




DOLORES-RIVER
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT

2019



Sunset near Bedrock, Colorado along the Dolores River. Credit: Southwest Conservation Corps

LETTER FROM RICA AND EMILY DRRP CO-COORDINATORS

Dear Partners,

As we pause to reflect on the past year of working collaboratively to restore the Dolores River riparian corridor to a healthier system, it is important to think of where the DRRP began. A massive and imposing infestation of tamarisk along the river; a problem so overwhelming, the prospect of restoration seemed unfeasible, and the DRRP emerged as a platform to disperse work across entities, leverage resources, track progress, and successfully remove most of the major tamarisk stands over almost 200 river miles.

2019 saw generous flows for the Dolores River, providing nourishment for cottonwoods, ample opportunities for recreation and to allow conservation corps crews to treat remote areas by raft in Utah; and of course to improve habitat for special native fish species.

In 2019, several milestones were reached:

- Southwest Conservation Corps crews horse-packed into the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area to remove tamarisk as a pilot project to treat more remote areas.
- The partnership treated a record number of tamarisk re-sprouts this year, ensuring that past work is maintained.
- The first landowner workshop in many years was held in Naturita.
- A contractor completed the first phases of a Dolores River Hydrology study to better quantify hydrologic changes in different reaches of the river.

So far, 2020 has been challenging for us all; COVID-19 and severe drought have necessitated changes and adaptations to the partnership's implementation plans and physical interactions with each other. However, this work is driven by the iconic Dolores River and remains our main focus, constantly inspiring us every day to continue to work together, be patient, and give back to the river.

It remains a top priority to find unique ways to engage local communities in stewardship opportunities, dive into more complex active revegetation strategies, and better understand habitat along the corridor. To all of our partners - thank you for your endless sincerity, knowledge, and commitment to the Dolores River.



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PARTNER HIGHLIGHT:

KYLE GODDARD

Over the past 11 years, the DRRP has seen partners come and go, cycling between different opportunities. While all DRRP partners provide valuable contributions, individuals with boots on the ground are the ones creating tangible improvements. This year, we would like to highlight Kyle Goddard, who has been working on-the-ground with the DRRP since 2010. Kyle leads the DRRP strike teams, works for the Grand Junction Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Office, and with Western Colorado Conservation Corps; providing consistent leadership for Conservation Corps projects.



Kyle says one of the best parts of the last decade working with the DRRP is seeing the physical changes and hearing the local community members take notice. “On more than one occasion I have had folks stop along the highway or float by in rafts and thank us for the work we’re doing.” By spending ample time along the river, he has also been able to notice changes in animal presence through time. “I take a lot of pride in seeing how wildlife is using the treated areas, and in some ways using those areas more than sites that haven’t been treated. It’s what makes the cold nights and hot buggy days worth it.”

“The reason this large-scale restoration project has been so successful, is because there are seemingly no boundaries. Relationship building has allowed us to treat the river corridor regardless of who owns or manages it in many cases.” He says that the partnerships’ commitment to maintenance work is also a major reason for success. “Initial removal is the most glamorous but without maintenance it could revert back to the sick ecosystem it was.”



Another bright spot of working with the partnership is observing Conservation Corps members use skills learned on the Dolores in future careers. “It is a privilege to work with the Corps. It is rewarding seeing them move on to jobs with the BLM, US Forest Service, or fire services. Many hands make light work, and they are a major reason we are as far along on our treatments that we are.”

Kyle’s intimate knowledge of the Dolores River is invaluable, and on behalf of the DRRP, we want to thank him for his commitment to the restoration of the Dolores River!

WILDLANDS RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS

In November, 2019 the DRRP worked for the third consecutive year with Wildland Restoration Volunteers (WRV) to complete construction of a holistic baffle structure on East Paradox Creek in Bedrock, cage young cottonwoods, and treat tamarisk re-sprouts with the help of Southwest Conservation Corps' strike team.



Photo credit: Wildlands Restoration Volunteers

Ken Holsinger with the Uncompahgre BLM Office instructed volunteers on how to build a holistic baffle structure to ensure water flows to a major cottonwood gallery along the Dolores River after a major rain event re-directed the creek in 2015. The structure is made solely of organic materials, so if another major water event were to blow the structure out, rebar or concrete would not be a potential hazard.

This work was made possible by the talented volunteers and staff at WRV, the Southwest Conservation Corps strike team, the Bureau of Land Management, and funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

Top left: Jim Johnston and WRV chefs ensure everyone is well-fed for the long days of restoration work! Bottom: Volunteers stand in front of the holistic baffle structure before weaving tamarisk branches into the posts.



ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSES

Over 1,000 acres along the Dolores River are trending towards and achieving native species dominance thanks to thousands of hours of tamarisk re-sprout and secondary weeds treatment work. The tamarisk infestations that are left are now in hard-to-reach places, yet the DRRP is finding ways to implement tamarisk removal in these remote areas. Conservation Corps participants and community volunteers continue to protect

PROGRESS TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL GOALS IN 2019

31 → Acres of tamarisk stands initially removed

10 → Acres of revegetation (seeding native grasses & planting forbs, shrubs, & trees)

295 → Acres of tamarisk re-sprouts treated

198 → The number of acres of secondary weeds (e.g. Russian knapweed, hoary cress) treated



Photo credit: Conservation Legacy

Southwest Conservation Corps Strike Team members learn about proper herbicide application methods to treat Russian knapweed



Photo credit: Canyon Country Youth Corps



Photo credit: Conservation Legacy

A crew from Canyon Country Youth Corps removing tamarisk from float-access sites in Utah in the spring (Left). A Southwest Conservation Corps crew working with horse-packers to pack their camp and tools into their backcountry work site in the Dolores River Canyons Wilderness Study Area (Right).

SOCIAL SUCCESSES

Consistent with our commitment to fostering the next generation of stewards, the DRRP created over 60 jobs for youth and young adults through 8-person Conservation Corps Crews as well as through smaller strike teams. The DRRP also engaged two local K-12 schools to engage the next generation of stewards in restoration work.

PROGRESS TOWARDS SOCIAL GOALS IN 2019

62 —→ Number of Conservation Corps crew members and leaders engaged

10,503 —→ Number of work hours by conservation corps crews

63 —→ Number of volunteers engaged

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

GATEWAY PLANTING EVENT

In November, 2019 the DRRP sponsored a Dolores River Riparian Habitat Restoration event with Gateway School and Gateway Canyons Resort. Gateway School students and volunteers from Mesa County Noxious Weed and Pest planted 60 native plants along the Gateway Interpretive trail site. One-gallon container plants were used, reflecting a range of moisture needs such as rabbitbrush, 3-leaf sumac, and four-wing saltbrush. Projects like this one represent the intersection of ecological, economic, and social goals within the DRRP. Partners who made this event possible include the Bureau of Land Management, Western Colorado Conservation Corps strike team, Gateway Canyons Resort, Chelsea Nursery, and Colorado Water Conservation Board.

PARADOX VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICE-LEARNING DAY

The DRRP hosted a service-learning day for students from the Paradox Valley Charter School along the Y-11 Road just upstream of the Dolores and San Miguel confluence in October, 2019. Students planted and caged 20 cottonwoods and native box elders with the help of DRRP coordinators and teachers. DRRP Coordinators also gave a short presentation on the tamarisk beetle and brought samples from the Palisade Insectary to show the students. Partners who made this possible include Colorado Water Conservation Board, Southwest Conservation Corps, and Wildland Scapes.

Photo credit: Wildlands Restoration Volunteers



Celebrating successful installation of an interpretive sign off Y11 road at the Dolores and San Miguel river confluence.

Photo credit: RiversEdge west



Emily with SCC shows Middle schoolers from Paradox Valley Charter School how to properly cage a young cottonwood after planting to protect them from beavers.

MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

Private, state, and federal funds all coalesce to make implementation, training, capacity, and outreach possible for our work on the Dolores. The Partnership has been able to adapt to the tides of changing funding sources over the years and we are proud to maintain diverse funding streams.

Creating local jobs and investing in local economies are two key components of our economic goal. Importantly, the DRRP coordinates with many partners to best leverage economic resources and make funding go further.

2019 ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

\$683,949

Conservatively represents the expenditures and partnership in-kind resources invested towards DRRP work on the Western Slope of Colorado and in eastern Utah.



Photo credit: Conservation Legacy

The Monitoring Team tracking ecological progress on a restoration site.

OVERVIEW OF THE DOLORES RIVER WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

In 2019, the Bureau of Land Management in partnership with RiversEdge West completed the first phases of the Dolores River Watershed Assessment. Part 1 of this study characterizes the Dolores River Watershed, provides a hydrologic analysis of the river (with a focus on the influence of McPhee Dam and the San Miguel River), and puts this information in the context of historical use of the river.

This report will help the DRRP better understand overall hydrologic conditions driving current river functions and anticipate future change. The DRRP will use information in this study to make more informed decisions about restoration activities such as active revegetation and invasive removal. This data will drive future ecological analyses and support management decisions in the future by quantifying hydrologic changes in the Dolores River Basin.

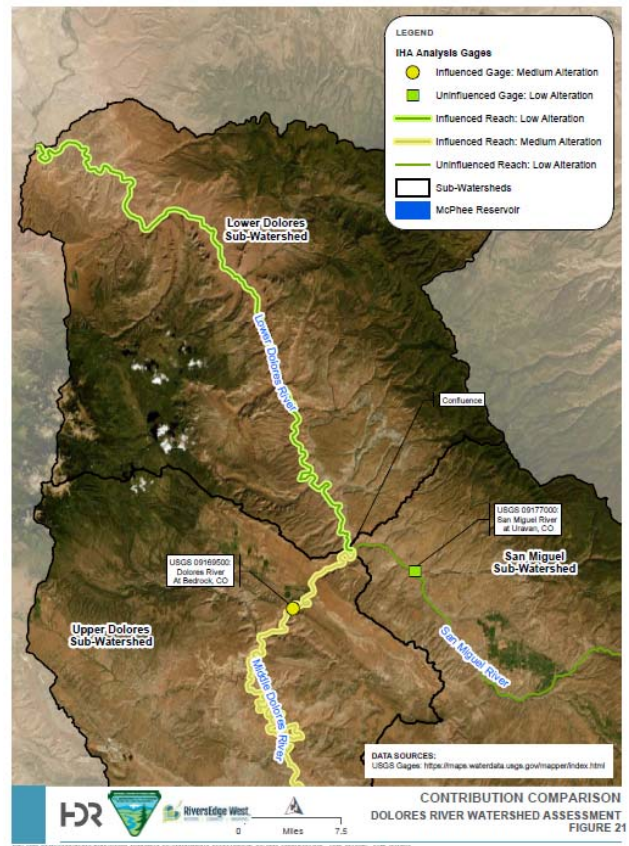
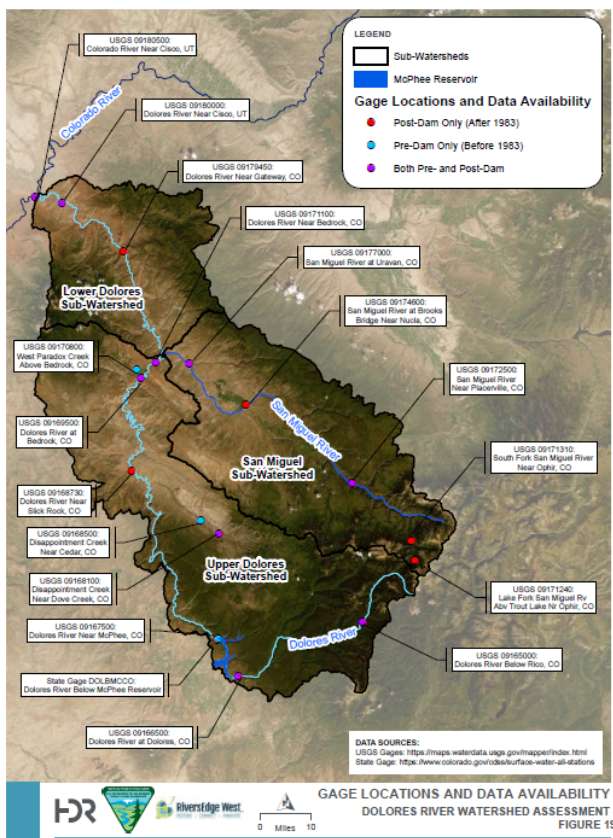


Dolores River Watershed Assessment

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Rivers Edge West

DRAFT

January 7, 2020



LOOKING AHEAD

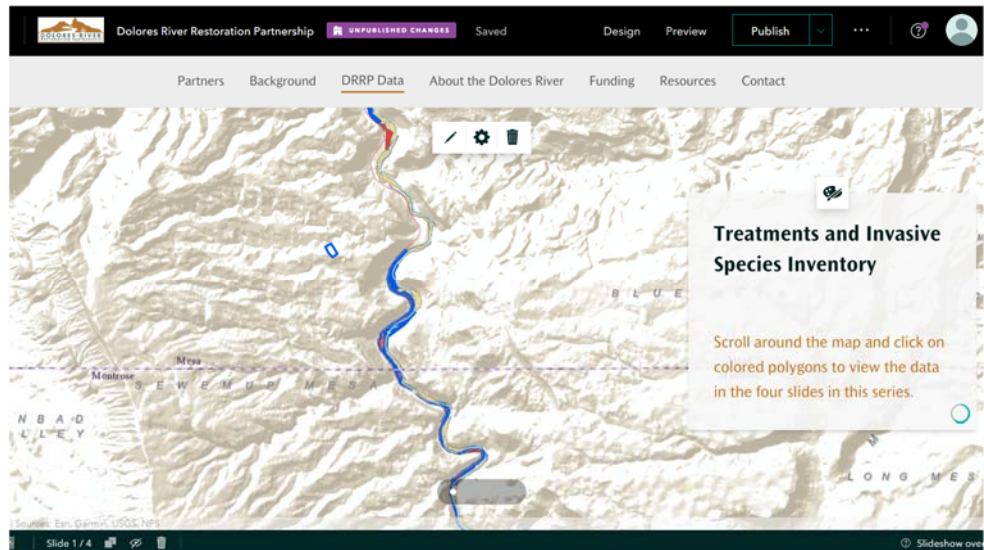
To date, the DRRP has removed tamarisk on over 1,882 acres of the riparian corridor along the Dolores River and some tributaries. In the coming years, the partnership is gathering resources to treat the Wilderness Study Area in the Uncompahgre Field Office using rafts and horse packing for access.

The DRRP is also looking into more detailed revegetation plans and information in order to better support active revegetation efforts and ensure climate change, hydrology, and aquatic and bird habitat explicitly impact restoration decisions moving forward.

STORYMAP

The DRRP is releasing an Esri ArcGIS Storymap that highlights the Dolores River, displays interactive maps of treatment, rapid monitoring, and photo points along the river, and links to relevant studies and research. Find it here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1823f6163cfd4b19ae31eb3ab460788f>



DOLORES RIVER BOATING ADVOCATES RELEASED A NEW RIVER GUIDEBOOK!

Whether it be Conservation Corps crews boating into a remote area to remove tamarisk, or just rafting for fun, a detailed guidebook is critical to understand what is coming downstream. The DRRP is excited to be featured throughout the new guidebook, created by Josh Munson with Dolores River Boating Advocates and published by *RiverMaps*.

Find this map at Dolores River Boating Advocates website (doloresriverboating.org), or at local outfitters in Durango, Dolores, Cortez, Grand Junction, Montrose, and Moab!



THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS PROVIDED CASH OR IN-KIND SUPPORT IN 2019

*AmeriCorps
Anne Yoshino & William Grimes
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Reclamation
Canyon Country Discovery Center
Canyon Country Youth Corps
Cole & Kara-Lynn Crocker-Bedford
Colorado Department of Agriculture
Colorado Department of Transportation
Colorado Mesa University
Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Colorado State University Extension
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Conservation Legacy
Cross-Watershed Network
Dolores County, CO
Dolores River Boating Advocates
Fort Lewis College
Gateway Canyons Resort
Gateway School*

*Grand County, UT
James Ranch
Jennifer Speers
Jim Johnston
King Family
Mesa County, CO
Mesa County Partners
Montrose County, CO
Moore-Larsen Family
Natural Resources Conservation Service
RiversEdge West
San Miguel County, CO
San Miguel Watershed Coalition
Navarro Research & Engineering, Inc.
OP Ranch
Paradox Valley Charter School
Serengeti Sanctuary
Shane Burton
Southwest Basin Roundtable
Southwestern Water Conservation*

*District
Telluride Institute
Telluride Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
US Fish & Wildlife Service
US Department of Energy
US Department of the Interior
University of Utah Rio Mesa Center
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative
Walton Family Foundation
Western Colorado Conservation Corps
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
Wildland Scapes LLC*



Photo credit: Wildlands Restoration Volunteers



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