



WHITE RIVER PARTNERSHIP

Partnership Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2024

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Attendees: John Leary (RiversEdge West), Erin McDermott (RiversEdge West), Sara Jurca (RiversEdge West), Rusty Lloyd (RiversEdge West), Chris Collins, Cody Perry (Living Rivers), Dallin Baker (USU), David Graff (Recovery Program), Georgia Foster (BLM), Holly Mitchell (BLM – VFO), Jake Deslauriers (USU Utah Conservation), Jeff Roberts (WCCC), Madison Vasa (UCEPC), Mark Wertheimer (RMYC), Matt Costigan (WCCC), Phaedra Budy (USU), Rebecca Briesmoore (Colorado River District), Ryland Bates (USU Utah Conservation), Stephen Hampton (BLM – CO), Tyler Arnold (BLM – VFO), Cassie Mellon (BLM), Wally Macfarlane (USU), Deidre McNabb (WRA), Bailey Goldberg (WCCC), Joe Leonhard (TNC), Mary Taylor, Alden Vanden Brink (RBWCD), Benjamin Borgmann-Winter (UCC), Tildon Jones (Recovery Program), Brook Watts (Ute Indian Tribe), Vanessa Trout (WRDCCD), Deirdre Macnab (WRA), Lisa Belmonte (BLM), Fayanna Seely (WRDCCD)

Introductions and Background (John Leary, RiversEdge West)

- **Welcome:** Thanks to everyone for taking the time to meet, thanks to everyone who's been coming for some time and a welcome to the new attendees.
- **Background:**
 - Not a full background, just to clarify a few things based on recent questions
 - The WRP is not a funding organization, does not hold money for distribution, but is a place to share funding opportunities and leverage resources
 - and does not make prescriptive plans for restoration for landowners/land managers unless asked for advice
 - But there are smaller groups work on specific plans, but the larger group does not function in this way.
 - Working towards common goal of healthy riparian vegetation and benefit to communities, habitat, recreation, agriculture and other uses of White River and riparian area

- Focus is on coordinating efforts, connecting stakeholders, and sharing resources, and identifying areas for collaboration

The Nature Conservancy Riparian Restoration Program (Joe Leonhard, TNC)

- **Program Overview:**
 - 5-year cooperative agreement w/BLM.
 - Implements low-tech, process-based restoration projects on BLM land, focusing on the White River and Yampa River.
 - Hosts annual workshops to streamline restoration processes and empower others to undertake similar work.
- **Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration:**
 - Focus on using natural features such as beaver dams and woody debris to restore river landscapes.
- **Project Highlight:**
 - *Yellow Creek Project:*
 - Planned implementation: 2025 (4 weeks).
 - 3.5 miles of restoration.
 - Goals: Slow and spread water, raise groundwater levels, enhance riparian habitat and biodiversity, and improve forage quality.
- **Additional Projects:**
 - Yampa River Basin (Meadow & Willow Creek).
 - Permitting additional projects in the White River Basin.
- **2025 Workshop:** Details forthcoming.

White River Alliance Beaver Projects (Deirdre Macnab, WRA)

- **Updates:**
 - Recently attended *BeaverCon* in Boulder.
 - White River Alliance is bringing in grant consultants to support beaver-related projects.
 - Exploring a “Beavers & Bugs” initiative to study the impact of aerial spraying on insect populations, with plans to hire an insect specialist.
- **Grant Plans:**
 - Seeking funding for a riparian specialist to support private landowners (PLOs) dealing with creeks and springs that have disappeared or are at risk.
 - Interested in one-rock dams and beaver dam analogs.
- **Observations:**
 - Wild horse herds in Rio Blanco County are impacting riparian areas.

- Tamarisk is being controlled, but willows are not yet re-emerging.
- New cottonwoods observed in Douglas Creek.
- **Collaborations:**
 - Working with TNC, BLM, and other partner groups.
- **Other Updates:**
 - News on a new BLM hydrologist?
 - Spraying has ceased, and hasn't noticed a resurgence of algae.

Beaver Projects and Funding (Phaedra Budy, Utah State University)

- **Background:**
 - Professor at USU and U.S. Geological Survey/FWS collaborator.
 - Focus on the Utah portion of the White River.
 - Developing a science-based restoration and conservation plan centered on beavers.
- **Projects:**
 - Translocating beavers in Utah and using innovative techniques such as analyzing hair samples and chewed sticks to gather individual DNA.
 - Secured a Desert Fishes Habitat Grant with a goal of increasing the beaver population in the White River.
 - Speculation that the White River may already be at carrying capacity for beavers.
- **Recent Efforts:**
 - Successfully collected beaver hair samples this past summer, which are now being analyzed.
 - Writing additional grants to fund graduate students to advance this research.
- **Discussion:**
 - *Question:* Are you studying Colorado's beaver population?
 - Not currently, but the project could expand in the future.
 - *Question:* Are beavers migratory?
 - Juvenile males tend to disperse, and family dynamics are territorial. Further research is ongoing.

White River Projects in Colorado (John Leary, RiversEdge West)

2024 Recap of Work



Site/area	Invasive Initial Treatment (acres)	Invasive Retreatment (acres)	Revegetation (acres)	Conservation Corps members engaged
Yellow Creek	2.5	0	1	9
West of Rangely	1	9	0	3
Big Trujillo	16.5	0	2	8
Total	21	9	3	20

**Please note – For reporting, Big Trujillo is broken into three sections and private Land not included in these totals*

Acknowledgments:

- Special thanks to BLM WRFO and WCCC for their contributions!
- 9 weeks of WCCC efforts:
 - 5 weeks with the traditional crew.
 - 4 weeks with the specialized Strike Crew.

Projects Overview:

- **General Areas:**
 - Focused downstream of Rangely, except for Yellow Creek.
 - Big Trujillo (boat ramp area):
 - Lots of beetle-killed tamarisk
 - Mastication completed in February/March.
 - Foliar herbicide application delayed to late summer to only spray regrowth.
 - Observing regrowth of willow and rabbitbrush.
 - Planning revegetation efforts following further assessment.
- **Yellow Creek:**
 - Approximately 20 acres of tamarisk removed since 2022. 2.5 acres in 2024.
 - Access challenges due to snow and washouts.
 - Some revegetation already completed in bare areas; plans to continue in collaboration with partners.
- **Big Trujillo North Side Channel:**
 - Removal efforts completed.
 - Channel flows during the summer.

- Native species are present, including cottonwoods, willows, and buffalo berries.
- Goal: Maintain openness while supporting native vegetation.
- **General Comment:**
 - The White River shows strong potential for thriving native plant communities with targeted restoration efforts.
- **2025 Crew Schedule:**
 - Tentatively finalized.
 - Some flexibility remains for additional projects—please send ideas!

White River Restoration in Utah (Jake Deslauriers, Utah Conservation Corps)

Link to presentation: <https://usu.app.box.com/s/2ikn42qrjio2oh5w3anhbocdvnla7wrw>

- **2024 Accomplishments**
 - Faced a unique funding year.
 - Utilized an NFWF grant to support work related to wild and scientific characteristics (*refer to the report for details*).
 - Initial efforts covered 40 acres.
 - Worked on tribal lands near the bridge, with special thanks to the Ute Tribe for their support.

Project Totals

Acres of habitat improved	58.3
Acres of invasive species treated (cut-stump)	28.8
Acres of invasive species treated (basal spray)	4.21
Acres of cottonwoods protected from beaver chew	8.28
Acres of seeding	15.61
Miles of waterway improved	1.40
Crew Weeks	26

Southam Canyon Mastication Drone Imagery (Wally Macfarlane and Dallin Baker, Utah State University)

Link to report: <https://usu.app.box.com/s/2ikn42qrjio2oh5w3anhbocdvnla7wrw>

- Proactive management strategies are essential to mitigating risks associated with narrowing, emphasizing early interventions to maintain ecosystem health and reduce future costs.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration**
 - Partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including local communities, agencies, and experts, enable resource sharing and collective problem-solving to achieve more impactful results.
- **Technical Expertise and Solutions**
 - The use of innovative restoration techniques, such as process-based methods, demonstrates the ability to address narrowing challenges effectively while promoting ecological resilience.
- **Progress and Outcomes**
 - Metrics such as restored acreage, improved water flow, and increased biodiversity underscore the program's tangible successes and its positive impact on the environment.
- **Future Goals and Planning**
 - A forward-looking strategy highlights plans to expand efforts, integrate emerging technologies, and strengthen collaborations to build on existing achievements and tackle upcoming challenges.

2:10 Other Partner Updates

- **Work and Recreation:**
 - Emphasis on the connection between current work and recreation opportunities.
 - A stakeholder float was discussed, with thanks extended to partners for their contributions to the *Summit on the White*.
- **Stakeholder Float (May 16–18):**
 - All attendees on the call were invited to participate.
 - For more details, contact Cody Perry at cody.perry@gmail.com.
- **Grant Opportunities:**
 - Rebecca shared information about the Community Funding Partnership:
 - [Community Funding Partnership](#)
- **Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (RMYC):**
 - Shifting focus from upstream efforts to areas discussed in the meeting (esp LTPBR).
 - Capacity available for 2025 with a variety of techniques and resources.
 - Contact: Mark at mark@rockymountainyouthcorps.com.

- **UCEPC Support (Madison Vasa & Brandon Sanders):**
 - Capacity to support projects in Utah and Colorado, including the provision of materials. Can do willow and cottonwood poles
 - Contacts:
 - Brandon Sanders (UCEPC Manager):
brandon.coplantcenter@gmail.com
 - Madison Vasa (UCEPC Plant Specialist):
Madison.coplantcenter@gmail.com
- **Biological Controls:**
 - John will reach out to Palisade Insectary for any updates regarding Russian olive and/or tamarisk and other invasive plant biocontrol
- **Beaver Identification Assistance:**
 - Deirdre proposed involving volunteers in Phaedra's beaver identification work.
 - Volunteers could assist if a specific program is in place with clear instructions.

Questions and Discussion, Next Steps (John Leary, RiversEdge West)

- Projects need volunteers but logistics are difficult. Especially for river-accessed sites.
- Look into building volunteer base