

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



DOLORES-RIVER
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP



Dear Partners,

As summer approaches and we look forward to anticipated recreational flows and seeing native plants thrive with increased precipitation, it's a good time to step back and take a look at the successes of 2022 and everything our collaborative group was able to accomplish.

2022 was another successful year of monitoring, maintaining, and restoring our favorite river—the Dolores. As we shifted our focus towards revegetation efforts across a watershed that has been mostly treated for removal of tamarisk, revegetation opportunities this past year included a volunteer event with local residents, a volunteer event with a school group from Cortez, conservation corps seeding in the Dolores Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA), and a willow whip planting by contractor Terra Sophia.

2023 marks the 15th year of collaborative restoration work across two states, four BLM Field Offices, five counties, and numerous private lands on the Dolores River. We are looking forward to developing strategies to maintain and capitalize on our investments of previous projects and planning for revegetation and future funding efforts.

Collaboration across different conservation corps contributed to ecological and social goals of 2022. These projects included Robert's Bottom tamarisk removal with Canyon Country Youth Corps working alongside Western Colorado Conservation Corps and a project where Western Colorado Conservation Corps cut tamarisk with Southwest Conservation Corps in the Dolores River Canyon WSA.

We would like to thank all the partners involved with the DRRP as we continue this work, all while wrestling with changes in funding, rebounding from a pandemic, gaining comfort and efficiency in our new roles, and balancing restoration efforts on a 15-year project.



Nate Peters
Nate Peters
Conservation Legacy



Montana Cohn
Montana Cohn
RiversEdge West

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: SARAH BYRD

Sarah Byrd, Field Supervisor for Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC), has played an important and changing role in restoration of the Dolores River the past few seasons. In 2021 Sarah served as a crewmember on the SCC monitoring crew, conducting monitoring on the Dolores, Gila, Verde, and Escalante Rivers. In 2022 Sarah was hired on as the crew lead for the DRRP Strike team, focusing on the removal of tamarisk, Russian olive, and secondary weeds, as well as revegetation and acting in a leadership position with backcountry logistics. This year Sarah started a new position with Southwest Conservation Corps as their Field Supervisor supporting the monitoring and strike teams on the Dolores River as well as SCC’s AIM crews.

As Sarah’s role within the DRRP has changed, her bond to the Dolores has grown stronger and helped cement her desire to restore this river. “I feel connected to the watershed due to the sheer amount of time I’ve spent driving, hiking, sleeping, eating, and working along the Dolores. My favorite part was admiring the native plants and critters that call it home. It didn’t take long for me to realize the river needs help due to its low flows and invasive plant infestation.” she said.

Sarah said that one reason the DRRP has been successful is the long-term collaboration and perseverance shown by partners: “We hiked countless miles and I continuously saw evidence of successful tamarisk removal. It’s a marathon not a race so it gave me hope to see confirmation of the collaborate efforts of folks throughout the years.”

Grateful for her time spent on the Dolores the past two years, Sarah is looking forward to seeing the native plant communities rebound this year after a robust snowpack. “As I think back on my experience working on the Dolores, I think about how much the river and I have changed over time. From crew member to crew lead and dry riverbeds to muddy rivers and monsoon seasons. DRRP brought me to nooks and crannies of the watershed I would have never seen.”



Photo credit: Sarah Byrd

ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSES

The Dolores River continues to benefit from initial treatments of tamarisk and Russian olive as well as maintenance of these and other secondary weeds and we are seeing increased recruitment of native desirable species. Stands of initial dense tamarisk are few and far between as the partnership has removed over 1,973 acres of initial tamarisk stands and continues to pursue the remaining thickets.

PROGRESS TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL GOALS IN 2022

22 —→ Acres of tamarisk stands initially removed

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

230 —→ Acres of tamarisk re-sprouts treated

250 —→ The number of acres of secondary weeds (e.g. Russian knapweed, white top) treated



WCCC crew member stacks freshly cut tamarisk.
Photo credit: Western Colorado Conservation Corps

SOCIAL SUCCESSES

Supporting youth, enhancing public safety, improving aesthetics:

In our commitment to supporting youth programs, we created 45 opportunities for youth and young adults through traditional and innovative 8 person conservation corps crews and small strike teams.

The social goals of the DRRP include improving recreational opportunities along the river, improving natural aesthetics, and fostering growth of the next generation of land stewards .

PROGRESS TOWARDS SOCIAL GOALS IN 2022

45 ———> Conservation corps crew members and leaders engaged

588 ———> Hours worked by conservation corps crews

33 ———> Volunteers engaged



Crew member hiking to a project site at dawn. Photo credit: WCCC



SCC crew member pushing through heavy willow growth. Photo credit: SCC

VOLUNTEER EVENT AT BRADFIELD BRIDGE

RiversEdge West collaborated with staff from Southwest Conservation Corps, BLM, Dolores River Boating Advocates and staff and students from Kiva Montessori School in Cortez to plant 65 native grasses, trees, and shrubs at the Bradfield Bridge Recreation site.



VOLUNTEER PLANTING EVENT AT Y11 RD

RiversEdge West collaborated with Southwest Conservation Corps staff and the DRRP summer strike team to host a day of revegetation along the Dolores River and Y11 Rd. Volunteers helped plant native grasses, shrubs, and forbs in the riparian corridor and learned about the ecology and importance of the Dolores River.



MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

Training, implementation, capacity, and outreach efforts have been supported through a diverse set of funding from private, state, and federal entities. The overall landscape of funding along the Dolores River has shifted entirely since its inception in 2009, but that has not stopped partners from pursuing different funding sources and maintaining flexibility to ensure these projects go on.

2022 ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT*

\$470,088

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



Left and right: WCCC crew members sawing tamarisk resprouts and initial growth along the Dolores. Photo credit: WCCC.

2023 FORECAST:

The DRRP looks to protect our shared investment by conducting monitoring and maintenance; to expand restoration work into inaccessible areas; and to bolster our revegetation and community stewardship programs. Here is what to look out for in 2023:

- Monitoring the Grand Junction Field office parcels through the SCC Monitoring Crew.
- Maintenance along the 1973 acres of the Dolores River corridor that we treated for initial tamarisk removal through noxious weed control and revegetation.
- Initial treatments with heavy equipment in areas which have been neglected due to challenges with location and access.
- Exploring treatment options and perform preliminary monitoring through the Dolores River Canyon Wilderness Study Area.
- DRRP meetings with stakeholders and facilitators to explore the future of the partnership and needs as initial tamarisk removal decreases.
- Yearly volunteer and revegetation events.
- Cottonwood pole plantings with a heavy equipment contractor.
- Tamarisk removal in remote areas with raft-in access during anticipated releases from McPhee Reservoir.



WCCC winter strike team clearing a bench of tamarisk. Photo credit: RiversEdge West

THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS PROVIDED CASH OR IN-KIND SUPPORT IN 2022:

AmeriCorps
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Reclamation
Canyon Country Discovery Center
Canyon Country Youth Corps
Chelsea Nursery
Colorado Department of Agriculture
Colorado Mesa University
Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Colorado State University Extension
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Conservation Legacy
Dolores County, CO
Dolores River Boating Advocates
Fort Lewis College
Gateway Canyons Resort
Grand County, UT
Granite Seed
Jim Johnston
Kiva Montessori School
Mesa County, CO
Mesa County Partners
Montrose County, CO
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
RiversEdge West
San Miguel Watershed Coalition
Southwest Basin Roundtable
Southwestern Water Conservation District
Stan Young
The Nature Conservancy
Terra Sophia
US Fish & Wildlife Service
US Department of Energy
US Department of the Interior

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative
Walton Family Foundation
Western Biology
Western Colorado Conservation Corps
Wildland Scapes LLC



WCCC crew members dragging and piling cut tamarisk. Photo credit: WCCC



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