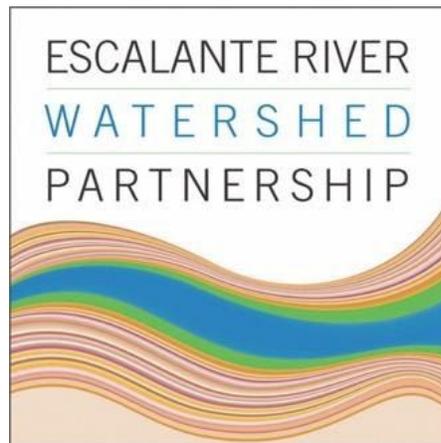




Escalante River Watershed Partnership  
**Updated Strategic Vision for the Action Plan**  
**2019 – 2024**



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## I. Introduction

With the 10-Year ERWP Plan nearing its end, in June 2018 ERWP embarked on a year long strategic planning process, with the support of Southwest Decision Resources, to reassess the partnership's goals, objectives, partners involved, capacity, and funding needs moving forward. Through the planning process, the Partnership updated the strategic vision for the original action plan to continue guiding its future work and objectives. Input was gathered and incorporated from members during four full Partnership meetings, four Coordinating Committee strategic planning sessions, and by email and virtual meetings of the Coordinating Committee throughout the process.

### Strategic Planning Timeline

- June 2018: Full Partnership Meeting – Review/Prioritize Needs
- Fall 2018: Internal assessment
- Sept 2018: Coordinating Committee Strategic Planning Retreat
- Nov 2018: Coordinating Committee Meeting – Review and prioritize ERWP goals  
Full Partnership Meeting – Brainstorm needs and ideas
- March 2019: Coordinating Committee Meeting – Prioritize ERWP action areas  
Full Partnership Meeting – Planning on key action areas
- June 2019: Develop draft updated strategic plan
- July 2019: Coordinating Committee and Full Partnership Meeting – Review draft plan
- 2019-2024: Implement Plan and track progress
- Fall 2023: Full Partnership Meeting – End of plan review and planning forward

## II. Mission, Goals and Objectives (2019 – 2024)

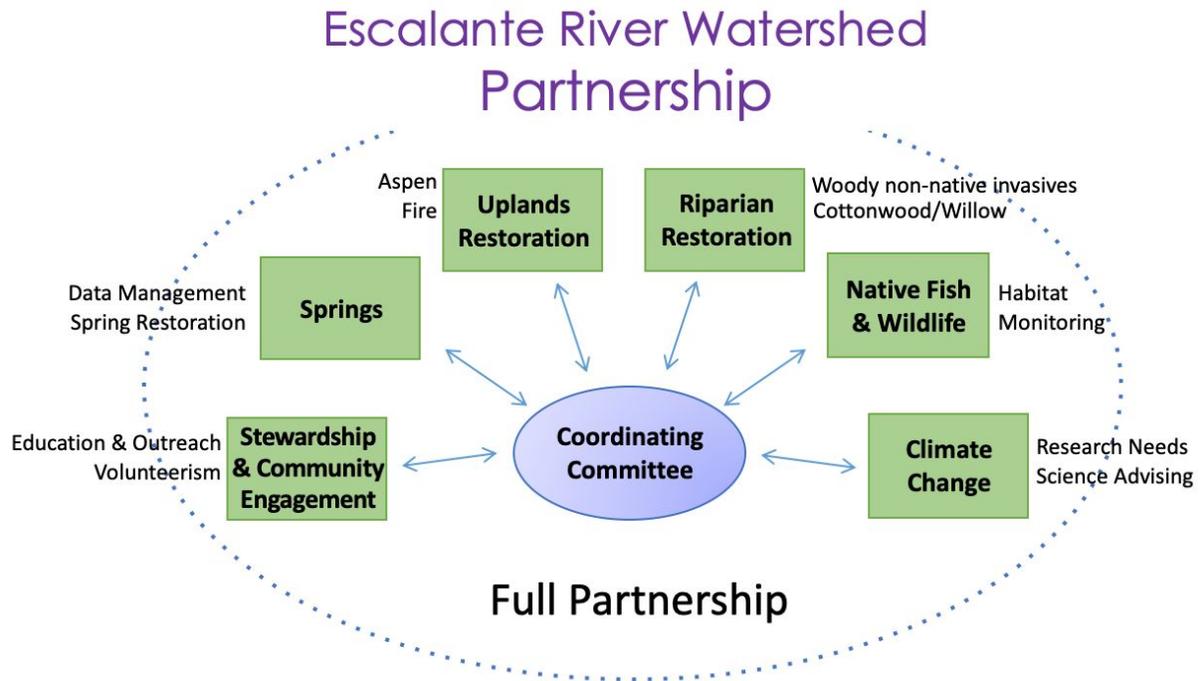
### ERWP Mission

Restore and maintain the natural ecological condition of the Escalante River and its watershed and involve local communities in promoting and implementing sustainable land and water use practices.

### 2019 – 2024 Goals

- A. **RIPARIAN RESTORATION:** Riparian habitats are improving through site assessments, data gathering, restoration, and monitoring and maintenance.
- B. **UPLANDS RESTORATION:** Uplands habitats are improving through site assessments, data gathering, restoration, and monitoring and maintenance.
- C. **NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE:** The warm and cold native fish communities are mostly intact and self-sustaining with few if any non-native species, by controlling non-native species numbers (using chemical, biological, or mechanical means), reintroducing native species, and improving fish habitat. The role of native wildlife is restored as a tool for increasing proper functioning of riparian habitats in the watershed.
- D. **SPRINGS:** Conditions of seeps and springs are improving by collecting data, inventorying and assessing conditions, developing guidelines for restoration, and implementing and monitoring restoration.
- E. **STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH:** Watershed stewardship is enhanced through education and outreach, coordinated volunteerism, service-learning and citizen science.
- F. **CLIMATE CHANGE:** The Escalante River Watershed is used to understand the effects of climate change on species and system targets, through ongoing watershed-relevant research, information sharing, and adaptive management.

### III. ERWP Structure and Committees



**Figure 1:** ERWP Structure. Topical committees in green boxes, with primary focuses listed for each. The Coordinating Committee provides overall guidance of the Partnership.

ERWP was formed to bring together a diverse group of individuals and agencies for the benefit of the Watershed. ERWP holds full partnership meetings biannually. All meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome. ERWP uses the best available science, community input and adaptive management. ERWP does not pre-empt, override, or dictate management on any federal, state, or private lands.

Most of the on-the-ground work is planned and implemented through committees. During the 2018-2019 strategic planning process, the ERWP committees were restructured to better reflect the goals and objectives of the partnership (**Figure 1**). Meetings should be held at least quarterly, and yearly work plans including budgets must be established at the beginning of each year to guide actions in the coming year. Committees are open to the public and anyone can join. In this strategic planning process, committees were revisited and modified to reflect priorities for the next five years.

### Committees

#### Topical Committees

**Riparian Restoration:** Works on riparian restoration, including woody invasive removal, erosion control, follow-up restoration efforts, and monitoring and maintenance. The committee works with public and private land managers to set project areas, meet compliance, apply for grants, and coordinate all on-the-ground work. The ERWP maintains a GIS database to track all public and private lands restoration work being done within the watershed. This committee is also

responsible for project specific outreach and fundraising. The living action plan for Riparian Restoration can be viewed [here](#).

***Uplands Restoration:*** Works on restoration in uplands including fire management, erosion control, native woody invasive control, and monitoring and maintenance. The committee works with land managers to apply for grants, strengthen community outreach, and ultimately reduce fire risk in the upper Escalante River watershed. It works to facilitate cross-land ownership communication on fire risk management. This committee is also responsible for project specific outreach and fundraising. The living action plan for Uplands Restoration can be viewed [here](#).

***Native Fish and Wildlife:*** Works on habitat monitoring and restoration for native fish and wildlife. The committee works to increase native fish populations and decrease or eliminate non-native fish within the same habitats. The committee conducts habitat restoration where needed to improve native fish and wildlife populations including fencing improvements, revegetation, and invasive plant removal. This committee is also responsible for project specific outreach and fundraising. The living action plan for Native Fish and Wildlife can be viewed [here](#).

***Springs:*** Works on monitoring and restoration of springs and seeps throughout the watershed. The committee works to align monitoring protocols across ERWP partners and oversees management of a spring database to inform and prioritize restoration efforts. It also implements restoration of springs with the help of volunteers and monitors conditions after restoration. This committee is also responsible for project specific outreach and fundraising. The living action plan for Springs can be viewed [here](#).

***Stewardship & Community Engagement:*** Works on volunteer coordination, community engagement, citizen science, and fundraising. The committee works to connect all people to the land. The committee links ERWP partners, especially federal land managers, with volunteers to help complete projects. It also seeks to engage students and the public in learning about the environment. The living action plan for Stewardship & Community Engagement can be viewed [here](#).

***Climate Change:*** Assesses the science, research needs, and opportunities of ERWP programs with a focus on climate change and its impact on ecosystems within the Escalante River Watershed. This committee advises other ERWP committees on related science issues and data gaps. This committee is responsible for project specific outreach, tasks, and fundraising. The living action plan for Climate Change can be viewed [here](#).

## Leadership

***Coordinating Committee:*** Coordinates all efforts among committees, tracks funding and identifies new funding sources for partnership-wide costs, and organizes full partnership meetings. The committee also guides public communications related to ERWP as a whole. The committee is comprised of representatives from each core partner involved in ERWP. The seat for each entity is retained and replaced if that individual needs to step down. At least one chair from each topical committee sits on the Coordinating Committee.

### **Coordinating Committee Members (as of May 2019)**

Harry	Barber	BLM Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (BLM/GSENM)	Acting Monument Director
Terry	DeLay	USFS - Dixie National Forest (DNF)	District Ranger
Kristen	Jespersen	RiversEdge West	Funding Program Coordinator
Jonathan	Paklaian	Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners	Restoration Program Coordinator
Mike	Scott	U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)	Research Ecologist, Volunteer Emeritus
Sage	Sorenson	Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners	Board Member
John	Spence	National Park Service (NPS)	Terrestrial Ecologist & Research Coordinator
Linda	Whitham	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	Canyonlands Program Manager
Erik	Woodhouse	UT Division of Wildlife Resources	Native Aquatics Biologist

### **Facilitation**

ERWP contracts with a third-party facilitator. The partnership may transition to a local coordinator or self-facilitation if and when the Partners reach a consensus decision to do so.

## IV. Topical Committee Summary Work Plans

Below are the specific goals, objectives, and partners for each topical committee. These objectives will be updated as-needed and guide the yearly action plans.

### A. Riparian Restoration

**Goal:** Riparian habitats are improving through site assessments, data gathering, restoration, and monitoring and maintenance.

**Objectives:**

- Non-native woody invasives: Complete Russian olive treatments and enter maintenance phase.
- Private land restoration: Work with Dixie National Forest to complete Russian olive removal on certain private parcels.
- Secondary weeds and other non-native woody invasives: Compile lists of species of concern and use for Rapid Monitoring; continue monitoring tamarisk leaf beetle.
- Native woody invasives: Create protocol for controlling these species and expand efforts to promote native deciduous species restoration.
- Willows and cottonwoods: Expand restoration projects with revegetation of sites using willows and cottonwoods.
- Monitoring: Collect long term data on changes in channel conditions; determine what plants are recruiting in the wake of Russian olive removal; use wildlife monitoring as an indicator of riparian health.
- Research and data collection: Potential projects – map tamarisk stands; analyze cost and benefits of “hack n’ squirt;” research effects of Russian olive treatments on bird species; collect data on grazing impact on headwaters, riparian areas, and erosion.
- Education and outreach: Organize an annual stakeholder meeting to highlight successful collaboration and work completed on private lands; create and host trainings on restoration strategies for agencies, organizations, and landowners; educate and engage the public in riparian restoration efforts; identify incentives and opportunities for removing feral cows from the river.

**Partners:**

- Grand Staircase Escalante Partners - Jonathan Paklaian (chair), Alex Engel
- Southwest Conservation Corps - Emily Kasyon (co-chair)
- Arizona Conservation Corps - Afton McKusick
- RiversEdge West - Kristen Jespersen
- Utah Conservation Corps/Utah State University - Jake Deslauriers
- Dixie National Forest - Natalie Cabrera

## B. Uplands Restoration

**Goal:** Uplands habitats are improving through site assessments, data gathering, restoration, and monitoring and maintenance.

### **Objectives:**

- Forest Health: Manage ecosystems by forest type to restore the forests to pre-fire suppression conditions.
  - Aspen: Expand and implement conifer encroachment restoration to encourage the growth of native deciduous species. Minimize fire severity.
  - Pinyon-Juniper: Potential projects – Research on Upper Valley treatment (three types of pinon-juniper); research on pre-treatment, treatment, and post-treatment at Hungry Creek. Minimize fire severity.
  - Ponderosa pine: Research using Side Hollow genetic test site (Southwestern ponderosa pine). Consider opportunity for citizen science support. Minimize fire severity.
- Reference areas: Set up monitoring and photopoints at the research natural area around town.
- Education and outreach: Facilitate cross-land management discussion on fire risk management; create interpretive materials for Upper Valley; recruit graduate students and interns to tell the story of fire in the watershed through research.

### **Partners:**

- Dixie National Forest - Terry DeLay (chair)
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife - Clint Wirick (co-chair)
- National Park Service - John Spence (co-chair)
- Grand Canyon Trust - Mike Popejoy
- Private landowner - Dennis Bramble
- Utah Conservation Corps/Utah State University - Jake Deslauriers
- Utah Fire, Forestry, and State Lands - Carrie Howard
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument - Raven Chavez

## C. Native Fish and Wildlife

**Goal:** The warm and cold native fish communities are mostly intact and self-sustaining with few if any non-native species, by controlling non-native species numbers (using chemical, biological, or mechanical means), reintroducing native species, and improving fish habitat. The role of native wildlife is restored as a tool for increasing proper functioning of riparian habitats in the watershed.

### Objectives:

- Colorado Cutthroat Trout: Implement habitat restoration in Hall, North, Pine, Birch, Boulder, and Calf Creeks. Implement priority aquatic organism passage projects. Remove and control non-native fish species.
- Three species: Monitor three species populations' response to large scale Russian Olive removal in the Basin. Increase and expand three species populations. Remove and control non-native fish species.
- Research and data collection: Create prioritization matrix of stream reaches using data gathered through Rapid Ecological Assessments. Utilize the thirteen standardized monitoring stations to track three species distribution/abundance, temperature, and flow. Carry out AIM monitoring (BLM).
- Riparian restoration: Conduct treatments to remove succession upland vegetation and plantings/fencing to reestablish native vegetation. Promote forest health and fire risk reduction treatments. Create a mosaic of forest successional stages in headwaters. Support UDWR beaver management plan to use beaver as a tool of riparian restoration.
- Education and outreach: Promote native fish and wildlife conservation issues through school visits, field days, community lectures, and literature.

### Partners:

- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources - Erik Woodhouse (chair)
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife - Clint Wirick
- National Park Service - Jeff Arnold
- Dixie National Forest - Terry DeLay, Mike Golden
- Color Country District (Bureau of Land Management) - Meghan Lyons
- Trout Unlimited - Jordan Nielson

## D. Springs

**Goal:** Conditions of springs are improving by collecting data, inventorying and assessing conditions, developing guidelines for restoration, and implementing and monitoring restoration.

### **Objectives:**

- Inventory/data collection: Develop a plan for information management including: Compile and build on existing data on springs; Align survey protocols (agencies and SSI) and merge ERWP database with the SSI database. Conduct a basin-wide inventory of springs. Develop restoration prioritization matrix.
- Restoration: Use prioritization matrix to carry out springs restoration projects.
- Monitoring: Implement protocols for long-term monitoring of springs.
- Education and outreach: Host workshop to inform and guide springs surveying. Utilize local volunteers to carry out springs restoration. Initiate research project on socio-cultural history of springs in the region. Communicate research findings to the public.

### **Partners:**

- National Park Service - John Spence (chair)
- Springs Stewardship Institute - Larry Stevens (co-chair), Jeri Ledbetter
- Grand Staircase Escalante Partners - Jonathan Paklaian, Alex Engel
- The Nature Conservancy - Linda Whitham
- Dixie National Forest - Natalie Cabrera
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument - Raymond Brinkerhoff
- Grand Canyon Trust - Mary O'Brien, Mike Popejoy
- Private contractor - Melissa McMaster
- Escalante Canyon Outfitters - Grant Johnson
- Utah Division of Water Quality - Amy Dickey
- Private landowner - Dennis Bramble
- Utah State University - Mike Scott
- Color Country District (Bureau of Land Management) - Meghan Lyons

## E. Stewardship & Community Engagement

**Goal:** Maintain the health of the Escalante River by engaging local and visiting communities in education, coordinated volunteerism, service-learning, and citizen science programs.

### Objectives:

- Volunteer projects: Work with agencies and organizations to identify projects that could use volunteers and create a timeline for engaging volunteers at those locations – include level of difficulty, expertise required for each task, and permitting. Host two - six volunteer events per year starting in 2020. Create “Service Saturdays” to build a committed group of regular volunteers.
- Volunteer coordination: Identify funding and path forward to hire a local volunteer coordinator. Work with UCC to determine approach for coordinating oversight at volunteer events. Work with field staff to orient graduate students in the field.
- Volunteer recruitment: Work with existing remote volunteer groups (e.g., Wilderness Volunteers, Wisconsin University, Vanderbuilt, Great Old Broads) to schedule events. Identify opportunities to work with existing service organizations and programs (e.g., ACE, Boys and Girls Club, 4H, GCT). Develop a group of committed local volunteers that can be trained in more technical work.
- Research and data collection: Research successful volunteerism and stewardship examples that have relevance in the Escalante watershed. Research housing, office space, and potential mentors/guidance for Conservation Corps members so that local positions are more feasible.
- Education: Support GSEP’s in-school STEM education program and identify strategies to build upon it. Partner with the Science Center if possible. Work with existing higher level education programs to build an internship program and bring students/researchers into the watershed to meet in-field education curriculum and bring qualified expertise into the watershed (e.g., monitoring, water quality testing, etc.)

### Partners:

- RiversEdge West - Kristen Jespersen (chair)
- Glen Canyon Conservancy - Amanda Boston
- Utah Conservation Corps - Joe Zelman
- Grand Staircase Escalante Partners - Sarah Bauman, Taylor Sanchez
- Southwest Conservation Corps - Emily Kasyon
- Escalante resident - Robert McElaney
- Springs Stewardship Institute - Jeri Ledbetter
- Grand Canyon Trust - Mike Popejoy

## F. Climate Change

**Goal:** The Escalante River Watershed is used to understand the effects of climate change on species and ecosystem targets, through watershed-relevant research, information sharing, and adaptive management.

### Objectives:

- Research: Determine climate research needs and questions to be pursued by the other ERWP committees; identify research needs that could utilize citizen science/student researchers.
- Coordination: Facilitate interagency discussion of climate-related mitigation strategies involving basin-wide resources of management concern.
- Monitoring: Develop the Upper Sand Creek Research Natural Area (USC-RNA) as (1) a reference area for evaluating ponderosa pine community health and management and (2) as a site for long-term monitoring and research aimed at better understanding climate change impacts within the Escalante River Watershed.

### Partners:

- University of Utah - Dennis Bramble (co-chair)
- Grand Staircase Escalante Partners - Sarah Bauman (co-chair), Sage Sorensen, Jonathan Paklaian
- The Nature Conservancy - Linda Whitham, Joel Tuhy (ex officio)
- Grand Canyon Trust - Mary O'Brien, Mike Popejoy
- Utah State University - Mike Scott
- National Park Service - John Spence
- Dixie National Forest - Natalie Cabrera
- University of Utah - Phoebe McNeally
- Escalante resident - Robert McElaney