

RESTORATION

Dolores River Restoration Partnership: A Public-Private Collaborative for Riparian Restoration



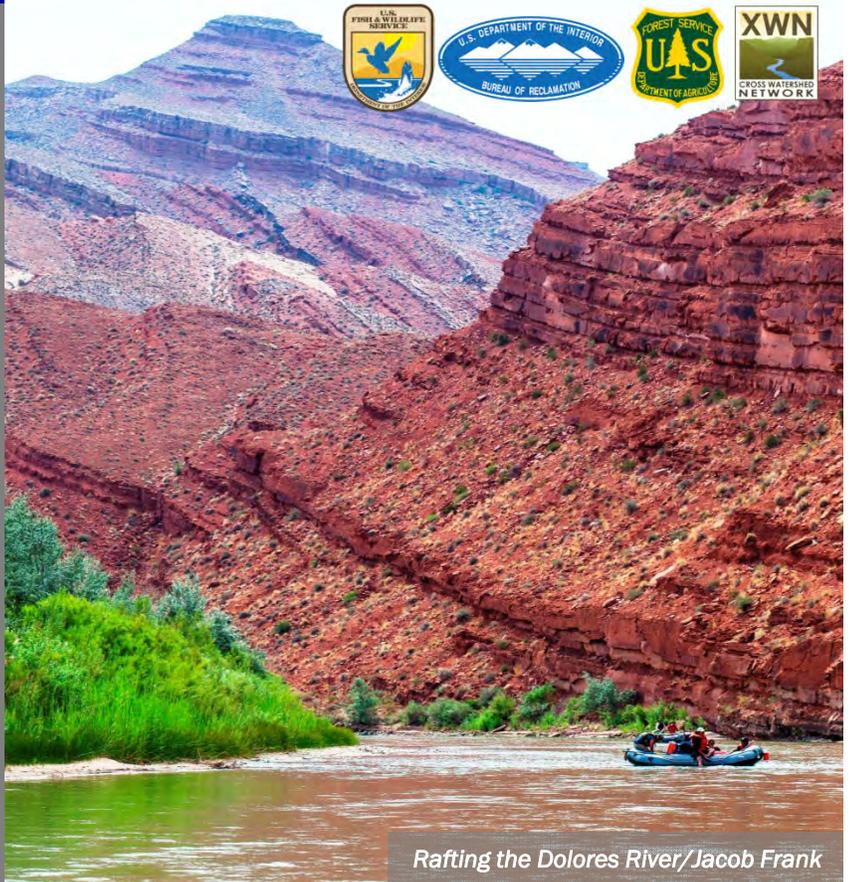
RiversEdge West

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

The Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) is a public-private collaborative of partnering individuals, organizations, and agencies working to restore plant communities in the riparian corridor of the Dolores River, which flows from the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado to eastern Utah, where it meets the Colorado River. Since 2009, DRRP has worked to remove invasive plant infestations that have displaced native plant communities, degraded wildlife habitat and forage, hindered access to campsites and other recreational opportunities, and increased wildfire risk in the riparian corridor.



Project Location



Rafting the Dolores River/Jacob Frank

KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

In 2009, the Dolores River riparian corridor was dominated by invasive vegetation, including tamarisk. The area provided low habitat value for native wildlife, contained an entrenched channel with armored streambanks, and was at high risk for catastrophic fire. Decreasing water availability, partially caused by a trans-basin water diversion high in the watershed, limits the ability of the system to naturally establish and support native plant communities. The region also suffered from economic stagnation and social detachment from the river. DRRP was formed in 2010 to address environmental issues while providing economic and social opportunities for local industries and communities.

PROJECT GOALS

- Increase healthy riparian floodplain plant community extent and reduce invasive vegetation
- Enhance recreation, increase public safety, and generate appreciation of the Dolores River riparian area as a cultural and socioeconomic resource
- Promote riparian stewardship and restoration employment opportunities
- Facilitate communication and coordination between land managers and owners

DRRP RECOGNITION

The partnership was awarded the Colorado Collaboration Award in 2015 for outstanding collaborative efforts; the award included \$50,000. Funds were used to bolster collaborative efforts and increase partnership capacity.



The Dolores River/David Varner

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Riparian Restoration: Over 1,700 acres of tamarisk have been treated using techniques adapted over years and various ecological conditions, including manual, chemical, mechanical, and biological procedures. Over 3,400 acres have also been treated for secondary invasive weeds. Nearly 600 acres have been re-vegetated with plantings and/or seed.

Employment Opportunities: 315 young adults/youth corps members have been employed by DRRP for over 100,000 hours of labor. Nearly 100 jobs have been created for local contractors, and volunteers have contributed nearly 6,000 hours of labor.

Partner Collaboration: Lessons learned from restoration have been shared across the partnership. In addition to partner collaboration on pilot-projects, DRRP hosts external restoration specialists for on-the-ground workshops and coordinates site visits to facilitate collaborative problem solving. Partnership coordinators integrate various forms of knowledge and facilitate biannual partnership meetings, where partners not only share information and discuss critical challenges, but also celebrate successes.

Collaborators and Funding Partners

- See online for full list of collaborators and funding partners

Case study support provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Forest Service, and Cross Watershed Network. Updated November 2018. Photos courtesy of RiversEdge West

LESSONS LEARNED

Partnership success results from a responsive governance structure, jointly developed planning resources, continual refinement of monitoring protocols, and a shared commitment to implementing lessons learned.

Without addressing the underlying ecosystem stressors of anthropogenic river management, water resource utilization, and decreased water availability, the riparian system requires perpetual effort to maintain the progress made through DRRP efforts. While the Partnership continues to engage youth corps, private contractors, and public agencies to accomplish invasive vegetation control, wildfire risk reduction, and habitat restoration, DRRP is in need of a long-term maintenance plan. Social and economic benefits are critical to the success of the plan.

Participant turnover is always going to be a challenge. Long-term partnerships require a plan to foster and re-develop leadership while allowing for periodic re-visioning to re-balance leadership roles and partnership direction.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue monitoring and maintenance through the term of the current five-year plan (2019)
- Implement a third round of strategic planning
- Strategize for addressing hydrologic challenges and maintenance of restored habitat

PROJECT RESOURCES

For more information on this project, contact David Varner: dvarner@riversedgewest.org

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



Restoration Volunteers/David Varner