# Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) Meeting 8/13/13 Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Interagency Office, Escalante MEETING SUMMARY P. 1 of 16

#### **ATTENDEES**

Ben Bloodworth, Tamarisk Coalition

Rhett Boswell, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Dennis Bramble, private landowner

Tim Carlson, Walton Family Foundation

Steve Cox, Boulder Community Alliance

Terry DeLay, US Forest Service

Amy Dickey, UT Division of Water Quality

Kara Dohrenwend, Rim-to-Rim Restoration

Kim Dolatta, US Forest Service

Sue Fearon, Boulder Community Alliance

Gen Green, The Nature Conservancy

Tina Greenawalt, National Park Service

Shannon Hatch, Tamarisk Coalition

Amber Hughes, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

Kristen Jespersen, Tamarisk Coalition

Laura Jones, Friends of Verde River Greenway

Afton McKusick, American Conservation Experience

Jason A. Metzger, American Conservation Experience

Edie Mondazze, Grand Canyon Trust intern

Chip Norton, Friends of Verde River Greenway / Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition

Mary O'Brien, Grand Canyon Trust

Charlotte Overby, Conservation Lands Foundation

Noel Poe, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners

Ron Rogers, Escalante River Watershed Partnership (via Grand Staircase Escalante Partners)

Anna Schrenk, Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition

Brooke Shakespeare, US Forest Service

Carolyn Z. Shelton, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

Peg Smith, Boulder Community Alliance

Sage Sorenson, Boulder Community Alliance

Joel Tuhy, The Nature Conservancy

Kristina Waggoner, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners

Linda Whitham, The Nature Conservancy

Mike Wight, Southwest Conservation Corps

Clint Wirick, US Partners for Fish & Wildlife

Michele Straube, University of Utah (facilitator)

Patti Beekhuizen, University of Utah (note-taker)

#### **NEXT ERWP MEETINGS**

- Thursday, Nov. 7 10-5 full partnership meeting, in Escalante
- Tuesday, Dec. 3 10-5 Coordinating Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> annual retreat, in Moab

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#### **UPCOMING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS**

- Sept. 10-11: Cross-Watershed Network (XWN) riparian restoration workshop
  - Cottonwood, AZ (Verde watershed hosting)
  - Primary topics: enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, addressing geomorphic processes, planning for long-term maintenance
- Sept. 12: Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition annual stakeholders meeting, in Cottonwood AZ
  - o Sept. 12-16: Biennial Conference of Research on Colorado Plateau, in Flagstaff, AZ
- Sept. 21: Leave it To Beavers Festival, Anasazi State Park, Boulder, UT
  - o <a href="http://www.utahbeaversfestival.org/">http://www.utahbeaversfestival.org/</a>
- Nov. 5-6: NRST workshop, in Escalante (contact Sue Fearon or Linda Whitham for details)

### GUESTS: VERDE WATERSHED RESTORATION COALITION – Introduction to Verde Watershed

- As part of the peer-to-peer sharing envisioned by the Cross-Watershed Network (XWN), ERWP invited representatives from the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition to join this quarterly meeting, field trip and evening learning session. Three Verde representatives attended:
  - o Chip Norton, board member
  - o Anna Schrenk, program coordinator
  - Laura Jones, outreach coordinator
- Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (pronounced "v-work")
  - Not a legal entity
  - How organization got started and developed its objectives
    - Workshop → getting stakeholders together → 5-year management plan developed by consultant (2011)
    - Ecological, economic, social and management goals
  - Organizational structure
    - Steering committee (10 reps from state and federal government, The Nature Conservancy, Tamarisk Coalition, conservation district); NRCS is unofficial member
    - 20 organizations/agencies actively participating
    - 12 organizations/agencies have signed MOU
    - 4 subcommittees (research & monitoring, planning & implementation, fundraising, education/outreach/engagement)
    - 2 staff (program coordinator and outreach coordinator)

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- Invasives of concern tamarisk (salt cedar), ailanthus altissima (tree of heaven), arundo donax (giant reed), Russian olive
- o Activities to date
  - 450 miles of riparian area to restore
  - 2012 was first field season, using 2 crews (one local, one youth)
  - 2013 will use 3 crews (1 veteran, two youth)
- Friends of Verde River Greenway
  - 7 active non-profits in the Verde Valley
  - Friends organization serves to coordinate their efforts / identify gaps and overlaps
  - Have worked with 140 private landowners so far

#### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **Coordinating Committee** (Chair, Linda Whitham) Miscellaneous ERWP News

- John Spence could not attend today's meeting because he was receiving a NPS Regional Research Management award.
- Kristen Jespersen referred to the ERWP Funding Timeline, which drives the committees'
  activities. The upcoming end-of-year quarter is the busiest one for fund planning and
  fund tracking.
- Status of ERWP-related funding requests:
  - Five Star grant (NFWF) not approved
  - UT Dept of Agriculture and Food -- \$30,000 received for invasive plant removal
    - Contracting with Garfield County to get the work done
  - o BOR WaterSMART proposal to fund watershed coordinator position pending
  - Pulling Together Initiative (NFWF) -- \$75,000 proposal pending for invasive plant removal
  - National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program -- \$17,000 received
  - NPS Challenge Cost Share Grant received
- Fund tracking
  - Total dollar amount received to date for ERWP-related work = \$1.9 M
    - Includes cash and in-kind
    - Information will be put on web portal
    - Plan to update this total funding received information 1-3 times per year
- Second Coordinating Committee strategic planning retreat has been scheduled for 12/3 in Moab
  - Big focus of retreat will be on long-term funding for ERWP and its work

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- Story Clark will be hosting a workshop on private donor and other innovative funding for NGOs
  - Primary audience is BCA and GSEP
  - Workshop is sponsored by Walton Family Foundation for organizational and ERWP-related capacity-building
  - o Focus will be on innovative funding beyond grants to sustain ERWP work
- Pete Skidmore, a consultant for the Walton Family Foundation, visited ERWP activities in Escalante earlier this summer
  - Field trip → develop metrics for long-term monitoring efforts
  - Provided valuable advice on RO removal
  - Now working with Season Martin to track progress in RO removal against goals
- Coordinating Committee is developing a survey for ERWP to conduct a self-evaluation on how it's doing as a partnership
  - o Survey will be sent out to all who have attended an ERWP meeting in the past
  - o Survey results will be compiled in time for the 12/3 strategic planning retreat
- Ten-year Action Plan
  - o Joel Tuhy recapped the process for developing the Action Plan; contents include:
    - Integrity table document current health of target habitats and species
    - Key threats or challenges to maintaining and improving that health
    - Objectives for maintaining and improving health of target habitats and species
    - Specific action steps to meet the objectives, along with assignments of responsibility and timeframes
  - Action Plan informs ERWP committee structure and work
  - Action Plan is being updated to reflect the work that ERWP committees have been doing
    - Joel and Linda will be calling committee chairs to confirm accuracy of updates

#### Woody Invasives Committee (Co-chairs, Amber Hughes and Kris Waggoner)

- Woody Invasives Control Guidelines are being regularly updated
- Crew training
  - 75 trainees this year largest project-targeted training of conservation corps youth in the nation
  - Purpose of training: make crew excellent ambassadors for ERWP and give them hands-on practice
    - Will learn-by-doing on private landowner sites in Alvey Wash

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- Training topics: area they'll be working in, ERWP purpose and goals, information about community in which they are guests, RO removal objectives, risk management details
- o Conservation corps general training precedes this ERWP-specific training
- State and federal dignitaries invited to attend end-of-training closing ceremony
  - 2 confirmed speakers: BLM State Director Juan Palma and Mike Wight

#### Private lands

- Overseen by BCA and FFSL
- One landowner has entered into a 10-year wildlife extension agreement with US Fish & Wildlife and Partners for Fish & Wildlife
  - 140 acres / 1 mile along Escalante Main Stem
  - Taking a comprehensive approach to the landowner's needs beyond RO removal (wildlife cover)
- Working with another landowner; NRCS taking the lead
  - 146 acres
  - Landowner long-term goal is agricultural productivity
- BCA is targeting landowners adjacent to these two projects
- National Riparian Services Team workshop
  - Scheduled for Nov. 5-6
  - Have identified several locations in Alvey Wash for hands-on learning: 1 private landowner, some combined private and public lands
  - Workshop topics: headcutting, erosion, woody invasives removal, grazing management plan
  - Canyonlands Conservation District very involved in workshop want to develop a personalized approach to targeted audience
- 2013 RO project areas
  - Majority of Boulder sites will be retreatment only
  - Most RO removal will take place along the Main Stem Escalante
  - Crews will be based out of Escalante this year
    - Until Nov 6
    - Crew = 8 people, 8 days on/6 days off
  - Alvey Wash get the few RO in side tributaries, create barrier around main Alvey Wash
    - Crew = 4 people (divide up in two's and go into separate canyons)
    - In Wilderness Study Area → hand crews only
  - Wilderness Volunteers group working in GSENM in September; already filled (only one spot left)
  - Funding received from Rethink Dine Power
    - Large focus on education with this crew, less focus on conservation

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- Budget for RO removal "the best news!"
  - Close to 2013 funding goal (\$30,000 short)
- Long-term and rapid monitoring
  - Middle of September, John and Amber will do long-term monitoring in Boulder Creek and Glen Canyon
  - o Amber working with John to get short-term monitoring data forms done
- RO research project update (Mike Scott/John Spence project, Linda Whitham gave report)
  - Trying to understand the invasion process of RO within the Escalante River watershed by collecting tree ring data from RO and cottonwood
  - Field data collection completed
  - o GIS analysis in lab comparing field data to aerial imagery underway

#### Conservation Targets Committee (Co-chairs, Mike Golden and Mary O'Brien)

- Fish-related updates
  - Ongoing Main Canyon projects
    - Hall Creek fish passage
      - New water culvert
    - Forest Highway17 resurfacing (2 miles of road)
      - · Reducing sediment load and water velocity
    - Riparian treatments Colorado River Cutthroat Trout distribution
      - Contract extended to 9/30
      - Fish passage re: connections
      - Cottonwood regeneration
  - Colorado River Cutthroat Trout brood stock development
    - Good egg development this year
  - Calf Creek fish kill report
    - No fish found
    - No piscicide used
- Dixie National Forest monitoring efforts
  - Boreal toad monitoring
    - Intended to head off listing of boreal toad
    - Monitoring to establish habitat
    - 95% of boreal toad sites relate to beaver ponds
  - Fish monitoring
    - Data show population is stable
    - Increasing populations in eastern part of watershed
  - Channel ecosystem stability monitoring efforts

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- Trout Unlimited / BLM aquatics analysis
  - Product expected by end of September
- East Fork Boulder Creek
  - Garkane turned off 2 cfs release as of July 18
  - Environmental analysis for requested variance is due 11/1/13
- Beaver-related updates
  - North Creek assessment
    - Remap beaver dams
    - Third year re-reading willows and expansion of willows
      - Some now over 5' tall
      - Continued expansion to the west
    - Third year repeat photos
    - Host to blond beaver, unique to Garfield County
  - o TrekWest visited beavers on North Creek
  - Filming in North Creek for beaver restoration film
  - East Fork Boulder Creek Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) assessment
    - Ground-truthing assessment
    - Field-testing an app for beaver dam assessment (3<sup>rd</sup> graders can use it)
  - Trainings on beaver
    - "Cheap and Cheerful Stream Restoration" (webinar produced for National Riparian Stream Team), <a href="http://www.joewheaton.org/Home/news-announcements/webinarcheapcheerfulstreamrestoration-withbeaver">http://www.joewheaton.org/Home/news-announcements/webinarcheapcheerfulstreamrestoration-withbeaver</a>
    - Jeremy Christensen presenting at Cross-Watershed Network (XWN) workshop later in September
  - o BLM1 beaver dam incident, 5/19/13
    - Someone tore out primary and secondary beaver dam; stole camera
    - County and state still investigating
    - Beavers rebuilt secondary dam in one day
    - May have compromised monitoring and trend study data collection
  - Video shown documenting how to install a beaver deceiver and flow control device
  - o Leave It to Beavers Festival September 21 in Boulder
    - Keynote speaker: Sherri Tippie
- Springs and seeps updates
  - o Completed 10 springs assessments
  - More in this sub-basin being done today (while meeting taking place)
- "Limiting factors" database to be renamed "watershed resources" database?
  - o Conservation Targets and Science committees have discussed further

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- o Envisioning a web portal click-and-point type of database
  - Map layers with table of contents
  - Point to certain sites for information (e.g., grazing exclosures, water monitoring points, RO removal, springs and seeps)
  - Through overlays, can identify hotspots
  - Could provide links to relevant data available on-line in other databases
- Potential audiences
  - Outreach materials (public access)
  - GIS-based for science and research
- o ERWP website (to be designed) also will include an interactive map element
  - Do not duplicate efforts

#### Science Committee (Co-chairs, Dennis Bramble and Linda Whitham)

- Fire study data
  - o Presentation reviewing tree core data to document fire history in watershed
  - o Exploring relationship between fire and water shortage
  - Looking for research money to expand study
- Adaptation workshop
  - Description of Adaptation for Conservation Targets framework
    - Objective: identify specific actions to be undertaken so that key ecological features continue to persist and function in difficult / uncertain future circumstances
    - Anticipating mega-droughts
  - Discussion about whether to plan adaptation workshop
    - Include topic of drought / future water scarcity in a community survey?
    - Identify possible adaptation options and evaluate how various interests might be affected?

#### Education/Outreach Committee (Co-Chairs, Kris Waggoner and Linda Whitham)

- National Riparian Service Team (NRST) grazing management for riparian areas training course
  - Will be offered for ERWP November 5-6, 2013
  - Topics: collaborative planning, focused monitoring, adaptive management, success through operator commitment
  - o Canyonlands Conservation District has expressed interest to sponsor training
  - Opportunity for livestock producers, agency personnel and others to learn and discuss riparian grazing management together
  - Focus on Alvey Wash
  - o ERWP members can attend for free

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- Conservation Lands Foundation has awarded funding to GSEP for a 1-year 10 hrs/week position
  - Job description: help implement ERWP communications plan, develop ERWP website (within GSEP website), draft news releases, work with committees to develop brochures/newsletters
  - Ron Rogers began in July as ERWP Communications Coordinator (first ERWP "employee")
- Communications Coordinator report / activities
  - Updating ERWP Facebook presence
  - Developing ERWP website
    - Looking for content and feedback
    - Heads up to committee chairs and others: Ron will be getting in touch re: what you're doing and other interesting news items
  - Views "public" as partners / local community / the world
  - o Will include full spectrum of outreach methods and audiences
  - o Fall ERWP newsletter to be completed by end of September
- Meeting participants viewed Visitor Center interpretive panels (describing ERWP) during lunch and breaks
- Plaque documenting ERWP's selection as an America's Great Outdoors project was available for viewing
  - o Plague will be mounted on a boulder outside the Visitor Center
  - Suggestion was made to carve the watershed into the boulder
- ERWP photo repository
  - When submitting pictures, identify when it was taken, who took it, location, what it is, photographer credits
  - o Look for funding to hire an intern for a couple months to create photo repository
  - Can be used to provide information to press
- ERWP representation at County Commissioner meetings?
  - o BOR WaterSMART watershed coordinator could be that person's responsibility
  - Terry DeLay meets with county commissioners once a month, reports on ERWP activities
  - Get on county commission agenda as needed (e.g., to inform them about specific work)

#### **CONSERVATION CORPS UPDATE** (Mike Wight)

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Corps
  - National committee is looking to reallocate existing \$\$ for this purpose

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- Fall 2013 = kickstart signature projects
  - Celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Wilderness Act
  - Would like to use partnerships to brand the conservation corps effort
- Tablet technology
  - Investing in tablets to help crews with monitoring, inventorying, documenting project accomplishment
  - o Interns on Verde and Dolores are using them this summer
- Interns overseeing conservation corps crews
  - o Interns are former crew members, now working on volunteer coordination
  - o WFF supports this as a way to continue growing capability of young adults
  - Will track conservation crews alumni to evaluate benefit of experience to young adults
- Social goals target is to use 65% local, at risk, Native American, veteran crews

#### **GUESTS: VERDE WATERSHED RESTORATION COALITION - Peer-to-Peer Sharing**

- VWRC private landowner approach
  - Set landowner recruitment targets
  - Focusing on large parcels with significant river and riparian miles; trying to combine work with many smaller parcels in between
    - 155 private landowners
    - 345 total parcels
  - Presentation poster talks about process educates about partnership, plants, mapping, treatment
  - Outreach
    - Community gardens, farmers market
    - Host event at local wineries and other venues
      - Invited 150 landowners
      - 95% success rate re: landowners signing up
  - ⊙ Great coverage in local paper → high recognition value for partnership and its work
  - o "I'm a VWRC Partner!" magnets
  - Host annual stakeholders meeting to which all landowners are invited
- Challenges ahead
  - Landowner fatigue
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Long-term maintenance
- 5-year agreements with landowners
  - o Landowners take responsibility for their own maintenance

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#### **OTHER PARTNERSHIP UPDATES**

- Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition
  - Hosted statewide meeting with NRCS (Working Lands for Wildlife), Partners for Fish
     Wildlife, AZ DEQ, AZ Game & Fish
    - Informational meeting to strategize statewide on funding opportunities for riparian restoration in southwest willow flycatcher habitat
    - 70+ participants, including private landowners and tribes
    - Will be writing "hybrid" conservation action plans for landowners, focusing on things like improved irrigation efficiency, energy conservation, etc.)
  - Hosting first Cross-Watershed Network (XWN) peer-to-peer workshop in September
- Southeast Utah Riparian Partnership (SURP)
  - Multi-agency funding to characterize geomorphic conditions on Main Stem Colorado (aerial vegetation mapping)
    - Chris Massengil collated information with ability to query specific areas
    - Fisheries and terrestrial habitats
  - Using FFSL funding to compile vegetation response monitoring data into graphs and site descriptions
    - Could be useful for areas out of Moab
  - 50-60 landowners conducting woody invasives removal funded by Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative (UPCD)
  - Gathering data on amount of acres treated and where / how much have we accomplished?
  - Strategic planning meeting scheduled for January / is this still a necessary entity or should we morph to something else
- Dolores River Restoration Partnership
  - Two conservation crews working a 10-week season in 2013
    - Vast majority on private lands
  - o 6 interns on the ground this fall
- Virgin River Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Collaborative
  - o Full partnership meeting in May, decided to expand to full riparian focus
    - Who will lead this effort?
  - 2-day workshop on geomorphological study
    - Comprehensive look at full system to identify spots what would not wash out in floods
    - Identified high-priority sites for restoration
- (Upper) Gila Watershed Partnership
  - Engaging with Southwest Conservation Corps (Tucson Office)
    - Manage native plant nursery
    - Active tamarisk and RO restoration in southwest willow flycatcher habitat
    - College credit for participants
    - New initiative for an "older" partnership

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- Agricultural valley, mostly private landowners and copper mine, BLM not a major player
- Verde and Gila watersheds cooperating on youth education project
  - Targeting elementary school to community college
  - Organizing youth summit
- Desert Rivers Collaborative
  - o Main Stem Colorado, lower Gunnison River
  - o Getting MOU signed (10-15 people)
  - o Conducting GIS analysis to prioritize

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### Escalante River Watershed Partnership August 12-13, 2013

#### **Meeting Schedule**

#### Monday, August 12

- 1-5 pm -- Field trip
- Field trip stops:
  - Mike Scott: Field aspect of RO research project
  - Geomorphology / channelization: Opportunity to put in cross-channel transects
    - John Spence will not be able to join us (he's receiving an award), so this part of the field trip has to be postponed
  - Additional locations according to Verde Watershed Restoration Project visitors' interest
- · Meet at Highway 12 bridge crossing
- What to bring:
  - Water and snacks
  - Sun protection (clothing, hat, sunscreen)
  - Note that we might be going through shrubby areas and/or waking in the stream / dress according to your comfort level (scratched up legs, heat, stream wading)

#### Tuesday, August 13

- 8-9:30 am Coordinating Committee meeting (Interagency Office)
- <u>10-5 full partnership meeting</u> (Interagency Office)
  - Lunch \$10-12, RSVP by 8/9 to amber\_hughes@blm.gov)
- 7-8 pm Presentation (Interagency Office auditorium)
  - Western Riparian Ecosystems: Focusing on the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle and Its Effects<sup>1</sup>
  - Ben Bloodworth (Tamarisk Coalition Tamarisk Leaf Beetle Monitoring Program Coordinator)

#### Wednesday, August 14

8-10 am – Woody Invasives Control and Restoration Committee meeting (Interagency Office)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Presentation will provide a concise overview of the health of western riparian ecosystems, with special consideration given to invasive species, highlighting tamarisk. Discussion will then cover all aspects of the tamarisk leaf beetle, including a brief history of its study and release, range expansion, population monitoring, and the effects (both direct and indirect) of these beetles on riparian areas. Endangered species potentially impacted by the presence of beetles, such as the southwestern willow flycatcher, will also be discussed. Finally, a broad overview of possible restoration techniques for riparian ecosystems will be presented. The need for partnerships and collaboration in riparian rehabilitation and restoration will be emphasized throughout.

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### **August 13 Full Partnership Meeting – Agenda**

10:00-10:15	Introductions Housekeeping	Facilitator	
10:15-10:30	Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition		
	Committee Updates		
10:30-11:00	Coordinating Committee	Linda Whitham Kristen Jespersen	
11:00-11:45	Woody Invasives & Restoration	Amber Hughes Kris Waggoner	
11:45-12:00	Conservation Corps update	Mike Wight	
12:00-12:30	Russian Olive research project update	Mike Scott	
12:30-1:30	LUNCH (\$10-12) RSVP to Amber Hughes by 8/9		
Don't forget to admire the ERWP interpretive display panels in the Visitor Center			
	Committee Updates – cont'd.		
1:30-2:30	Conservation Targets	Mike Golden Mary O'Brien	
2:30-3:15	• Science	John Spence Linda Whitham	
3:15-3:45	Education/Outreach	Kris Waggoner Linda Whitham	
3:45-4:00	BREAK		
4:00-4:30	<ul> <li>Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition</li> <li>Private Landowner Outreach</li> <li>Other Questions / Lessons Learned</li> </ul>		

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4:30-4:45	Other Partnership Updates	Partnership reps
4:45-4:55	Upcoming Events	All Partners
4:55-5:00	Additional Agenda Items (if any)	
	Schedule Next ERWP Meeting	

Please take care of your own garbage before you leave the meeting