

Partnership Seeks to Improve River Habitats & Access

submitted by Mike Wight.

On May 2, three conservation corps crews working to restore riparian habitat along the Dolores River came together at the Naturita Public Library to learn from the BLM how to apply for federal land management positions. Heather McClean from the Moab BLM has been working to outreach application techniques and tips to young adults throughout the four corners area for many years.

Crews arrived at the library at the beginning of their 8 day hitch and it was obvious they had already put in weeks of hard work. Clothes permanently soiled with sawdust, bar oil and grit adorned each member, stained from weeks of effort removing tamarisk as a part of the Dolores River Restoration Partnership's (DRRP) efforts to improve habitat, wildlife diversity, access and forage along the entire river corridor.

Crews used chainsaws and herbicide to treat tamarisk in Disappointment Creek, and rafts to access the canyon below the Dolores/San Miguel confluence as dictated by BLM implementation plans.

This day of training is a brief reprieve from the heat and the grueling work of battling the tenacious tamarisk. The Western Colorado Conservation Corps out of Grand Junction, the Canyon Country Youth Corps out of Monticello, UT, and the Southwest Conservation Corps out of Durango have collaborated to provide a workforce to the partnership for three years running.

It has been a win-win situation where important restoration activities are accomplished through the engagement of local and regional young adults, supported by both private and public funding spanning typical project boundaries, to include two states, four BLM offices and private lands in the region.

Corps members, ages 18-26 gain skills that will help prepare them for positions in land management agencies and private companies that work to mitigate the effects of fire on the landscape and treat invasive species.

Throughout the course, the three eight-person crews will gain important information how to apply for positions in the BLM

and Forest Service, a process that can be quite tedious.

Heather is an experienced instructor and guides the crews aided by a power point presentation and years of knowledge.

The presentation is followed by a discussion led by Peter Mueller of The Nature Conservancy, a participant in the DRRP.

He explains the role of tamarisk removal as one part of shifting the river to a more healthy state and discusses the work of the Dolores River Dialogue to better understand the needs of native fish and the timing of spring runoff in the system.

Many corps members come from towns and cities near the watershed and are interested in continuing a career in public lands management.

Today's training represents future opportunities and continued education for those who supply so much hard labor on this meaningful project.

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The DRRP engages corps programs and local contractors to complete tamarisk removal, Russian knapweed treatment, planting and seeding of native species throughout the watershed. The group has worked for three years to coordinate restoration activities from McPhee dam to Big Gypsum and in the Gateway area. Next plans are for areas of the Uncompagbre BLM management area, and below the Stalentine in Utah.

Participants typically work during spring and fall when temperatures are more moderate. Volunteer projects are held throughout the year. The next such project is slated for May 19th in the Bedrock area to plant native plants in pilot project sites, intended to provide important insight towards native species recruitment and success after various removal techniques.

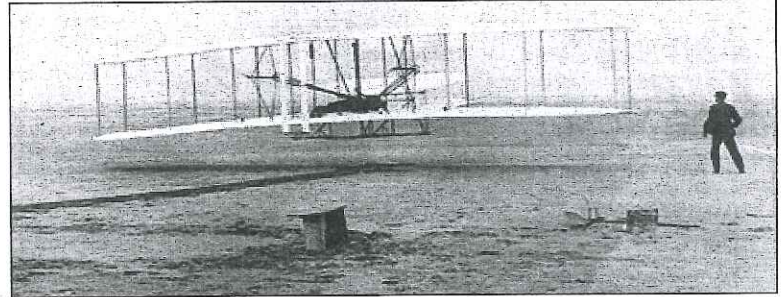
To sign up for the project, contact Katie Phillips at 240-

5308 or jgrablender@blm.gov. Volunteers will meet in Naturita at 9am and caravan to the project

site where they will learn about the partnership and plant up to 4000 native species. For informa-

tion about opportunities for young adults in the area, contact Mike Wight: mike@sccorps.org.

Hopkins Field Upgrades Announced



Pioneer airmen take to the skies in the early years at Hopkins Field. Photo courtesy of Lloyd Arnold.

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inal includes a planning room with computer access, Wi-Fi, conference room, all ADA compliant. "When flying in pilots need to have the ability to look up NOTAM (Notices to Airmen), weather patterns, and the ability to file flight plans," stated Arnold. "We currently do not have the basic services that pilots need when travelling."

The conference room seat 12 to 15 people and have an updated video conferencing system to replace the outdated system currently in use. It will be separate from the common area to alleviate the current issue of people trying to use the video conference equipment for internet service.

"Could private industries rent the video conferencing capabilities for the county?" asked Dianna Reams, Nucla-Naturita Area Chamber of Commerce President. "Speaking for the Chamber, I see this as an economic benefit for incoming busi-

nesses, particularly the mining industry that we are looking at coming in here whose offices are in Canada, Denver and other locations. This would be a streamlined offering that they could use, until they are able to get their own set up. I would recommend this as a revenue stream to the county."

"That's a good idea. We'll have to have a discussion on that and see where we are at," said Arnold.

The Request for Proposal (RFP), that is just about ready to issue, should be coming out around May 21.

They are looking for companies to submit design/build proposals, meaning that the company will design the project and build it through to completion. The plan is to have it finished by the end of September 2012.

"We are going to scrap the building that is there. What are we going to do with everything in the interim?" asked County Commissioner David White.

"We have a modular construction system and some of that is still in the works," stated Arnold.

The funds for the terminal come from a State grant for \$400,000 and a match from Montrose County of \$44,444.

The final project is an upgrade to the runway safety area which currently has several issues. This project is scheduled for 2013/2014.

The upgrades being considered are the approach on runways 5 and 23 to meet safety standards. Portions of the current airport road encroach into the safety area and will need to be moved.

This project is expected to cost approximately \$1.6 million. The funds will be coming from many sources and include the following approximations: Federal Entitlement \$375,000, State Entitlement Match \$30,000, State Grant \$370,000, State Apportionment \$750,000 and County Match \$71,000.

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