



## Escalante River Watershed Project:

### FAQs

#### ***Why is Russian Olive (RO) here?***

RO is native to parts of Europe and Asia. It was introduced to the West around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a way to build wind brakes and control erosion. The first documentation of RO escaping cultivation was in 1924 in Utah. About forty years ago the RO started growing uncontrollably in the Escalante River Canyon.

#### ***Why cut RO in Escalante?***

There are many reasons for removing RO. Once established, RO will hinder the growth of native plants like cottonwood and willows. The root systems constrict the natural flow of the river by creating narrow corridors with high sides, restricting the water which once flowed onto the plains. The RO also grows prevalently along the banks creating shade. The Escalante River is traditionally a warm water river; the shade cools the temperature which is not ideal for our local river life.

#### ***Why don't we cut Tamarisk?***

Though tamarisk is also an invasive plant in the canyon it is not a cutting priority. In 2006, 2007 and 2008 the tamarisk beetle, *Diorhabda carinulata*, was released on private land surrounding the monument and the results are promising. You can see the remains of the dead tamarisk in the upper Escalante Canyon as it continues to move down stream.

### ***Why do you build piles?***

We build piles as an easy way to dispose of the debris from the down trees. We build two types of piles. Habitat piles are built on the flood planes with the hope of becoming homes for wildlife. River piles are built to be easily flushed down the canyon.

### ***Will you burn the piles?***

Burning the piles is not out of the question, though not our first choice. In this stage of the ERWP project the main concern is initial treatment followed by retreatment. The hopes are that by the time we get to the burning stage of the project, we will find that the habitat piles we have built have become a working part of ecosystem and re-vegetating with native species.

### ***Will the river piles make dams?***

The cuttings will make some dams, but this is part of natural river process that maintains stream habitat, particularly where the river has become deep and narrow.

### ***Is the herbicide safe to use near the river?***

Yes. The herbicide that we use is safe when handled properly and responsibly. Each person has a responsibility to apply herbicide using the correct application processes. The primary herbicides that we use, and their rates of degradation, are described below.

(cited from: <http://www.invasive.org/gist/products/handbook/20.Triclopyr.pdf>)

***Round Up and Rodeo (glyphosate)*** In general, glyphosate is moderately persistent in soil. Soil studies have determined glyphosate half-lives ranging from 3 to 130 days (U.S. EPA, 1990; USDA, 1984). The soil field dissipation half-life averaged 44-60 days. In U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tests using water from natural sources, the half-life ranged from 35 to 63 days (U.S. EPA, 1986).

(cited from: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/emon/pubs/fatememo/glyphos.pdf>)

***Habitat (imazapyr)*** is slowly degraded by microbial metabolism and can be relatively persistent in soils. It has an average half-life in soils that range from one to five months. In water, imazapyr can be rapidly degraded by photolysis with a half-life averaging two days.

(cited from <http://www.invasive.org/gist/products/handbook/17.Imazapyr.pdf>)

### ***What about the bar oil and gasoline?***

Again, each person has a responsibility to prevent the spillage or leakage of these fluids that is not associated with regular chainsaw use (i.e. spilling a sig or dolmar, leaving containers open and unattended.). The 'natural' loss of fluids via a chainsaw while working has such a small PPM (parts per million) that it is not considered a threat to the watershed. Also we are using Stihl BioPlus bar oil which is made from vegetable oil base and is biodegradable.

***What does retreatment look like?***

Retreatment is a big part of the ERWP project. RO is such a resilient plant that only a year after initial treatment the saplings are back at it. We try to combat the new trees by cutting the new growth and treating with different herbicides every few years.

***What is the ERWP?***

The Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) is a coalition of federal and state resource managing agencies, county and city governments, nonprofits, private interests, and research scientists who live and work near or on the Escalante River in south-central Utah. This diverse group of stakeholders shares the vision of restoring and maintaining a relatively intact and natural Escalante River and its associated watershed.

***Are there other people working on this project?***

There are many groups working on managing the RO invasion. Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, the BLM, NPS, USFS and UT Forestry Fire and State Lands are working on ERWP woody invasive restoration projects. These partners hire and oversee a variety of crews to do the on-the-ground work. The crews hired to remove RO change from year to year, and depend on whether they are working on public or private lands. On public lands the majority of the restoration work (RO removal) will be conservation crews, such as Utah Conservation Corps, Canyon Country Youth Corps and Arizona Conservation Corps. Also through the years the ERWP has had help from volunteer groups such as the Wilderness Volunteers and Great Old Broads.