



ERWP Full Partnership Meeting Summary – February 18, 2016

**Escalante River Watershed Partnership  
February 18, 2016, Full Partnership Meeting  
Interagency Visitor Center, Escalante, UT**

**Attendees**

- Mark Ahlijanian, Canyon Country Youth Corps / Four Corners School
  - Dave Bastian, Utah Conservation Corps
  - Nick Behe, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners
  - Matt Betenson, BLM-GSENM
  - Rhett Boswell, Div. Fish & Wildlife (via conference call)
  - Dennis Bramble, Private Land Owner
  - Terry DeLay, US Forest Service, Dixie National Forest
  - Jake Deslauriers, Canyon Country Youth Corps / Four Corners School
  - Amy Dickey, UT Div. Water Quality
  - Daniel Fagergren, National Park Service
  - Sue Fearon, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners
  - Lou Fisher, National Park Service
  - Mike Golden, Dixie National Forest
  - Marsha Holland, GSENM History
  - Amber Hughes, BLM-GSENM
  - Grant Johnson, Boulder/Escalante Canyon Outfitters
  - Brad Jorgenson, National Park Service
  - Robert McElaney, Escalante resident
  - Josey Muse, US Forest Service, Dixie National Forest
  - Jordan Nielson, Trout Unlimited
  - Charlotte Overby, Conservation Lands Foundation
  - Noel Poe, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners
  - Mike Scott, Utah State University
  - Brooke Shakespeare, US Forest Service
  - Craig "Sage" Sorenson, private landowner
  - John Spence, National Park Service / Glen Canyon (via conference call)
  - Joel Tuhy, The Nature Conservancy (via conference call)
  - Loch Wade, Private Land Owner
  - Kris Waggoner, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners
  - Jessie Warner, Dixie National Forest
  - Dave Welz, Conservation Lands Foundation
  - Linda Whitham, The Nature Conservancy
  - Mike Wight, Conservation Legacy
  - Erik Woodhouse, UT Div. Wildlife Resources (via conference call)
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- Michele Straube, University of Utah EDR Program (facilitator)
  - Mara Elana Burstein, University of Utah EDR Program (co-facilitator)



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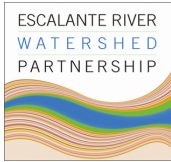
### Introductions/Housekeeping

- VTC (video tele-conferencing) connection is available at the Interagency Visitor Center for future ERWP meetings. No time delay.
- Welcome to new participants:
  - Nick Behe, new Public Lands Coordinator, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners
  - Matt Betenson, Assistant Monument Manager, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (sitting in for Sean Stewart, BLM rep on Coordinating Committee)
  - Jordan Nielson, Trout Unlimited
  - Erik Woodhouse, UT Div. of Wildlife Resources (participated via conference call)

### Coordinating Committee (CC) December 2015 Retreat Update

PowerPoint slides available from facilitator

- Developing summary of 2015 accomplishments now
  - Linda Whitham to contact committee chairs.
  - This will be on the website.
  - Good for grant applications and talking points.
- CC received UT Conservation Partner Award for biodiversity conservation and preservation of UT's special places
  - Award will reside in Interagency Visitor Center rotunda
- CC has an annual retreat at end of calendar year in Moab to review administration of partnership
  - Substantive work of partnership is done by committees, based on 10-year Action Plan (approved by consensus several years ago)
  - Reviewed Action Plan to identify which actions have been completed, which are underway, which not yet started
- ERWP capacity update
  - Watershed Partnership Coordinator
    - ERWP partners reached consensus at October 2015 meeting to hire a Watershed Partnership Coordinator
    - Extensive advertising, many applications received in 2 rounds
    - Multiple interviews
    - Multiple offers made; none accepted
  - Alternate plan to take care of immediate woody invasive-related needs
    - GSEP hired Public Lands Coordinator- Welcome Nick Behe
  - Keep open the option of hiring Watershed Partnership Coordinator in future
- Q: What is the process for getting a Partnership Coordinator? What are the next steps to get us going?
  - A: We need funding and to rewrite the job description. New capacity building for healthy watersheds proposal opportunity due March 13.



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- ERWP Committee reorganization
  - Provided history of Executive Committee, CC, and standing committees
    - Changes made over time to have Coordinating Committee be properly representative of partnership, and to reduce overlap in membership of standing committees
- 2016 committee structure:
  - Coordinating Committee (CC)
    - Each federal agency (3), Youth corps (1), NGO's (2), Committee co-chairs. Chair: Linda Whitham, TNC
    - Reduced number of representatives from same entity
  - Outreach & Funding Subcommittee (a new subcommittee of CC)
    - Implement outreach aspects of 2016 Outreach & Funding Plan
    - Responsible for ERWP capacity funding
  - Standing Committees
    - Woody Invasives Control and Restoration (WICR)
      - Co-chairs: Nick Behe, GSEP and Raymond Brinkerhoff, BLM
      - Responsible for project-specific outreach and funding
    - Science/Conservation Targets (S/CT)
      - Co-chairs: Mike Scott, USU and John Spence, NPS
      - Subcommittees to be created for individual projects
      - Responsible for project-specific outreach and funding
- **Action Item: Sign up for 2016 committees** (sign-up form handed out)
- Year-end financials
  - 2015 funding numbers on pie chart are not final, will update for next meeting
  - Total income: \$1,446,972
  - ERWP depending less and less on Walton Family Foundation; providing more federal funding to match grant funds
  - Will have forecast for 2016 funding at next meeting
- **Action Item: Send 2015 in-kind donation information to Kristen Jespersen**
- Completed 2016 Outreach and Funding plan: identified several new sources of funding including Restore our Rivers Campaign
  - What:
    - Tamarisk Coalition (TC)-led fundraising campaign
    - Jan 2016 – Dec 2017
    - Raise money for restoration work and partnership capacity in multiple watersheds
  - Fundraising goal:
    - ~\$150,000 per partnership x ~9 partnerships + TC admin costs + TC reserves = ~\$2M total
  - How:
    - Identify and cultivate donors that individual watersheds may not have access to
    - Pool the funds to share across participating watersheds.



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- Tamarisk Coalition responsibilities
  - Design, organize, publicize and staff the campaign
  - Collect and develop story-telling information from watersheds
  - Identify potential donors, cultivate them and make “asks”
  - Manage donor database and continued engagement
  - Provide ongoing fundraising assistance to watersheds
- Partnership Responsibilities
  - Provide 30% match for available campaign monies
  - Coordinate with TC and provide information to support donor work
  - Help to organize local fundraising events
  - Work with TC on outreach to individual donors and about campaign
- ERWP will participate, especially because there is an escape option (after a year)
- ERWP submitted pre-application
  - Outreach & Funding Subcommittee to share individual tasks
  - Linda Whitham is ERWP point person now, Nick Behe may take over
- Potential ERWP projects (must help build ERWP’s financial sustainability over time)
  - Watershed partnership coordinator / staff to do strategic fundraising
  - Long-term maintenance and long-term monitoring of Russian olive removal work
- ERWP goal:
  - To get ~\$150,000 from Restore Our Rivers, need to raise \$45k match in 2 years
- Q: Can CC just decide to do this without full consensus?
  - A: Grants targeted to implement 10-year Action Plan or other consensus items do not need to be submitted for consensus again. Consensus approval of the strategy or action item authorizes the partners and committees to pursue funding as needed, especially because grant applications have strict/short turnaround timelines.
- Partnership Agreement- Valid Until 6/23/16
  - ERWP Partnership Agreement terms specify a 5-year term triggered by the date of the first signatory (6/23/11)
  - Signatory partners can expect email from Michele Straube with request to sign document extending agreement date for another 5 years
  - ERWP Charter being updated to:
    - Reflect current committee structure
    - Clarify confusing wording (e.g., distinguish between “partner” and “participants”)
    - Charter to be reviewed today during CC lunch meeting. Will send it around for review.
  - Comment: Agency management will need a lot of lead time to sign Partnership Agreement extension before 6/23/16
  - Comment: Signatory partners will want to review Charter revisions before signing Partnership Agreement extension

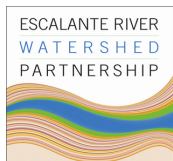


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### Science/Conservation Targets (S/CT) Committee Update and 2016 work plans

PowerPoint slides available from facilitator

- Some updates for this committee are ERWP initiatives, others are info-sharing on projects taken on by individual partners
- Citizen Science (Linda Whitham)
  - ERWP and USU offered WaterWatch Program training in October for locals to collect water quality information
    - Data collected will go into statewide database to get a better understanding of what is going on in state
    - 10 volunteers, 5 partners attended
    - Great day; identified 13 sites to monitor over several next months on public lands (now permitted to do this work). Monitoring has begun on 6 sites
  - Data available at [www.usu.edu](http://www.usu.edu)
  - Q: Is there any mandate or agreement to share data with EPA? Can EPA take action based on citizen science data?
    - A: Data gathering is done in different tiers. This citizen science monitoring is mostly Tier I (simple and fast). If any samples raise concern, the agency follows up with Tier II monitoring (more extensive, with specific rules on how to share that data). Dennis Bramble says that some citizens have been doing Tier II sampling for the past 6-7 months.
  - Q: Does this have anything to do with mercury in fish?
    - A: No. There are some advisories for trout in Escalante, but this is not the focus of this citizen science program. Get fish advisory information at [www.fishadvisories.utah.gov](http://www.fishadvisories.utah.gov).
- Hydrology 2016 data collection on Dixie National Forest (Brooke Shakespeare)
  - Stream flow monitoring
    - Headwaters Escalante River Watershed
    - 4 Streams
  - Precipitation Monitoring
    - 2 Tipping bucket rain gauges
  - Water Temperature Monitoring
    - ~9 streams
  - Channel stability Monitoring
    - Eventually will have some bank erosion rates
- New Escalante Irrigation Company, Wide Hollow Reservoir (Brooke Shakespeare)
  - Recently reviewed emergency Watershed Protection proposal
    - Install 21 rock check dams above reservoir
    - To dissipate flow energy and address erosion
    - Not necessarily a good permanent fix, but this might slow the issue
  - Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP)
    - Stalled because they were not able to find facilitator



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- Canyonlands Conservation District hiring USU student to move this project forward
  - Many small irrigation districts have this issue and USU can be a great resource
  - This can be a good way for ERWP to model something new.
- Springs/Seeps (John Spence)
    - Got \$30k funding for mid-level surveys and characterization in Escalante basin
    - 2 year project
  - Channel morphology (John Spence)
    - Resubmitting USGS grant probably in next couple years to look at relation between channel morphology and Russian olive recruitment
  - Legacy cottonwoods (John Spence)
    - Monitoring slowed last year, rethinking that now
    - Need funding for third year
  - Long term monitoring (John Spence)
    - Time to re-monitor some sites
  - Warm water fish / DWR three species monitoring (Erik Woodhouse)
    - In 2015, did 4<sup>th</sup> year population monitoring to identify relative abundance of 3 fish species.
      - 19 km mainstem Escalante River
      - Good results: found all 3 species
        - Most total number of fish seen since 2009
      - Found roundtail chub (multiple age classes), not seen since 2009
      - Did not catch many non-native species (less than 2%)
    - Q: How many roundtail chub did you find?
      - A: 5
    - Q: Why do you think we are seeing more fish?
      - A: Subpopulations can be fickle. When we sampled we had increased flow and reduced turbidity. Not sure why these are the results.
    - Q: Did you take a look at data from Megan and Rick, etc. They did it in early 2000s. Were these fish in similar location? How did they compare numerically?
      - We sampled different areas; 2000 sampling was downstream of Hwy 12 bridge, 2015 sampling was above and below Boulder Creek.
      - Definitely experiencing a decline over the long-term.
      - May want to do more sampling below Harris Wash (no data since 1990's).
    - Q: Is this info being shared with Phoebe McNeally for watershed database?
      - **Action Item: Michele Straube to will follow up with this**
    - Roundtail chub propagation program
      - Will start in San Rafael River
      - Start brood stock
      - Fremont River is first priority; Escalante River is second priority



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- Cold water fish / native fish conservation action summary (Mike Golden)
  - Sampled roundtail chub, little blue head sucker, and flannel mouth sucker
    - Managed under conservation agreement for 3 agencies
    - Chub found in Boulder Creek, but not numerous in upper watershed
      - Trying to identify stronghold
      - Identifying characteristics: doesn't look like other fish. Mouth is terminal and silvery, not spots like trout or top fin
    - Bluehead sucker, haven't seen major declines since early 2000s
    - Same with Flannel mouth
  - CO River Cutthroat Trout
    - Also managed under conservation agreement
    - In 1990s 5 remnant populations inhabiting 8.2 stream miles (13.2 km) of the Escalante River drainage
    - In 2015 there are 14 populations occupying 27.6 stream miles (44.5 km) in the Escalante River drainage, and an additional 32.7 stream miles (52.7 km) in the Fremont River drainage
    - Showed map with current and historic distribution
  - Other species--speckled dace and mottled sculpin
    - Identifying characteristics: speckley and small
    - Probably most abundant out of all species
    - Mottled sculpin- only found in Boulder Creek
  - Past conservation actions
    - Non-native fish removal and reintroduction
      - 5 streams
      - Responsible for most of the increased occupied habitat for CO River Cutthroat Trout (CRCT)
    - Aquatic organism passage (AOP) projects
      - 8 projects
      - 6 for CRCT
    - Habitat Improvements
      - Nonnative vegetation removal
      - Riparian thinning projects
      - Riparian planting projects
      - Exclosure maintenance
      - Road and trail closures, reroutes, and maintenance
      - Beaver management
        - Beaver reintroductions: DWR is working with counties and local communities to identify locations
      - Outreach and education
      - Native fish brochure
      - Boulder Mountain Sport Fish Management Plan
    - Monitoring
  - Planned future conservation actions
    - Non-native fish removal
      - East Fork Boulder Creek, Calf Creek, and Pine Creek?





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- Nonnative vegetation removal
- Beaver management
- Additional brood stock development
  - King's Pasture Reservoir
- Aquatic organism passage projects
  - West Fork Boulder Creek and Hall Creek?
- Monitoring
  - Roundtail assessment?
  - And 2020 CRCT reevaluation
- Q: In regards to Calf Creek, who is the lead?
  - A: Dan Trujillo was the lead. Erik Woodhouse is somewhat replacing the lead. He hasn't heard much on this project.
- Aspen Update (Terry DeLay)
  - Did project in 2012 to cut out encroaching pinyon and encourage native species
    - If we see excessive grazing, thinking about putting temporary electric fencing to allow natives to establish
  - Mitchell Spring
    - Northern goshawk is indicator species for pinyon/juniper
    - Historically tried to get uniform age crown for timber harvest, which led to fires
    - Current thinking: for ponderosa pine timber type, restore to uneven age structure
    - Going to treat 1000 acres
    - 400 acres of fuels reduction around private lands being developed
    - Turn lower road into motorized trails
  - Iron Springs (Griffen Top)
    - Purpose is to promote aspen and cut conifers over 9000 acres
    - Awarded 3 timber sales to be implemented this year
    - Conifers → regional sawmills
  - Jacobs Reservoir
    - Treatments to promote aspen
  - Q: Is this in response to aspen die-off?
    - A: Somewhat, but we've been able to keep ahead of it.
    - The key is to do enough acres spread across the landscape so they can establish, because otherwise cattle and deer will eat new growth.
    - There is also a lot of natural succession, because aspen only live about 100 years.
- Watershed resource database update and request for data
  - **Action item: Send data to Phoebe McNeally before field season starts**
  - Phoebe is willing to help you populate meta-data
- Reference areas (Dennis Bramble)
  - Long-term restoration in South Hollow – hoping to make this a model
    - Summer – put in automated weather station





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- Measure soil moisture, temperature
    - Piezometer well in lower area
      - Measuring by hand
      - Moving to fancy water auger
    - Look at changes over time
      - E.g., how rainfall affects local groundwater flow
  - Dennis going through repeat photo collection from 1993 →
    - Year-to-year differences in phenology (when things leaf out) relative to rainfall
  - Also looking at private lands to nominate as reference areas
- Monument science update (Amber Hughes)
  - Since Kevin Miller left, Amber Hughes issues science permits.
    - It's been slow.
    - Received half of the reports required from science permit holders.
  - Monument is 20 years old this year
    - More info to follow about activities in various locations around the monument
    - Events probably Sept 18-19, 2016
- Migratory bird survey (Mara Burstein)
  - On 9/30, the ERWP Joint Committees discussed the need for bird surveys in the Escalante Watershed for woody invasives removal—especially for migratory birds.
    - Subcommittee formed and discussed.
    - No vegetation removal is occurring during the nesting and brood raising periods, therefore there is adequate protection for the species.
    - All treatments in Monument will begin after 9/1/16, when all birds are done brooding and rearing their chicks.
  - Amber proposes we request bird survey data from Fish & Wildlife, and add them to watershed database managed by DIGIT lab.
  - **Action Item: Mara to request from Rhett and Keith**
- Russian olive (RO) invasion study (Mike Scott), summary of last night's community talk
  - Russian Olive that were removed -- counted rings to age
    - Slides show specific sites
  - Results:
    - Show establishment periods moving downstream from when RO was planted in 1950s for conservation.
    - Seems like there is a response to precipitation.
  - Conclusions:
    - Narrowing began in the late 1940s – early 1950s
    - Russian-olive introduced/established in Boulder and Escalante in early 1950s
    - Scattered establishment along river mid 1950s – 1970s; likely spread by birds and water



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- Extensive establishment during wet periods in mid 1980s and mid 1990s; 1° spread by floods
  - Invasion narrows and simplifies channel; may alter future riparian states and trajectories
  - Limit seed sources in headwaters; re-treatment and monitoring, esp. during wet periods
- Water study / “people survey” (Michele Straube)
    - Purpose of “people survey”:
      - Identify if there is community interest in learning more about water resources in watershed
      - If no-one in the community is interested, ERWP will focus on other issues
    - Sub-committee held a call in October to discuss survey questions and process
    - Survey is going to be informal and anecdotal, but will give you a sense of community interest
    - Survey process:
      - Select stakeholders to be interviewed, to have cross-section of community in watershed
      - Pick a time period to conduct surveys
      - Conduct interviews
        - Answers will be kept anonymous to encourage stakeholders to give their honest opinion
        - Record answers without judgment or editing
        - Send results to Michele Straube to compile answers and anonymize
      - Compiled answers will be used by this committee to inform future work
      - Compiled answers will also be available to public
    - **Action Item: If you live/work in the watershed and you’re interested in interviewing locals, email Michele Straube.**

## **Woody Invasives Control and Restoration (WICR) Committee update and 2016 work plans** PowerPoint slides available from facilitator

- Public lands (Kris Waggoner)
  - Escalante Watershed is over 15,000 riparian acres
    - 7367 acres have been selected for control
    - Currently 6084 acres have been treated or inventoried (still working out final acreage numbers)
    - In 2015: 401 acres treated
    - In 2015, ground-truthed areas that we thought there was no Russian olive
  - On the mainstem, 71 of the 90 miles of river have been treated
  - Over 400 jobs have been created since 2010
  - Presented map of 2016 proposed treatment areas and funding
- Private lands (Sue Fearon)
  - Entered into MOU with FFSL to help them spend a grant that they wrote



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- Engaged contractor since Sept on private land, throughout winter and will continue
- Working with F&WS on a cooperative agreement to streamline ERWP and F&W coordination
  - Encourage private land owners to opt in
  - Makes it easier to participate
- Developing good relationship with NRCS
  - We have a couple projects being considered as a priority for funding
  - Irrigation efficiency and riparian restoration through a Range Conservation program
- 11 people have been employed locally since September
- Details about RO removal and restoration on private lands are not on ERWP website to protect landowner nprivacy
- Q: Who should website requests go to?
  - A: Kris Waggoner
- Nesting spotted owls
  - Have been found in one location in watershed
  - RO treatment will begin after 9/1 to accommodate this activity

### **Expansion of ERWP membership (Loch Wade proposal)**

- Background and proposal presented
  - Recent situation at Oregon wildlife refuge may afford opportunity to reexamine outreach to resource users and find common interests
  - Suggestion that ERWP make reaching out to resource users a priority goal, and brainstorm ways to meet the goal
  - Suggestion that ERWP explore opportunities for mutual gain with groups currently unrepresented in partnership – “give people a reason to show up”
- Discussion:
  - Definition of “resource user”
    - 13 individuals in the meeting self-identified as “resource users” of public lands in various ways
    - Specific community interests not currently represented as ERWP signatory partners include livestock community, irrigation companies
  - Definition of “participation”
    - Private landowners conducting RO removal and restoration on their property are “participating” in ERWP activities
    - Is coming to meetings the only way we recognize “participation” in ERWP?
  - How to address misconceptions among some groups of what ERWP does
    - ERWP does not influence public land policy, and Action Plan is clear on that
    - ERWP conducts research, on-the-ground activities, information-sharing
    - Individuals and organizations who belong to ERWP may influence public



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- policy on their own, but not as a representative of ERWP – this may be creating confusion
- Suggestions of outreach strategies that will reach a broader segment of the community:
  - One-on-one communications
  - Hold shorter, more targeted meetings in the evenings
  - Hold meetings in different venue (not at interagency offices)
  - Have events be more festive and oriented around food
  - Town / interagency appreciation night
  - Consider holding stakeholder group meetings in addition to the quarterly full partnership meetings (1-2 hours, highlights only)
  - Consider the barriers for ranchers to participate in ERWP meetings or activities
  - Add a question to the “people survey” --- what meeting time would work best with your availability?
  - Create an opportunity for other community members to show up
  - Post a 1-2-page synthesis of full partnership meeting summary at Post Offices
  - Schedule regular briefing meetings with county officials
- Next steps:
  - Subcommittee formed to continue conversation
    - Jessie Warner/FS, Loch Wade, Jake DesLauriers, possibly Joel Tuhy
    - Identify stakeholder interests not currently represented
    - What are their interests, barriers to participation
    - Brainstorm outreach approaches

### Upcoming events

- August 2: Tour of Utah is starting in Escalante.
  - Goal to have educational booth for that.
  - Could also be a good time to celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Monument

### Schedule next ERWP meeting

- Late June might be a good time for an evening community meeting

### Summary of Action Items:

- Get UT Conservation Partner Award displayed in interagency visitor center.
- Linda to contact committee chairs for summary of 2015 accomplishments
- All: Sign up for 2016 committees (via email to Michele Straube)
- All: Send Kirsten Jespersen all 2015 in-kind donations
- Michele Straube to draft and email Partnership Agreement extension for next 5 years.



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- All signatory partners: Sign Partnership Agreement extension and send back to Michele Straube.
- Michele Straube to follow up with Phoebe McNeally to see if native fish data should be included in her database.
- Mara Burstein to request bird survey data from Fish & Wildlife from Rhett and Keith. This is to be added to watershed resource database managed by DIGIT lab (Phoebe McNeally).
- Michele Straube to send invitation to ERWP partners and participants: if you live/work in the watershed and are interested in interviewing locals regarding water, please sign up.



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**Escalante River Watershed Partnership  
February 18, 2016 -- Full Partnership Meeting  
Escalante, UT**

**Meeting Schedule****Wed February 17, 2016**

- 7:30 pm — community invited to learn about Russian olive invasion study (Mike Scott presenting) (*Interagency Visitor Center auditorium*)

**Thu February 18, 2016**

- 8:00-9:30 am – Science/Conservation Targets Committee face-to-face meeting (*Interagency Visitor Center conference room*)
- 10-5 – ERWP Full Partnership meeting (*Interagency Office*)
  - During lunch — Coordinating Committee face-to-face meeting (*Interagency Visitor Center conference room*)
- 5-6 pm — Woody Invasives Committee face-to-face meeting (*Interagency Visitor Center conference room*)
- 6 pm —> dinner (pay for your own) / thank you for Kris Waggoner's service to ERWP (*Cowboy Blues*)

**February 18 Full Partnership Meeting Agenda\***

- Introductions
- Housekeeping
  
- Coordinating Committee December 2015 retreat update
- Science / Conservation Targets Committee update and 2016 work plans
- Woody Invasives Control and Restoration Committee update and 2016 work plans
- Russian olive invasion study – quick summary of results (Mike Scott)
- 2016 committee sign-up's
- Expansion of ERWP membership (Loch Wade proposal)
- Other Partnership Updates
- Upcoming Events
- Additional Agenda Items (if any)
- Schedule Next ERWP Meeting

\* Breaks will be taken at appropriate times in agenda