

WHITE RIVER PARTNERSHIP MEETING, VERNAL, UT 5/11/16

Partnership Attendees

- Daniel Emmett – BLM Vernal
- Julie Knudson – Tamarisk Coalition
- Rusty Lloyd – Tamarisk Coalition
- Dave Bastian – Utah Conservation Corps
- Adam Percival – Permittee
- Jerrad Goodell – BLM
- Matt Breen – Utah Division of Wildlife
- Mike Bertagnolli – BLM Vernal Fire and Fuels
- Scott Chamberlain – SITLA
- Jessi Brunson – BLM Vernal
- Sonja Wallace – SITLA
- Darrin Brown – TriCounty Health
- Terrell Thayne- UDAF GIP
- Andrea Merrell – USDA NRCS
- Ben Bloodworth – Tamarisk Coalition
- Debra (Deej) Brown – Branch Chief – BLM Vernal
- Ryan Snyder – BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) - Colorado
- Mary Taylor – BLM White River Field Office (WRFO)- Colorado
- Carl Adams – DEQ-DWQ
- Scott Hacking - DEQ
- Kirby Arrive - Ute Tribe
- Brandon McDonald – BLM Vernal - heavy involvement since 2009
- Dixie Sadlier – BLM Vernal

- Natasha Hadden – BLM
- Matt Scott – Rio Blanco County Weed and Pest (not able to make it but wants to be involved)
- Karl Fleming – USFWS (not able to make it but wants to be involved)

Presentation - Current State of White River – Daniel Emmet – Vernal BLM

- Introduction of tamarisk
- Introduction of Russian olive
- White River – pretty tight canyon, some areas where not much of a floodplain, but in areas where have more of a floodplain – tamarisk infestation is a common state. Hard to push cows through tamarisk, plant diversity low because pretty much a monoculture, not much insect diversity, fewer birds and fewer small mammals, etc. Jessi Brunson also added that when tamarisk comes in – a lot of times then cheatgrass sets up in the understory also. Matt Breen says a geomorphologist has aerial photography from 1927 to 2015 – channel has shifted dramatically every 30 years – that it is a very active channel historically – so tamarisk removal will hopefully return the river back to being an active channel (whereas now in some places it is armoring banks and inhibiting natural channel movement)
- In 2014 received WRI money to do Russian olive and tamarisk work. Tamarisk was very dense and slow to work through
- Conservation Corps efforts on the ground – very dense stumps – Daniel counted rings on one stump and got approximately 30 years of age. Pictures about 5 river miles downstream from Bonanza Bridge
- 2015 work – contracted out 122 acres of Russian olive – had road access so were able to get chipper in there? Also had one UCC crew in 2015. All 2015 work was right by the bridge.
- 2016 work – applied for WRI money – waiting to hear. Now would like to create partnership and apply for additional funds. Future funding – PFW, NRCS, other
- What we have learned so far
 - Fall = best results
 - Summer is too hot
 - Avg cost of project is approx \$2000/acre
- Future issues
 - Costs

- Control techniques – need to figure out better techniques for tamarisk
- Revegetation
- Monitoring and maintenance
- Funding sources
- Showed video of heavy machinery owned by Summit – made quick work of chipping up a Russian olive tree – Track hoe chipper – (buncher/feller?)
- Questions
 - Secondary weeds – what are other big ticket secondary weeds to be concerned about besides tamarisk?
 - Scale of project – Whole river is 195 miles – approximately 50 of those miles are in Utah – Daniel’s BLM office (Vernal) = about 1200 acres, but that doesn’t include tribal lands or anything on the Colorado side
 - Funding – WRI
 - Desert Fishes Habitat – there may be some funding there – need to talk to Krissy Wilson in Salt Lake

Partner Presentations

- Matt Breen – Utah Division of Wildlife
 - Approx. 60 fish species in area – only 12 of these are native – and 8 of these are either officially endangered or state threatened; 7 of these 8 imperiled species call the White River home
 - White River still has pretty natural flow regimes so there is real potential to bring these fish back from the brink
 - Right now seeing 3 of the 4 endangered species in the White River - Pikeminnow, razorback suckers (now seeing them in the White River)
 - Bonytail (there are so few left in the wild don’t know a lot about them – trying to learn more about these species)
 - Last year was the first documentation of these fish spawning in the wild
 - Want to preserve/enhance off-channel floodplain habitat for these fish – need these backwater areas (important rearing habitat to complete their early life history)

- State sensitive species – want to keep these from being federally listed so want to help these populations now – bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, roundtail chub; one of the more robust populations for all three species range-wide
 - Duchesne River – similar system as the White River, flow recommendations were compromised for minimal flow targets to the detriment of wildlife (i.e., nonnative aquatic and terrestrial species have flourished under altered conditions)
 - Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program – working on a White River Management plan right now that is tied into a flow recommendation (setting target highs and target lows) so stay tuned – Matt is trying to stay tied into this
 - We need to preserve what water we can to prevent duplication of conditions in the Duchesne River
 - Native Fish Conservation Area – watershed level protection – the White River is a place that could potentially qualify for this – that requires multiple partners working together
 - 2011 – incredible water year – with high flows like that – endangered razorbacks and all three state sensitive species had best recruitment year since 2008 (previously not monitored)
 - They do not take water quality samples typically, but at one point they did have a project related to Wolf Den fire where they used fire money to measure water quality above and below the Evacuation Creek confluence (wolf den fire drainage) But do measure turbidity and conductivity and temperature during all fish surveys. Continuous temp logger attached to Bonanza Bridge PIT antenna (initiated September 2012).
- Debra (Deej) Brown – BLM - speaking about partnerships
 - Partnerships are so important for getting work done
 - Example – in an area she worked previously - cheatgrass was moving in and partnership group worked together to list cheatgrass as a noxious weed in the County so ranchers and other folks could get assistance to treat it at 50% discount (likely through a local county program that required weeds to be listed as noxious in order to offer discounts on herbicide, etc?)
 - BLM and USFS working together to monitor infestation of tamarisk to ensure control and that it wasn't spreading
 - We are increasingly asked to do more with less time and money – it is critical to work together with other partners to make this happen

- Mike Bertagnolli – BLM Vernal Fire and Fuels
 - Russian olive – kind of fire neutral – fire doesn’t burn well through a Russian olive stand on his properties – more concerned about its invasive nature
 - Tamarisk – he has observed that tamarisk will get oily – then winds come in – and combine that with a human caused fire – fire spreads and wipes out cottonwood bottoms that are mixed in with tamarisk – they can lose multiple cottonwood ‘bottoms’ per year – and since tamarisk survives fire well typically can move right back in
 - Their main concerns/interests
 - Tamarisk beetle – results in almost dead or standing dead tamarisk – fuels hazard
 - Hand crews – leaving piles to do controlled burns – seems like a pretty good strategy - have to write a burn plan and be careful of windy conditions but otherwise not a big problem. Only real concern is keeping an eye on burn pile spots for secondary weed invasion/lack of revegetation down the line. Only other challenge is that pile burns typically occur in winter and sometimes air quality issues in winter because of inversion so can be tricky to get a burn window because air quality folks won’t let them burn
 - Can leave piles as is for wildlife habitat – don’t always have to burn
 - He likes chipped debris spread around
 - Mary Taylor from Colorado WRFO BLM said that they like leaving ‘wildlife piles’
 - Jessi Brunson – BLM Vernal - says on Green River – they left felled trees all over the site and now difficult to get back in, so may be important on some sites to do something with biomass – don’t just leave felled trees scattered around
 - In this regard, Mike recommends putting a prescription in place with contractor dealing with your invasive woody biomass – require that anything under 16? inches they need to either chip or pile. Anything over 16? inches you can leave on the ground. But some folks may want to set a prescription smaller/more strict than this (contact Mike for further details)
 - For fish habitat – someone said they need more woody debris in river for fish, but this can be a tricky issue
 - Ryan Snyder – BLM WRFO - says they had so much chipped debris on ground that it inhibited regeneration. Mike’s response was to recommend if going to chip, then require contractors to spread out chipping to recommended maximum depth allowed so that don’t get deep piles of chipped materials in some places.

- Rusty Lloyd, Tamarisk Coalition - pointed out should share Escalante material regarding putting woody debris in river – pros/cons, methods

- Dave Bastian – Utah Conservation Corps
 - Work with young adults who are learning valuable skills and appreciation that they go on to use in their future jobs and often continue restoration efforts
 - They are affiliated with Utah State University
 - Activities – build trail, build fence (Utah is a fence out state regarding grazing), other activities, but things are changing in land management. Used to conduct more work near paved roads, now they are working with a lot of new partners doing more backcountry work
 - Safety – They provide all crew members with Wilderness First Aid training, and many crew members getting Wilderness First Responder certifications. They also have remote safety communication equipment
 - Equipment they have – Chipper, boats, brush cutters, GPS units, Ipads for mapping and monitoring and data collection, etc
 - Other partners currently working with – Tamarisk Coalition, Rim to Rim Restoration (native plant nursery based in Moab)
 - In Utah have 2 Conservation Corps (versus in Colorado have 16 Conservation Corps he thinks)
 - Young adults on these crews – yes they are out conducting restoration work and learning skills, but these are also the future youth who will be taking care of our public lands
 - Questions
 - Contracting with UCC – they send out 4 person crews typically (a leader plus 3 crew members) with all their equipment. Cost = \$2900/week, unless running chainsaws then it is \$3200/week. With a County they just have to put together an MOU, but with federal government need to go through (Grants.gov?) Crew members get a small stipend and an education award that they can use for future education or to help pay off student loans. They go into local communities and hire local youth often to help support the local community.
 - Tasks crews can do – they have a variety of experience and can do anything from restoration work to mapping or other projects – open to new projects.

- Machinery versus Conservation Corps – remote access areas or low density infestation areas with good understory that you wouldn't want machinery disturbing – these are places where Conservation Corps really excel.
- Mary Taylor – BLM WRFO - Colorado
 - She has about 12 miles of White River crossing over BLM lands – about 60 parcels – anywhere from 8 feet in size to 1.5 miles
 - Several projects the last few years
 - Olive Garden site – was wall to wall dense tamarisk and a lot of secondary weeds and otherwise poor understory
 - Had several phases
 - 2007 – started as small office project
 - Then later were able to conduct complete TRO (tamarisk and Russian olive) removal – completely opened up site – now focusing on secondary weed removal as a flush of them came in. Now getting a lot more deposits in some areas, more of a beach in other areas (whereas before the banks were more armored with TRO)
 - Environmental Plant Center – that is where they got plantings from
 - Have not had great success with plantings historically, but success improving
 - Lesson learned – they suspect that soil salinity may have been too high so definitely test your soils before you plant
 - Lesson learned - Need to be careful with what herbicides using on (for example) Russian knapweed under cottonwood trees to make sure don't injure cottonwoods
 - Big Trujillo site – approximately 1.5 miles long – mature cottonwood forest, had good understory, fewer secondary weeds – so hoping won't need to do much active revegetation.
 - Have done a lot of good work with tamarisk/Russian olive on this site

- Site doing good but unfortunately may have improved site ‘too much’ in that the public is using it a lot more and creating lots of new recreation related roads on site (kids like to party there, etc) – so working on ways to work with public to help restore site for enjoyment but not inhibit and instead help support restoration efforts
 - Will be applying for additional funding soon for this work
 - Have worked with NRCS, Rio Blanco Weed Coordinator, BLM and others – were able to remove all of the Russian olive and/or tamarisk along several river/creek stretches
 - Matt Scott is doing great work on private lands for tamarisk/Russian olive (TRO) removal and secondary weed treatment (he is Rio Blanco County Weed Manager in Colorado). Matt was sorry that he could not be here at the partnership meeting today.
- Questions
 - Ben Bloodworth pointed out tamarisk beetle – big experiment now – once beetles are in the system they often stick around in some capacity but can get population ups and downs/cycles. Beetles overwinter in the litter – if get really high flows they will sometimes wash away beetles. Also severely cold winters can knock back beetles as well – can still find the beetles but definitely hurts numbers. Beetles really like hot and dry conditions – cooler moister summers that have occurred in some areas lately have also knocked back populations sometimes too
 - Mary - Lesson learned – choose sites wisely where can make the most impact
 - Rusty Lloyd pointed out – Matt Scott from Colorado – Weed and Pest Manager – have a Weed and Pest District there – they have been very active over the years and just received an \$85K grant to continue restoration work on White River on Colorado side
 - Mary – on a tree by tree basis - whenever they have approached private landowners and asked them if they could take out one Russian olive tree here and there – the landowners are almost always receptive and didn’t even know it was an invasive
- Karl Fleming – USFWS – wasn’t able to be here today but if you are interested in increasing wildlife value on private lands, he may be able to secure funding for you.

- Rusty Lloyd – Tamarisk Coalition
 - Small non-profit based in Grand Junction but work with restoration partnerships all across the West – providing education and technical resources, including helping partnerships to connect with funding
 - Help single partners and partnerships to restore rivers – work with private and public entities – either provide resources directly to partners or connect partners with others who have the resources they need
 - Tamarisk Coalition doesn't just help remove tamarisk – organization works to control a host of weeds (woody and herbaceous) that occur along the river and provide tools for full restoration (not just weed removal)
 - Key point is that weed removal is not the whole story – critical to look at whole picture and ensure that improving the health of the river enough such that areas do not just reinvade with invasive species (e.g. active revegetation, etc)
 - Education is a large piece of what Tamarisk Coalition does
 - For partnerships – just depends on what partners need – can provide assistance with training, finding resources, finding funding, connecting partners, help with planning and monitoring, etc
 - Can go to Tamarisk Coalition website for a host of resources as well = <http://www.tamariskcoalition.org/>
 - Daniel Emmett – said that Tamarisk Coalition conference is an incredible resource for learning new tools and information for restoration efforts
 - Daniel Emmett – pointed out so important not to try to do this work alone – really helpful to have partners sharing information and resources

- Andrea Merrell – USDA-NRCS
 - Can provide funding (e.g. EQIP) – can work with Tribe/private landowners for brush management, herbaceous weed control, and developing a plan to help restore property. In the case of tamarisk, Russian olive, whitetop, etc – follow up treatments of weeds as well.
 - Funding intended to cover portion of costs but not full costs (can get loans through UDAF-GIP program, or can provide match contributions through labor, etc)
 - EQIP is where the bulk of their funding is, although there are other programs
 - Applications must be submitted for EQIP before October 15

- Questions/Other Notes
 - A college owns some property along the river as well

- Carl Adams – DEQ-DWQ
 - Focus is on water quality – nonpoint source and point source – White River currently meeting standards and wants to keep it that way
 - Get funding from EPA and state funding (Water Quality Board)
 - TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Loads) implementation/compliance – key piece of what they do
 - Habitat projects – they do participate in those throughout the state – significant issue for water quality potentially
 - Can help with streambank stabilization and shading (e.g. pole plantings, etc)
 - So they can help with White River project potentially funding-wise, but will depend on amount of funding they have in a given year and other applications submitted
 - Uintah Basin – last time prioritized this basin because had challenges with Lady’s tress, etc and didn’t have enough applications – so this next round might have same issue and White River applications might be good fit
 - They can also provide data – historical data as well as future data collection efforts – great resource for monitoring

- Terrell Thayne – UDAF GIP
 - Can help with grazing-related efforts (including fencing, planting, etc) – could be great pairing with UCC who has experience with fence building, etc
 - Provide a cost-share program, and can help navigate low interest loans
 - Utah Invasive Species Program get approximately \$1 million per year – they typically shy away from tamarisk and Russian olive but if they know that they can help with high priority areas such as riparian areas then they are more willing to contribute funding
 - Can fund cross-fencing, and planting – can cover materials and labor – on private lands is 50/50. On State and Tribal lands the landowner does 25 and they do 75
 - Questions

- Jessi Brunson mentioned - Between water level and high water line – need to get permission from Forestry, Fire and State Lands to treat weeds (Laura Ault is probably best contact as per Ben Bloodworth of Tamarisk Coalition)
 - Watershed Coordinator (Darrell Gilman) can get notes from previous restoration efforts (talk with Daniel Emmett for more details)

- Darrin Brown – TriCounty Health
 - Interested in working with partners in partnership to help keep an eye out for people dumping chemicals and other into river
 - During the oil/gas boom it was more of a problem, but luckily hasn't been as much of a problem recently
 - Would really like to hear from anyone who has any concerns/suspicious related to this

- Sonja Wallace and Scott Chamberlain - SITLA
 - Trust Lands administers lands entwined with BLM
 - Land managed in trust for school children for financial benefit
 - He will facilitate as fast as possible anyone who needs to work with them
 - Also has a lot of experience with revegetation

- Kirby Arrive - Ute Tribe
 - Have developed a few plans recently (for Hookless cactus, for Yellow Billed Cuckoo), and through the development of those plans learned more about tamarisk and Russian olive issues on the White River
 - Also currently working with NRCS on some sage grouse and other projects
 - Working with SITLA on some land issues
 - Seems like there are opportunities to work together – feel free to contact me with questions 435-823-6005 (cell number). Willing to be a point of contact for Utah AND Colorado folks
 - Have a lot of different programs underneath him, so is involved with a lot of different activities

- Invasive species and youth – they are trying to develop a path there
- Tribe is trying to protect and enhance native vegetation on their lands – towards this goal looking for different ways to help nature take its natural course
- Tribe hopes that with the removal of tamarisk and Russian olive can return the river to healthy state

Presentation - Benefits of and Creating a Partnership – Rusty Lloyd, Tamarisk Coalition

- Why partnership?
 - To achieve results that no one can achieve alone
 - Capitalize on each other's strengths
 - Support each other's weaknesses
 - Accomplish results in a cost effective manner
 - Help ensure long time change – just tearing out tamarisk and Russian olive isn't the total answer – need to ensure that we have lasting change with restoration efforts and the other pieces that support lasting change
- Partnerships
 - Ability to connect with people that have valuable successes and valuable failures to share information about
- Key pieces and tools
 - Invested people – this cannot be overlooked
 - A plan
 - Identify the problem
 - What is to be accomplished and how it will be done
 - Goals
 - Ecological
 - Social
 - Management
 - Economic

- Cultural
 - Time frames
 - Governance
 - Geographic extent
- A budget
 - Fund the work
 - Fund the capacity
- Memorandum of Understanding – MOU
 - Clearly outline rules and responsibilities
 - Provides legitimacy
 - Tool for funding
 - Important to recognize that it is a powerful tool, but technically not legally or financially binding. Important way to legitimize partnership for showing potential funders and others that partnership is being thoughtful and partners are deliberately working together to accomplish good work
- Gave example - Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP)
 - Example DRRP MOU being passed around
 - Economic impact over \$6.3 million for local communities
- Another example – Desert Rivers Collaborative
 - When first began, different local agencies and groups not even talking to each other
 - Now these groups are working together and helping each other

Partner Resources - Discussion

- **Survey – Partnership Benefits and Contributions**
 - Survey to help folks start thinking about the benefits of a partnership, and how might contribute; help new partnership to start getting an inventory of what resources we have collectively and help prioritize for the future based on partner interests/needs

- Can hand in survey at end of meeting today, or just hold onto and use to think through

- **Current Funding**
 - Daniel Emmett BLM – WRI funding
 - Tamarisk Coalition – Conoco Philips NFWF funding for a restoration workshop for White River
 - Aim for early October for workshop (September is end of fiscal year and doesn't work for some folks)

Additional Partners/Groups to Bring to the Table - Discussion

- Uintah County Weed Department Supervisor - Nate Belliston (Andrea Merrell recommended bringing him in)
 - Nate Belliston, Manager. Uintah County Weed Department.
nbelliston@utah.uintah.gov 435-828-1071 (cell); 435-789-1073 ext 12 (office)
- Uintah County Conservation District – Darrell Gilman (Terrell Thayne recommended bringing them in)
- Would be great to bring in a hydrologist and a geomorphologist
- Volunteer groups to engage - Dedicated Hunter Program (don't want less than an 8 hour project and give them a significant heads up because a lot of folks are driving from far away), Eagle Scouts, Wilderness Volunteers, River Guardians (or similar)
- Governor's office – Public Lands Coordinating Office – would review the MOU for state agencies reviewing (Carl Adams suggested)
- Possibly invite Alan Bass or others in WRI to table (Daniel Emmett can help with this)
- Representative from Resource Advisory Council (Mary Taylor mentioned)
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Southwest Chapter River Management Society
- Trout Unlimited
- Ducks Unlimited
- Wild Turkey Federation

- Mule Deer Federation
- Utah Conservation Commission
- And Colorado counterparts to a lot of the above organizations
- Green River LCD folks

Next Steps

1. Pull together a draft MOU and send it around to see what folks think and edit, and suggest other partners that might want to be involved in MOU – and set out a deadline
2. Workshop survey – will send out topic ideas for folks to weigh in on – WILL HOLD WORKSHOP EARLY OCTOBER
3. Mass email – share contact information – if upcoming events or funding opportunities come across desk that might be relevant for other partners, questions you might have about who to contact for a certain issue, etc. Will send out notes from this meeting with first mass email.
4. Timing of next partnership meeting – in conjunction with workshop - EARLY OCTOBER