitment that sustains long-term, local restoration of the Dolores River riparian corridor”.

Draft Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1 – Foster greater public appreciation for and civic discourse around the riparian corridor
 Goal 2 – Sustain a culture of collaborative restoration based on local values and restoration needs

Structure within the subcommittee:

Celene said there are four working groups as follows:

- **Group 1: Public Events**
- **Group 2: Monitoring & Citizen Science** (will coordinate with the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee)
- **Group 3: Education** (focused on developing materials and distributing this educational information through existing channels and networks)
- **Group 4: Agency Engagement** (how to maintain agency institutional memory/support and provide public agency partners with the tools they need to steward public lands).

Overall structure of the stewardship effort:

Celene said a question arose early in this effort that was discussed by the full subcommittee. The effort being planned here may be long-term. She said right now it is a good fit for this to be occurring within a subcommittee, but in coming years it may be necessary to revisit the question of long-term structure. Will the Partnership continue doing monitoring, maintenance and community stewardship, or will it start looking at alternative structures? This is something to flag for the future. This seems to include a timeline beyond 2020.

Daniel noted that there is an MOU with 30 or more signatories that is in effect from 2015-2020.

What's next?

Celene said the Stewardship Subcommittee will continue to recruit for ideas and participation.

- Refine structural questions around the stewardship effort
- Continue to develop short-term and long-term activities
- Develop metrics for success
- Draft the DRRP Community Stewardship Plan.

Discussion: David Graf asked about outreach to counties. Daniel said each county's involvement with riparian restoration work has been different, but all are involved. All the counties have expressed interest in being part of this Stewardship Subcommittee but he is not sure how each will be involved.

David clarified that he was wondering how to elevate awareness of DRRP to the county commission level, as those boards could be valuable community partners.

Rusty said the Partnership has done a decent job reaching out to commissioners. County commissions are concerned about economic development, and the Partnership uses local labor, including the youth corps. DRRP has done \$6 million to \$7 million worth of work, not to mention in-kind work, and it is incumbent on this Partnership to disseminate that information to the right people.

Daniel said the Core Team recently realized the need to obtain letters of support from federal and state legislators when applying for grants.

Ron Mabry, San Miguel County weed manager, said he gives his commissioners an update every year. Tim Higgs of the Grand County, Utah, weed department said he has spoken about the Partnership to his board and conveyed that this was a good group to be part of.

Marsha summarized that this effort is shaping up. The Stewardship Plan is a living document and is in process. It will be disseminated to the partnership along with the meeting notes. Anyone with comments should send them to her, Daniel or Celene.

Initial Findings from Dolores River Bird Monitoring*

Daniel said the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (formerly the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory) conducted some monitoring this spring. Their representatives were not able to be here to present their findings, so John Toolen, ecologist with the BLM Uncompahgre FO, will give them. Daniel noted that John brought this opportunity to work with the Bird Conservancy to the DRRP a year ago.

John gave a PowerPoint presentation titled "Bird Monitoring along the Dolores: Initial Findings". He said a year and a half ago the possibility of work with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies was discussed as a way to understand how restoration efforts will affect bird communities, to gain information on species distribution, and to inform future restoration work. The BLM provided some funding.

John discussed monitoring design and methods. He said the current IMBCR (Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions) extent includes all lands in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, and portions in 10 other states.

Goals of the project:

- Investigate how birds are impacted by the present of tamarisk along the Colorado portion of the Dolores River
- Investigate how tamarisk removal affects avian populations
- Determine how quickly bird and vegetation communities respond following restoration efforts.

Initial results:

The Bird Conservancy surveyed 51 of the intended 60 grid cells along three strata along the Dolores River this spring and summer. They recorded 2,260 individuals representing 96 species. Colorado's total bird species list is approximately 460, including migratories.

John said 22 of the 60 grid cells are control areas where no restoration was done.

He said 19 of 29 planned sites were surveyed within the tamarisk-removal area that did not have active revegetation, and found 81 species were found. Ten of 11 planned grid cells with active revegetation efforts were surveyed, and 60 species were found. John said this may sound as though revegetation is not helping avian species, but this was just the first year of revegetation, so it is too early to draw conclusions.

He said some species of greatest conservation need were detected. One surprise was that many yellow-breasted chats were found in all three types of survey areas. They were by far the most abundant species.

Next steps will be data analysis and sharing; in-depth discussion at the winter subcommittee meeting; and spring 2017 monitoring. The project is scheduled to continue for five years.

Daniel said the Bird Conservancy has prepared an interim report that will be sent to the Science and Monitoring and the Implementation subcommittees. Others who want to receive it should contact him.

Discussion: It was asked whether this information is being disseminated to the agencies. Daniel said there are people from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies on the subcommittees, but he will check.

It was asked whether it is too early to draw conclusions from the data. John said yes. He said some species such as warbling vireos require full-canopy trees for habitat. Full-canopy cottonwoods are still several decades away in the restored areas. However, grassland nesting birds such as horned larks are probably doing well at present. As time goes on, species that thrive in mixed grass and shrubs will move in. He said when you start with nothing, it takes time to see results.

It was asked if there are plans to quantify the vegetation structure and similar factors. John said he is not sure.

Restoration Work*

Daniel gave a PowerPoint presentation on 2016 restoration work and the future. He said these are estimates of what the Partnership expects to accomplish, not precise numbers. He said 2016 was another big year, though not as big as 2015.

2016 accomplishments included:

- Initial removal of tamarisk and olive – 130 acres. There were five crews from the conservation corps working this year.
- Active revegetation – 60 acres. Daniel commented that one reason why there may be fewer bird species present on sites where active revegetation is occurring than on sites where it isn't is that sites where revegetation is scheduled aren't in as good a condition as the others. He said 26 volunteers came to Bedrock for three days and did broadcasting of native grasses. DRRP also worked with student groups from different schools, and SCC did plantings with Amanda's crew.
- Treatment of tamarisk resprouts and Russian knapweed/secondary weeds – more than 500 acres.

Biological control agents:

- The Uncompahgre FO and Palisade insectary introduced Russian knapweed gall midges, a biocontrol agent, on La Sal Creek and below Coyote Wash. In addition, a private landowner in Bedrock worked with the Palisade insectary to do a release, and the midges did establish over the winter.
- The tamarisk leaf beetle and weevil are present as far south as Slickrock in San Miguel County and north to Roberts Bottom in Grand County, Utah.

Highlights:

Daniel said every year the Partnership is involved in 80-90 projects, but these are some of the highlights.

- Conservation corps strike teams are now working across all four BLM offices
- DRRP has engaged new private landowners in work along the San Miguel River
- New restoration sites were designated in the Moab FO after it completed a programmatic NEPA
- A pilot project has been established to reconnect tide channels to provide backwater habitat for juvenile fish species and insectivorous birds.

Discussion: Daniel further explained the pilot project to reconnect side channels. He said DRRP has been able to identify side channels that were disconnected from the Dolores River and to reconnect them. Some sites near the Montrose-Mesa County line were so thick with tamarisk that crews could not get in to work, so they hired two local contractors to do removal this December. Through that effort, crews discovered a large side channel no one knew existed. Three or four more side channels were later identified. This could provide slow backwater habitat for juveniles of native warmwater fish species.

In another project, a site in the Moab FO has been identified for work because it had a big rock berm built long ago by a homesteader. The idea was to remove a portion of the berm so that

during spring runoff, some of the water will return to the side channel. Daniel said that rock will be used to help secure pilot projects upstream 20 miles. He hopes to implement this in fall 2017.

David Graf said Colorado Parks and Wildlife is hoping to do pre- and post-treatment fish surveys to see if fish will come back to these areas.

Edd Franz of the Uncompahgre FO said that field office is looking at Wild and Scenic River suitability on some river segments.

Marsha asked about an inventory of such kinds of places along the Dolores River. David Graf said CPW does a non-scientific survey via drive-bys. The channel has undergone geomorphic changes since the dam closure. It's the lower end that is of particular concern.

Looking Ahead – 2017:

- Initial treatments to remove tamarisk are planned on 75 acres of public and private land. Daniel said some initial treatments are still being done, but DRRP is approaching the end of the bell curve for these types of treatments.
- In 2018, there will be treatment on a small amount of remaining public acreage, plus possibly some private land (TBD). They have worked with more than 30 landowners and there are still five they would like to work with.
- Long-term maintenance work has been done on more than 1600 acres to date. They will be working with county weed managers, BLM staff, and corps strike teams.
- Pilot projects to connect side channels will be pursued.

Daniel showed photos of the cleanup of two illegal marijuana grow sites discovered last year along the Dolores. Sparky said the cleanup was a major undertaking with help from many parties.

Mike Wight said the conservation corps put about 40 folks on the ground this year, bringing the total since 2009 to 300 or so young people. There were also about 60 volunteers.

Sparky said last year more than 500 debris piles were burned along the river, and it was good to have the help of the BLM fire crews.

Group meetings

Meeting attendees broke into small groups to discuss ideas to help DRRP evolve and improve. These were:

Group 1:

- Generate more public awareness among hunters, rafters, climbers, four-wheelers, anyone who uses the river corridor.
- Consolidate volunteer days with holidays such as Martin Luther King Day, when people are off work.
- Hold plant-identification trainings for the younger generation.

Group 2:

- The Partnership could take the lead or be a catalyst for next steps for the 300+ young people who have served with the conservation corps. Where can they go from here?
- Restoration work is proving effective on the majority of sites we have done. It's nice to see the transformation.
- The Partnership is on the right track regarding stewardship and maintenance. However, there is a fear that there is a list of maintenance needs that could continue 20 years from now.

Group 3:

- We are from Utah, and the only portion of the Dolores in this state is the "triangle area", most of which is federal land. It's difficult to explain to people what it is. How do we educate people on that area? The only access to this area is through the Colorado Monument or Gateway or by trying to cross the river. It's difficult for people that live in to get to.

Group 4:

- DRRP is doing well. We especially like bird monitoring and fish-habitat development. It gets to the meat of the matter and helps the entire ecology. Keep going in that direction.
- There is impatience that we can't restore the lands faster.
- DRRP should create and disseminate a different "mini presentation" every year about what we do, perhaps a region-specific PowerPoint.
- Better communication about the Partnership to county commissions is a good idea.
- We want a "kochia beetle".
- CDOT is looking to hire a weed manager. This may be of interest to the conservation-corps crew members.
- DRRP needs to stay involved in the science and monitoring, plus maintenance.

Group 5:

- There was an excellent resource at BLM in end-of-year funding. We were able to funnel about \$180,000 to DRRP, which mobilized conservation crews to do the work. It was August when we learned we had the money, so it happened quickly. It was great to have such a tool and a collaboration that allows us to get on the ground so fast.
- Also, we have been able to utilize the BLM's Resilient Landscapes Program. By using this tool in conjunction with DRRP, we were able to use Sparky Taber and his crew in the stateline area.
- Natural recruitment of cottonwoods on the river appears to be happening. There are a lot of naturally recruiting cottonwoods and willows out there.

Next steps:

- The DRRP Transition Plan is on the website. The Communications Plan has not been posted yet, but anyone who has questions about it should talk to Daniel.
- The Community Stewardship Plan will be sent out for comment.
- "Strategies for the Future" will be posted on the website.
- One key idea was to reach out to county commissioners and do regional reporting.
- Call or email Daniel with comments about activities and how DRRP can do better.
- The group ideas will be in the notes and will be shared with the committees.

- Mike Wight suggested having one formal Partnership meeting in the fall and one active/outdoor/tour event in the spring every year. It was agreed this should be considered.