RiversEdge West

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

Strategic Plan

2018-2022

Adopted by the Board of Directors on 12/19/17

www.RIVERSEDGEWEST.org
RiversEdge West focuses on riparian forest and floodplain health in the American West to address impacts from invasive riparian (riverside) plants such as Russian olive and tamarisk, challenges associated with climate change and habitat fragmentation, and stressors that may result in diminished biodiversity and ecosystem services.

RiversEdge West provides credible information on the best practices and technical aspects of restoration (e.g., techniques for managing invasive riparian plants and re-establishing natives). RiversEdge West also specializes in fostering grassroots leadership by bringing diverse stakeholders together across boundaries to coordinate the restoration of riparian lands. This is accomplished by helping practitioners assemble resources (e.g., gathering information, securing funding, raising public awareness) to better understand and navigate restoration challenges and succeed in the sustained recovery of affected river systems.

VISION | RiversEdge West envisions a network of healthy riparian ecosystems throughout the American West.

The desired network of riparian areas that RiversEdge West envisions is ecologically resilient, consisting of a diverse assemblage of native plant species of various age classes, sustained through natural regeneration of native plants, suitable hydrology (i.e., year-round or perennial flows, intermittent or ephemeral flows, etc.), and managed by a community of local stewards.
VALUES | RiversEdge West protects the quality and ecological integrity of riparian lands as an important means to promote the economic, social, and cultural well-being of communities in the American West.

Invasive plants in riparian ecosystems directly impact recreation and agricultural production, diminishing quality of life and threatening local economies in river-dependent communities. RiversEdge West understands the close connection between people and rivers, and considers human uses of the river (e.g., clean water, agriculture, development, recreation, etc.) as integral to planning restoration goals and managing riparian systems over the long-term.

Community engagement on various levels is critical to achieving long-term success in sustaining healthy riparian areas. RiversEdge West promotes the engagement of numerous partners throughout all phases of the river restoration process.

Comprehensive riparian restoration is accomplished with respect for biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, existing water laws, property rights, cultural and social values, and livelihoods. RiversEdge West is a politically-neutral organization, working collaboratively with diverse people and interests with the shared goal of improving riparian lands.

2018–2022 GOALS

- **Riparian Health**
- **Access to Information**
- **Awareness and Support**
- **Science and Innovation**

Advancing the restoration of riparian lands through education, collaboration and technical assistance.
GOALS — STRATEGIES — OBJECTIVES

RIPARIAN HEALTH

GOAL: Improve and maintain riparian habitat in targeted river systems by fostering a network of self-sufficient community partnerships.

STRATEGY

- Lead, support and/or advise community partnerships to ensure they have the capacity, technical resources, and information required to carry out and sustain riparian restoration work.
- Enhance the network of riparian restoration practitioners by connecting practitioners to each other, subject matter experts, and researchers.
- Promote the use of peer-to-peer sharing methods with practitioners.
- Pursue tools and methods that can enhance resources for private landowners to conduct riparian restoration.

OBJECTIVE

- Serve as the lead for the Desert Rivers Collaborative, Dolores River Restoration Partnership and White River Partnership to ensure partnership engagement, restoration and long-term stewardship activities along the respective rivers, until long-term partnership infrastructure is established to support an ecologically-resilient river system(s).
- Provide support to local stakeholder groups through technical and capacity building until RiversEdge West assistance is unnecessary.
- Support the Purgatoire Watershed Weed Management Collaborative by providing capacity-building resources and leadership until the partnership can be sustained through local leadership.
- Supply capacity to the Cross-Watershed Network to help it become a sustainable entity.
- Augment RiversEdge West’s educational content with the Cross-Watershed Network’s peer-to-peer methods.
- Pilot a private land-focused position in partnership with federal, state, and other entities in 2018 and 2019; sustain and possibly replicate this approach in other states as proven useful.

AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

GOAL: Inform policy and build community awareness to secure support, funding, and an information infrastructure for riparian restoration issues.

STRATEGY

- Raise awareness about the importance of healthy riparian systems.
- Ensure legislative/policy makers consideration of advancing river health, information, awareness, and science.
- Increase funding for riparian restoration.
- Become a nationally-recognized expert on invasive plant impacts and riparian restoration.

OBJECTIVE

- Identify and pursue opportunities to work with relevant state and federal agencies in priority areas to expand resources, funding, and policy support (e.g., well-crafted legislation and permitting processes) for riparian restoration.
- Identify and pursue opportunities to work with schools and communities locally and regionally to expand stewardship and education of riparian restoration (e.g., engage with education organizations; assemble educational resources on rivers, invasive plants, and restoration for other educators to utilize).
- Directly engage and participate in the work of the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and other national and regional policy and funding initiatives to build riparian restoration into their programming.
- Engage in targeted outreach to individuals and foundations to grow funding for riparian restoration.
GOALS — STRATEGIES — OBJECTIVES

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

GOAL: Make technical restoration information and practices readily available to practitioners and future stewards.

STRATEGY

- Provide tailored educational workshops and tools to restoration practitioners.
- Compile and synthesize key information for practitioners.
- Offer youth education programs in the areas in which we are directly improving riparian habitat.

OBJECTIVE

- Outreach information regarding the tamarisk beetle and its potential impacts, with a focus on areas where the beetle is anticipated to move.
- Coordinate educational events and an annual regional management and research symposium based on partner needs.
- Assist partnerships in the training of conservation partners according to their needs and timelines.
- Collaborate with Desert Rivers Collaborative and Dolores River Restoration Partnership to identify and address community needs for youth and public education.
- Maintain and outreach RiversEdge West’s online Resource Center of restoration publications.
- Initiate and provide quality education for consumers and industries about invasive plant impacts and native plant alternatives in restoration activities.

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

GOAL: Improve the state of riparian restoration by encouraging innovation and advancement of new restoration science and management practices.

STRATEGY

- Coordinate with the scientific and technical community to advance information regarding:
  - River flows and associated impacts to riparian habitats.
  - Climate change impacts to riparian habitats and associated adaptation strategies.
  - Remote sensing and mapping, and supporting databases.
  - Development and use of technology-based tools (e.g., mobile apps).
  - Defining success, prioritizing and goal setting (at scale, adaptive management).
  - Carbon sequestration (and other ecosystem services of riparian areas).
  - Improve processes for identifying scientific needs and synthesizing information for policy and land management decision making and actions.

OBJECTIVE

- Develop a periodic publication to help partners with decision making – “new developments in riparian restoration,” with first publication being year-end 2018.
- Conduct an assessment of need for restoration-related scientific research and advances that can inform education event structure and content; pilot this process as part of the planning for the 2019 conference.
- Encourage the development of mapping technology and similar projects to assess the extent of the riparian invasive plant problem on western rivers.
- Support the continued development of standard methods for monitoring and evaluating restoration progress.
- Support the continued development of project planning tools, specifically cost estimation.
GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The boundaries on this map are flexible and indicate the general regions where RiversEdge West provides programs and services.

Across the West | The outer circle encompasses the entire region where RiversEdge West provides advice, information sharing, and practitioner education. Throughout the West, the organization brings resource managers and communities together to address common riparian restoration challenges; coordinate and leverage resources, build capacity and collectively implement riparian restoration actions; engage communities; and promote stewardship.

Regionally | The middle circle represents where RiversEdge West provides direct support to the local restoration leaders, land managers, partnerships, and networks. RiversEdge West “props up” community-based partnerships to build organizational and fundraising capacity, while providing technical and scientific assistance.

Locally | The inner circle, proximate to it’s headquarters in Grand Junction, Colorado, represents the area where RiversEdge West provides direct leadership to riparian restoration partnerships, engaging land managers, community members and youth in restoration, education and stewardship activities.
OPERATING PRINCIPLES

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Financial sustainability and fiscal responsibility are primary principles of the organization. RiversEdge West strives to diversify its funding portfolio, increase the percentage of income from individual contributions, and has set a goal of establishing a three-month operating reserve by the conclusion of 2022.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY
In order to achieve its mission and maintain an appropriate level of capacity, RiversEdge West ensures that the organization has well-qualified and committed people (staff, board, and volunteers) who have the expertise needed to meet its goals.

RiversEdge West will always invest in the staff’s ongoing professional growth and development. Furthermore, it will constantly reach outside the organization to form strategic partnerships that benefit the mission.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA
In order to remain responsive and focused on the strategies in this plan, RiversEdge West has created the following criteria as a basis to consider when making decisions regarding new projects or evaluating existing programs:

- Will it make a significant impact toward meeting the goals of RiversEdge West?
- Does this project fit within the current area of expertise, or is it an opportunity to grow expertise?
- Is there a role for RiversEdge West to fill? Is RiversEdge West the best organization to fill that role?
- Are there other organizations working on this issue? Are there collaboration opportunities?
- Does the organization already have, or can it attract, the resources needed to take this project on?
- Does the anticipated outcome justify the level of resources needed to implement the project?
- Will this project allow RiversEdge West to stay politically neutral?

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION
RiversEdge West has established a comprehensive annual action planning and evaluation process to ensure success in achieving the intended impacts of this plan. Periodic reports on overall progress are reviewed by the Board of Directors for alignment with the organization’s vision and stated goals.