

2018



Annual Report



**A MESSAGE FROM
EMILY AND RICA
DRRP CO-COORDINATORS**



Rica Fulton
Restoration Coordinator, RiversEdge West



Emily Kasyon
*Watershed Programs Coordinator,
Conservation Legacy's Southwest
Conservation Corps*

Dear Partners,

Since 2009, the Dolores River Restoration Partnership has collectively conducted restoration activities on over 200 miles of the Dolores River riparian corridor. Trust built across two states, five counties, four Bureau of Land Management field offices, and dozens of private landowners has led the partnership to fulfill our ecological, social, and economic goals in southwestern Colorado and eastern Utah.

In 2018, several milestones were reached:

- 2018 marks the 10th year of collaborative work along the Dolores!
- Volunteers of all ages collectively worked 956 hours on projects throughout the Dolores River Basin.
- Field data collection was streamlined through the implementation of tablets to gather and visualize spatial data.
- The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies completed three years of bird monitoring along the Dolores in Colorado and Utah.

The year 2018 was exceptionally dry for the Dolores, yet native plant communities are continuing to persist; representing the resilience of the river system. While many changes have occurred within the DRRP in the past few years, such as funding, leadership, and goals; the endless passion for the Dolores River has driven all of our partners to embrace the Partnership's metamorphosis. Both of us are honored to help drive the DRRP towards continued growth and ecosystem-wide restoration. We are excited to raise awareness, garner additional support, and expand the ecological projects housed under DRRP.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your continued commitment to the Dolores River.

Rica Fulton
Rica Fulton
RiversEdge West

Emily Kasyon
Emily Kasyon
Conservation Legacy



A FAREWELL FROM MIKE WIGHT:

Hello Everyone!

As I transition away from Conservation Legacy and my tenure with the DRRP, I've spent a lot of brainpower reflecting on what it has meant to be a part of such an inspiring collaborative. I'm so proud of what we've accomplished together! I recall my first days in early 2010, sitting in the Tres Rios BLM Field Office with partners discussing nuances such as how to connect with private landowners and how to instigate and implement restoration across multiple boundaries and fences, to today where together we have, and continue to, complete so much important work.

We've faced a host of challenges between government shutdowns, staff transitions at every level, changing funding regimes, and on the ground-drought conditions, flash floods, and new secondary weeds. In the initial phases of partnership we were only concerned with "whacking the tammies," and today we have a robust follow-up treatment plan, secondary weeds treatment teams, a comprehensive monitoring strategy, a GIS geodatabase to track our efforts towards restoration, with cover class of native vs. invasives and passive recruitment as qualifiers to inform Acres Restored across 175 miles of river.

At one time we thought our initial treatments of tamarisk would significantly decline, but thanks to the resiliency of partners such as the BLM, and new funding opportunities through CWCB and others, we continue to treat new areas each year in the Uncompahgre and Moab BLM Field Offices, and to address remote and hard to access areas originally crossed off the list of possibilities. Efforts to impact native fish are also relatively new, such as the berm removal at the state line that is reconnecting a long closed off side channel that can provide critical backwater habitat.

In the midst of all this change and development we've continued to engage and train the next generation of stewards through our work with Canyon Country Youth Corps, Western Colorado Conservation Corps and Southwest Conservation Corps.

As a great example of how we can develop leadership through the DRRP, I'll note in particular how Emily Kasyon has transitioned from a member on a chainsaw crew to running a very successful monitoring program on the Dolores, collaborating with other corps, and more recently to navigating the nuance of grant writing, reporting and partnership engagement with newly hired Rica Fulton at RiversEdge West. Emily and Rica are in a great place to combine their on-the-ground experience, improvement of structure and DRRP engagement, breathe life back into the website, and continue to fund and implement a complex host of projects across a broad landscape.

Personally, while my departure from the DRRP is indeed bittersweet, I also feel confident in the renewed direction of the partnership, the continued collaboration with new and existing BLM staff, an effort towards reconnecting with private landowners, and continued fund development that will ensure that the DRRP and the investments that have been made in this iconic river will continue to persevere and improve over time. This work is truly important; we can both see and feel the impacts along the river. Keep up the good work everyone! Its been an absolute pleasure working with you, getting to know you and sharing our passion for restoration.

Please keep in touch, you can still reach me at 970-749-2796.

With pride,
Mike Wight



ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSES

STRENGTHENING RIPARIAN SPECIES IN THE FACE OF DROUGHT

Moving into a decade of project implementation, the DRRP has many skilled hands working throughout the year to enhance riverside habitat. The restoration of over 1,700 acres has shifted much of the riparian corridor to a thriving, healthy system. The myriad of partners and our collective success remains a testament to the importance of collaboration and continued partnership.

PROGRESS TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL GOALS IN 2018

- 31** → Acres of tamarisk stands initially removed
- 35** → Acres of revegetation (seeding native grasses & planting forbs, shrubs, & trees)
- 94** → Acres of tamarisk re-sprouts treated
- 106** → The number of acres of secondary weeds (e.g. Russian knapweed, hoary cress) treated



Photo credit: Conservation Legacy

Southwest Conservation Corps Strike Team members prepare backpack sprayers to treat Russian knapweed



Saw crews from Western Colorado Conservation Corps remove tamarisk and drag cut limbs to a chipper along a narrow bank between Hwy 141 and the river, improving visibility and safety along the windy road

Photo credit: Western Colorado Conservation Corps

SOCIAL SUCCESSES

SUPPORTING YOUTH AND AESTHETICS

Consistent with our commitment to fostering the next generation of stewards, the DRRP created 43 jobs for youth and young adults through 8-person Conservation Corps Crews as well as through smaller strike teams. Alongside technical resources from BLM land managers and experts, useful and comprehensive work and training was accomplished.



Photo credit: Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
Volunteers with WRV discuss the method for caging newly planted cottonwoods, which will protect them from beavers.



Photo credit: Conservation Legacy
Middle schoolers from Paradox valley charter school dig a deep hole to plant a cottonwood in near the boat ramp in Bedrock, CO

PROGRESS TOWARDS SOCIAL GOALS IN 2018

- 43** → Number of conservation corps crew members and leaders engaged
- 7633** → Number of work hours by conservation corps crews
- 63** → Number of volunteers engaged

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

GATEWAY PLANTING EVENT

In November, 2018 the DRRP sponsored a Dolores River Riparian Habitat Restoration event with Gateway School and Gateway Canyons Resort. Gateway School students and volunteers planted several hundred native plants in three distinct areas along the Gateway Interpretive trail site. One-gallon container plants grown expressly for the site were used, reflecting a range of moisture needs such as rabbitbrush, willow, 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 National Wild Turkey Foundation, Bureau of Land Management, Gateway Canyons Resort, and the Colorado Native Plant Society.

WILDLANDS RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS

In September, 2018 Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV) brought 24 volunteers from the Front Range for a 2-day planting event in Big Gypsum Valley. Volunteers planted and caged 80 long-stem cottonwoods, removed tamarisk new growth from the planting area, and spread 100 lbs. of native seed mix along the bank. The DRRP sponsored event was held just downstream of the Big Gypsum boat launch at a site that has seen continual restoration work since a dense infestation of tamarisk was initially removed in 2011. This work was made possible by the awesome volunteers and staff at WRV, the Southwest Conservation Corps strike team, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Wildland Scapes LLC, and the Bureau of Land Management.

PARADOX VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICE-LEARNING DAY

The DRRP hosted a service-learning day for students from the Paradox Valley Charter School at the Bedrock boat ramp in October 2018. Students planted and caged 20 cottonwoods with the help of the Southwest Conservation Corps strike team and Jasmine Anenberg, Field Biologist with the Canyon Country Discovery Center. Ken Holsinger, biologist with the BLM, also gave an educational talk about the wildlife that the river supports and the benefits of restoration. Funding for this event was provided by the Southwest Water Conservation District.

MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

SEEKING OPPORTUNITY, ADAPTING TO CHANGE

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. When we can, we buy supplies from local companies and hire local contractors, collectively fostering local interest and benefits to surrounding communities.

2018 ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

\$690,018

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



Monitoring crew member Steve Licavoli checking out a naturally established cottonwood as part of the rapid monitoring protocol

Photo credit: Conservation Legacy



A saw crew from Western Colorado Conservation Corps smiling after a successful hitch removing tamarisk from Disappointment Creek, a major tributary to the Dolores River

Photo credit: Western Colorado Conservation Corps

WHAT IS RAPID MONITORING TELLING US?

The DRRP started rapid monitoring in 2014, and although the methods have been tweaked and refined over the years the goal has been the same: to collect meaningful data that tracks restoration progress across all restoration sites. This data has allowed the DRRP to keep an eye on secondary weed infestations and tamarisk re-sprouts, evaluate native vegetation growth, and assess overall site health to inform management decisions.

The most recent 3 years of monitoring data (2016, 2017, and 2018) show that almost 85% of sites have less than 30% tamarisk and that almost 70% of sites have greater than 50% native cover, which means the partnership is well on its way to achieving ecological goals but there is still a lot of work to do to keep these sites on a good trajectory. The monitoring data reveals that areas where tamarisk has been removed will re-sprout if left unchecked, so re-treatment of these areas as well as planning for retreatment for future tamarisk removal projects continues to be a big priority for the partnership. Monitoring teams have also mapped Russian knapweed on over 90% of sites, stressing the need to continue secondary weed treatments.

LOOKING AHEAD:

To date, the DRRP has removed tamarisk on over 1,700 acres of the riparian corridor along the Dolores River and some tributaries. In many reaches, the only areas not treated are prohibitively difficult to access in deep and remote canyons; until a logistically and economically viable way is found.

Tamarisk re-sprout, secondary weed, and active revegetation treatments, as components of the 'maintenance' phase of restoration, are continuing in order to protect previous investments and move sites further toward a restored and resilient state. The DRRP has ramped up monitoring and maintenance of treated sites, to ensure long-term stewardship of important riparian lands.

While the response of native plant communities to restoration actions has been impressive, it is apparent that return to 'native' or even 'historical' conditions may not be feasible due to hydrologic modifications high in the watershed, among other environmental factors. Within five years, DRRP leadership would like to better understand the future hydrologic realities and strategize how to best restore riparian vegetation along the Dolores.



Photo credit: RiversEdge West

Gateway school kids and volunteers busy planting a variety of native species in Gateway, CO

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

THE FOLLOWING PROVIDED CASH OR IN-KIND SUPPORT IN 2018:

AmeriCorps

Ann and Dave Brach

Anne Yoshino & William Grimes

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Bennet Family

Bureau of Land Management

Bureau of Reclamation

Canyon Country Discovery Center

Canyon Country Youth Corps

Cole & Kara-Lynn Crocker-Bedford

Colorado Canyons Association

Colorado Department of Agriculture

Colorado Department of Transportation

Colorado Mesa University

Colorado Natural Heritage Program

Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Colorado State University Extension

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Conservation Legacy

Cross-Watershed Network

Dolores County, CO

*Dolores Watershed & Resilient Forest
Collaborative*

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

Montezuma Land Conservancy

Montrose County, CO

Moore-Larsen Family

National Wild Turkey Federation

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Navarro Research & Engineering, Inc.

OP Ranch

Paradox Valley Charter School

Pat Greer

Rim to Rim Restoration

RiversEdge West

San Miguel County, CO

San Miguel Watershed Coalition

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



TO LEARN MORE, CALL 970-256-7400

OR VISIT DRRPARTNERSHIP.ORG