Escalante River Watershed Partnership
Summary of 2018 Accomplishments

The Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) in its 8th year, has undergone numerous changes, which are reflected in our work and in our achievements. As we enter into this next chapter the partnership remains strong and dedicated to its mission and the goals of our restoration plan, with focus on some new and exciting endeavors. Below is a summary of the outstanding work that the ERWP accomplished, as well as the challenges that we overcame 2018.

General Partnership Accomplishments

Milestones:
• Sue Fearon, Private Lands Coordinator was recognized by the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program “for all her hard work and dedication restoring habitat on the Escalante River”

Transitions:
• ERWP hired facilitation team from Southwest Decision Resources in June 2018 to guide the partnership through its strategic planning process.
• GSEP: Public Lands Manager Stephanie Minneart and Private lands Manager Sue Fearon resigned from their positions at the end of the year. ERWP welcomes Jonathan Paklaian who takes over both private and public lands roles.
• GSENM: Dana Backker and Matt Betensen relocated to new jobs.
• Coordinating Committee welcomed new members: Erik Woodhouse (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources), Sage Sorensen (Board member of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners)
• Dixie National Forest: Hydrologist Natalie Cabrera was hired.

Special Events:
• ERWP sponsored several public outreach events/presentations in 2018: Wild Turkeys in the Escalante watershed presented by Dr. Nicole Frey; Native fish reintroduction and non-native control; USFS Fish Biologist Mike Golden and Boulder Community representative Josh Ellis; “Culturally significant springs, biodiversity, and archaeology at Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument presented by David Sabata.
• The sixth annual two-week long Conservation Corps Collaborative Training and graduation ceremony was held in August – the largest training of its kind in the country. Topics include chainsaw safety, first aid, riparian ecology, herbicide use and safety, and backcountry working and living.
**Coordinating Committee**

**Strategic Planning:**
- As the partnership approaches its 10th year and nears the completion of woody invasives initial treatment, ERWP began a process of re-examining its priorities and how to implement them through an involved strategic planning process. This process began with the Coordinating Committee holding an initial planning retreat in June 2018. Two additional retreats were held in September and November, led by ERWP’s new facilitation team from Southwest Decision Resources (SDR). Each planning retreat was followed by a full partnership meeting to share information with partners and solicit input on priorities for ERWP moving forward.
- At the November 2018 the partnership engaged in a strategic planning café in which high priority objectives were identified including: Springs and Seeps, Riparian, Wildlife (Native Fish), Science/Research/Data Management, and Stewardship. Other objectives include: Uplands, Recreation and Fire.
- For each objective discussion were divided into four categories:
  - Current and Recent efforts.
  - Opportunities/ideas
  - Biggest Needs
  - Question
- Discussion also included reflections on: status of the partnership, needs, issues that require further discussion (for example engaging local community), and who is missing from the partnership.
- ERWP Committees: Based on current status of strategic planning effort, committees were refined, and committee chairs and members were identified.
- Complete notes from planning retreats and strategic planning café can be found on the ERWP website.
- This process is still in progress and more meetings, retreats are planned for 2019.

**Fundraising:**
- Approximately $1,500,000 was raised to implement high priority restoration actions throughout the Escalante watershed in 2018. Funding sources include private grants and donations, federal and state funds, as well as Partner and volunteer in-kind donations.
- Several new foundations and other funding sources were targeted this past year in an effort to diversify funding.
2018 Distribution of Expenses

- Woody Invasive Control and Removal: 84%
- Conservation Targets and Science: 12%
- Capacity: 4%

Breakdown by Funding Type

- Federal: 44%
- State: 29%
- Private: 20%
- WFF: 7%
Details of Funding Sources:

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<th>Expense Type</th>
<th>Projected Expenses</th>
<th>Amount Earned</th>
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<td>Conservation Targets and Science</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Breakdown by Funding Type

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Private Funding Sources

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- The Coordinating Committee’s Funding Sub-committee completed the Outreach and Funding Plan in 2015. This comprehensive plan which outlines strategies for fundraising, potential fundings sources, audiences and messages for outreach and donor solicitation is updated each year to reflect new and changing information and updates.
ERWP Action Plan

The 10-year Action Plan has been updated and priorities revisited this past winter with input from all Committee chairs. This plan acts as a comprehensive guide to Escalante Watershed Restoration, encompassing issues of water quantity and quality, riparian restoration, native species preservation, research, and education and outreach. This plan is a living document and is updated annually to capture adaptive management needs in a dynamic watershed. The latest version is now available and will be distributed to partners and posted to the ERWP website.

Education and Outreach

Outreach

• Participation in:
  o Escalante Canyon Arts Festival: ERWP partnered with this annual festival to sponsor artists on the river.
  o Frontier Science School: Several ERWP partners gave presentations for students at the school.
  o Volunteer plantings on private lands
  o Brochure distribution
  o WFF Video
  o ERWP panel at REW conference
  o Corps Training: August 25-29 (70 participants)
  o Presentation with high school science classes
  o Dennis Bramble presented on ecological restoration to University of Wisconsin students at headwaters demonstration site in March.

• Volunteer Trips:
  o Vanderbilt University, University of Wisconsin, Wilderness Volunteers.

• Volunteer Events:
  ERWP sponsored 3 well-attended presentations/events open to the public.

• Increased ERWP presence at local community meetings:
  o Boulder City Council: Steve Cox is the newly elected mayor of Boulder
  o Interagency meetings with County Commissioners: Terry DeLay attends quarterly.

Communications

The committee focused efforts on targeting new audiences this past year. Efforts include:

• ERWP Facebook page continues to be updated and visited. https://www.facebook.com/EscalanteRiverWatershedPartnership (is that correct?)
• ERWP Website and Blog www.escalantewatershed.org.
• Developed and distributed brochures and newsletters.
• News articles about ERWP-related activities were published in:
  o Wayne and Garfield County Insider and TNC Newsletter; GSEP Newsletter
  o Blog (http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/stories/restoring-utah-escalante-river)

• Outreach efforts
  o Increased number of public presentations including Escalante Chamber of Commerce.
  o Increase in engagement with local utilities, landowners, and public officials.
  o Outreach materials developed: newsletter (Spring/Summer 2018)
Science & Conservation Targets Committee

Native Fish Update

• Warm water fish: The UDWR investigated an off channel source of non-native fish in the Escalante River basin approximately 3.5 miles upstream of the HWY 12 bridge. Sampling results indicated a suite of non-native fish were present including Green Sunfish, Fathead Minnow and Yellow Bullhead. An ongoing monitoring effort was initiated to determine the impacts of the off channel non-native fish population on native fish communities in the mainstem Escalante River.

• Cold water fish:
  o Hall Creek AOP contract awarded and bridge materials purchased
  o Bank stability and/or annual use monitoring conducted at four locations in the Watershed
  o Continuous temperature monitoring conducted at three locations in the watershed

Water Quality

• Citizen Science Utah Water Watch: in its fourth year Utah State University teamed with ERWP to host volunteer-based water quality monitoring program in the Escalante watershed. In addition to the tier one program, ERWP hosted a tier two training in Boulder in early summer. Data are stored in a statewide database and available for public use (uww.usu.edu).

Dixie National Forest

Completed summer 2018 under a Good Neighbor Agreement with Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands, approximately 600 acres of mastication treatments removing pinyon-juniper understories from Ponderosa pine stands were accomplished in the Upper Valley portion of the Escalante watershed. Located adjacent to the Upper Valley private inholding the treatments improved
upland wildlife habitat while effectively reduced the risk of wildfire along northern boundary of the Wildland Urban Interface inholding.

Hydrology –
• Surveys:
  o Springs and Seeps (NPS):
    o In 2018, spring surveys were completed in Harris Wash and along the Escalante River between the GLCA boundary and Harris Wash.
    o This past year the Science committee began to form sub-committees with focus on: native fish and wildlife, and springs and seeps. Native fish project has been going strong for the past few years thanks to the efforts of DWR and Dixie NF fish biologists. Now efforts are underway to concentrate on springs and seeps by joining forces with the Southwest Springs Institute (Flagstaff, AZ). This sub-committee will work together to develop a system that encompasses springs inventory and assessment in the Escalante basin.

Science and Research
• Watershed Resource Database: ERWP’s GIS Specialist continues to work with researchers and land managers to assimilate all known datasets and associated metadata from throughout the watershed. The database currently contains over 75 data sets describing the physical characteristics of the watershed, its hydrology, geology, weather, plant and animal species, vegetation trends and modeling, historic and time lapse photographs, and the woody invasive removal and monitoring process. This database is a central repository and is available to the public, with some access limitation based on data ownership and sensitivity.
• Headwaters Demo Site:
  Dennis Bramble has continued to take photos, but no piezometer measurements were made in 2018. As we’ve discussed, I’m not sure how relevant they are with respect to natural hydrologic conditions. I think it would be worthwhile checking with Natalie Cabrera (and John Spence) to see what she thinks about monitoring this site going forward.

• Legacy Cottonwoods (pre-1930’s trees): Legacy tree surveys were conducted in 2018, with sampling down to ca. 1 mile above Harris Wash. Over 200 trees were surveyed.

• South Hollow:
  Dennis Bramble continued monitoring using repeat photography and recording environmental data at several locations using automated data loggers. Other activities included: adding a mini-weather station to record physical conditions (air and soil) inside one of our long-term ungulate exclosures. Hosted a two-day workshop for Grand Canyon Trust volunteers to learn how to recognize the impacts of livestock grazing on vegetation and soil. Completed installation of new cattle-guard on FS road (easement) across our private land to control unwanted trespass grazing.

• Reference Areas:
  There was some progress in working toward the establishment of a group of private lands Reference Areas that would be associated with the ERWP. The owners of the three prospective private properties met in Boulder for two days to discuss the concept and some of the logistical challenges. We were joined by a forth possible property owner and also representatives from the Grand Canyon Trust. Dennis also met with representatives from the development office at the University of Utah as well as faculty administrators to make them
aware of our interest in creating a small cluster of long-term research sites on private land that could host faculty and student projects and to get suggestions from them as to how best to pursue this goal. Other members of the group met with the director of the Rocky Mt. Biological Laboratory to seek similar guidance.

**Russian olive invasion study:**

**Woody Invasive Control and Restoration Activities**

**Fundraising** – Over $1.3 million dollars in public and private funds were raised in 2018 to accomplish Woody Invasive control in the Escalante watershed. See breakdown in Fundraising section of this report.

**Public Lands (NPS, Dixie NF, and BLM):**
- Total acres treated – 886 Primary
- Total acres retreated – 602 Retreatment

**Private Lands: (Boulder and Escalante)**
- Total acres treated – 67 Primary
- Total acres retreated – 345 Retreated
- Total acres actively restored – 66 planted/seeded

**Long-term monitoring and rapid assessments**
- Ten long-term transects have now been established and are being monitored throughout the watershed
- Data analysis is underway and will be reported to the partnership in late 2016.

**Landowner Outreach:**
- Assessment of all treated parcels for presence of Russian olive.
- Development and distribution of educational tools (rack cards):
  - Recognizing Russian olive.
  - Controlling Russian olive seedlings on your Property.
  - Retreatment and Monitoring Form.
- Retreatment options for landowners: training, no training, or participation in fee-for-service program.

**Planning:**
- The Monitoring and Maintenance Plan has been completed and is available on the ERWP website. (anything more to say here?)
Conservation Corps Collaborative Training and Closing Ceremony:
- Hosted by ERWP, these events were held in Escalante in August with over 75 Conservation Corps members in attendance. This training provides skills training based on the ERWP Cutting Guide developed by the WICR committee.

GIS:
- The woody invasive database data are available via Google drive for information and file sharing. An interactive story map of the watershed describing the Partnership and the Russian Olive removal project is available on the ERWP website: (http://escalanteriverwatershedpartnership.org/the-watershed/google-fly-thru/).