

DOLORES RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

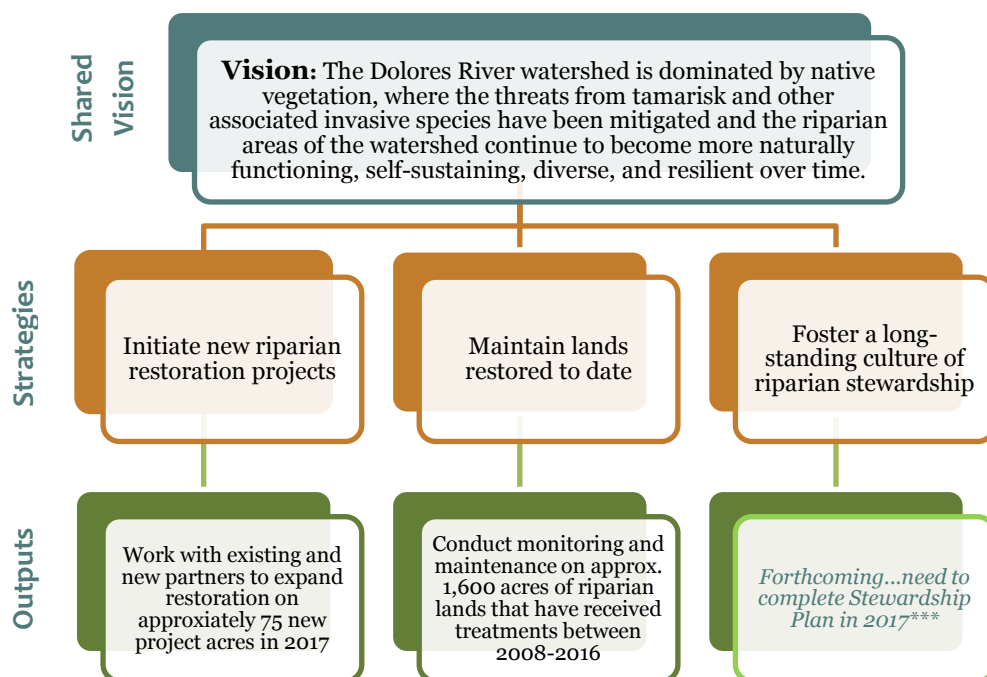


OUR STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

Background

Since its inception in 2009, the Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP), a public-private collaborative, has been working to restore 200 miles of the riparian corridor of the Dolores River and its tributaries in southwestern Colorado and eastern Utah. During this time, the DRRP has established, evaluated, and refined its shared goals and objectives for success.

This **Strategies** document is intended to summarize and integrate the DRRP's multiple goals and objectives¹ into a comprehensive and concise structure. By integrating goals and objectives, we will have a clearer and comprehensive sense of success and, by extension, what programmatic resources are needed to be successful as a partnership.



Initiating New Restoration Projects

Riparian restoration projects along the Dolores are multi-year in nature; typically they include the initial removal of tamarisk, followed by several active years of controlling tamarisk re-sprouts and herbaceous weeds such as Russian knapweed; in some cases, planting and seeding of native vegetation may also be warranted before a sight transitions to a less intensive maintenance phase. While some projects are already transitioning to maintenance, others are newly initiated, and still others are in a planning phase.

New projects are selected and initiated based on prioritization criteria (e.g. feasibility, social and ecological values) outlined in the Dolores River Riparian Action Plan. Next calendar year, the DRPP estimates that new projects will be initiated on 75 acres of public and private lands. By the end of 2017, partners anticipate that all initial tamarisk removal treatments will be completed on BLM lands in the Tres Rios and Uncompahgre Field Offices, with only a few potentially remaining in the Grand Junction and Moab Field Offices to be completed in 2018; new projects with volunteering private landowners will continue to be identified in the coming years, based on sustained community engagement.

¹ Shared goals and objectives have been articulated to date in the Dolores River Riparian Action Plan (2010), the DRRP Transition to Monitoring & Maintenance Plan (2014), the DRRP Communications Plan (2015), and DRRP Stewardship Plan (*forthcoming...*)

For all of these sites, partners are initiating new riparian restoration projects based on a goal of healthy, diverse, and increasingly self-sustaining riparian and floodplain plant communities.

- Associated ecological objectives include reducing live tamarisk to less than 5 percent of the vegetation cover; reducing other invasive, non-native plants to less than 15 percent of the vegetation cover; maintaining total vegetation cover equal to or greater than 30 percent; and documenting passive recruitment of native plants towards species-specific thresholds in the riparian corridor.
- Associated social and economic objectives include developing opportunities for the next generation of stewards by hiring and training at least four interns annually through the Conservation Corps programs; increasing efficiency of work by reducing annual treatment costs per acre; and improving recreational opportunities by enhancing river-side campsites.²

Newer for DRRP, partners are designing a series of pilot-projects that will modify the river channel to benefit a range of aquatic and terrestrial species; these pilot projects will re-connect several side channels to the main stem of the Dolores River to provide important backwater habitat that will benefit insectivorous birds as well as native, sensitive fish species during their young life stages. Goals and associated metrics are still in development for these pilot projects.

Conducting Monitoring and Maintenance

Restoration work has been initiated on over 1,600 acres of the riparian corridor. Many of these sites are nearing the end of intensive restoration work and are transitioning to an equally important phase of long-term monitoring and maintenance. Projects in a maintenance phase can be programmatically distinct from newer, more intensive projects in multiple ways, including: what partners are involved; what funding sources are utilized; and what personnel, equipment, and planning is warranted. The success of these projects is measured with the same ecological, social, and economic goals described above and in the 2014 DRRP Transition Plan for Monitoring and Maintenance (M&M). M&M is expected to continue throughout the project area beyond 2020.

Community Stewardship

The new DRRP Stewardship Subcommittee has developed the following *draft* vision and goals for developing a stewardship program that builds on and protects DRRP's shared restoration investment:

- **Vision:** A shared passion and commitment that sustains long-term, local restoration of the Dolores River riparian corridor.
- **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.

While metrics have not yet been crafted, the subcommittee has prioritized stewardship strategies and developed an organizational structure to achieve its goals. A stewardship plan that will complement the 2014 Transition Plan for M&M and the 2015 Communication Plan is forthcoming and the subcommittee anticipates that its work will go beyond the year 2020. Current partnership goals that apply to this work:

- *Transition Plan M&M Management Goal - Incorporate educational and interpretative practices to enhance public understanding and appreciation of riparian restoration actions; engage community volunteers in at least 500 hours of restoration work annually.*
- *Communications Plan - Goal 2: Bolster the lasting constituency of local stewards and advocates for the Dolores River.*

Supporting These Three Key Strategies

As the 2015 DRRP Memorandum of Understanding affirms, working towards these goals takes shared commitment and resources. With continued commitment of public and private partners willing to garner and share sufficient resources (e.g. funding, coordinating capacity, equipment, technical personnel, and lessons learned) as well as evaluate and improve on collaborative initiatives, the DRRP will continue to be successful.

Applicable Goals:

- *Communications Plan Goal 1: Garner financial support from existing and new funders*
- *Communications Plan Goal 4: Keep DRRP partners motivated and engaged*

² See Ecological, Social, and Economic Goals on page 5 of the DRRP Transition Plan for Monitoring and Maintenance for the complete list of goals and metrics.