

RESTORATION

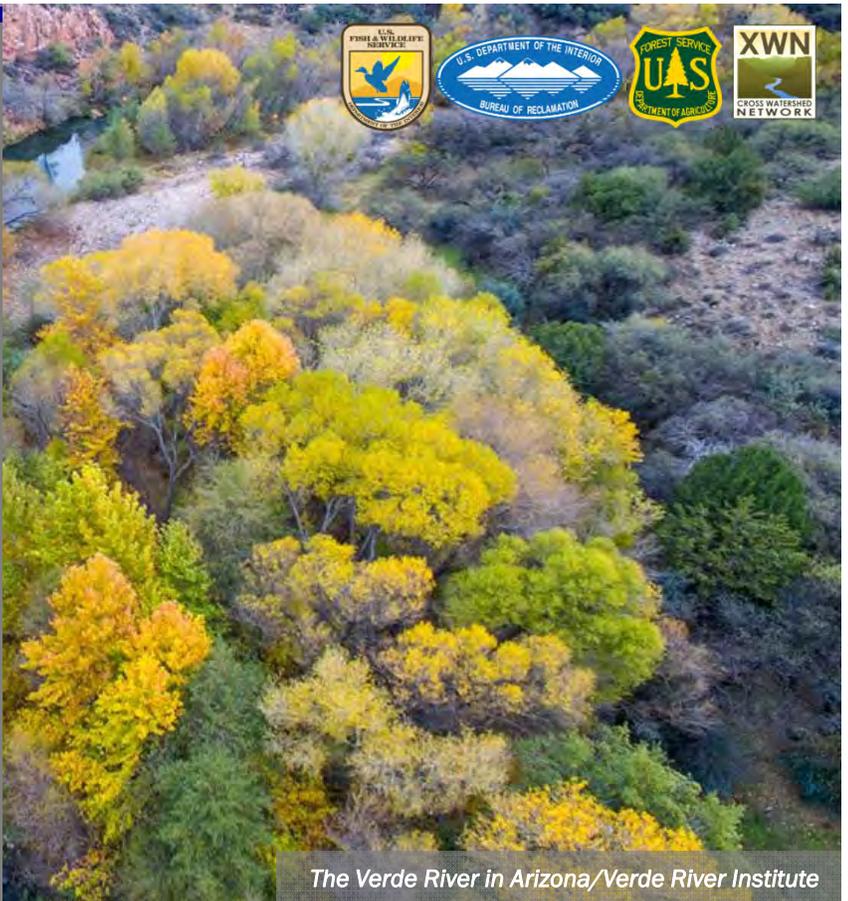
Collaborative Restoration Partnerships in the Colorado River Basin



RiversEdge West

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

Restoration partnerships comprised of diverse associates are working across social and jurisdictional boundaries for restoration of riparian lands across the Colorado River Basin. Much of the Basin has been severely impacted by invasive plant species including tamarisk and Russian olive. The Dolores River Restoration Partnership, Escalante River Watershed Partnership, Gila Watershed Partnership, Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition, and Virgin River Coalition have collectively invested millions of dollars. In addition to ecological goals, partnerships are striving to meet social, economic, and management goals established by participants.



KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

Tamarisk and Russian olive, both invasive plants, have become dominant riparian woody plant species in the desert Southwest, as is evident throughout the Colorado River Basin. These plants rapidly crowd out native plants, such as cottonwood and willow, significantly reducing and degrading available resources for wildlife, fish, pollinators, birds, and livestock.

Invasive riparian plants also impair natural river function, restrict recreational access to scenic landscapes, reduce the productivity of agricultural lands, and, in the case of tamarisk, increase the risk of catastrophic wildfires. Given the geographic extent of the invasive plant issue, collaborative efforts are crucial to impact change on a landscape-scale and across jurisdictional boundaries.

PROJECT GOALS

- Establish a sustainable partnership structure for project implementation and long-term stewardship
- Develop sustainable funding for partnership capacity, on-the-ground restoration, monitoring, and maintenance
- Develop common metrics for restoration success
- Increase public awareness through education and outreach

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Youth and veterans crews from across the Southwest have been instrumental in the implementation and maintenance of riparian restoration, gaining valuable skills and knowledge through their work.



Conservation Corps Training/Daniel Oppenheimer/REW

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Expanding Effort: The partnership models described are being utilized, to varying degrees, along other high priority river systems in the West, such as the Colorado, Gunnison and White rivers.

Tangible Impacts: Through 2016, more than 13,000 acres of tamarisk and Russian olive were removed as a result of partnership efforts, and over 1,000 jobs were created.

Beyond Ecological Goals: Many partnerships were borne out of a desire to address ecological goals. However, they quickly set their sights on social, economic, and management targets as well.

Identifying Participant Roles: Partnerships generally have guiding documents to define partner roles and responsibilities. These outline how different parties (e.g. organizations, agencies, businesses) work through formal and informal processes towards shared goals.

Collaborators

- Escalante River Watershed Partnership
- Gila Watershed Partnership of Arizona
- Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition
- Dolores River Restoration Partnership
- Virgin River Collaborative

Funding Partners

- Walton Family Foundation

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LESSONS LEARNED

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to watershed planning; many techniques and levels of engagement are effective as long as clear goals, measurable objectives, and appropriate metrics are defined early on. Equally important is discussion of a partnership’s “end-game” and how that impacts stakeholders and community members over time.

Governance documents can help to define partner roles and commitments, as can engagement of a professional, neutral facilitator. It is critical to develop a range of expertise within the group and engage high-level agency personnel early and often for planning, decision-making, and funding support.

Diverse funding sources are a critical piece of partnership viability. A business plan describing how partnerships allocate, track, and leverage a large amount of funding is helpful in establishing clear expectations. Communication about funding challenges early and often is also important.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue building partnership capacity for watershed restoration and long-term maintenance
- Support the establishment of additional partnerships efforts to broaden the geographic scope of restoration efforts
- Promote partnerships’ achievements through visual storytelling media

PROJECT RESOURCES

For more information on this project, contact Rusty Lloyd: rlloyd@riversedgewest.org

For additional project resources and case studies, visit the Collaborative Conservation and Adaptation Strategy Toolbox: WWW.DESERTLCC.ORG/RESOURCE/CCAST



Visitors of the Escalante River/Zach Mahone