

Summary of 2021 ERWP Accomplishments

In 2021, the Escalante River Watershed Partnership continued the transition from initial Russian olive removal on the mainstem of the Escalante River to other efforts including maintenance, habitat and upland work, and baseline watershed data collection. The Partnership continued to meet virtually throughout 2021, but planning has been underway to ramp up volunteer efforts and in person meetings in 2022.

General Partnership Accomplishments

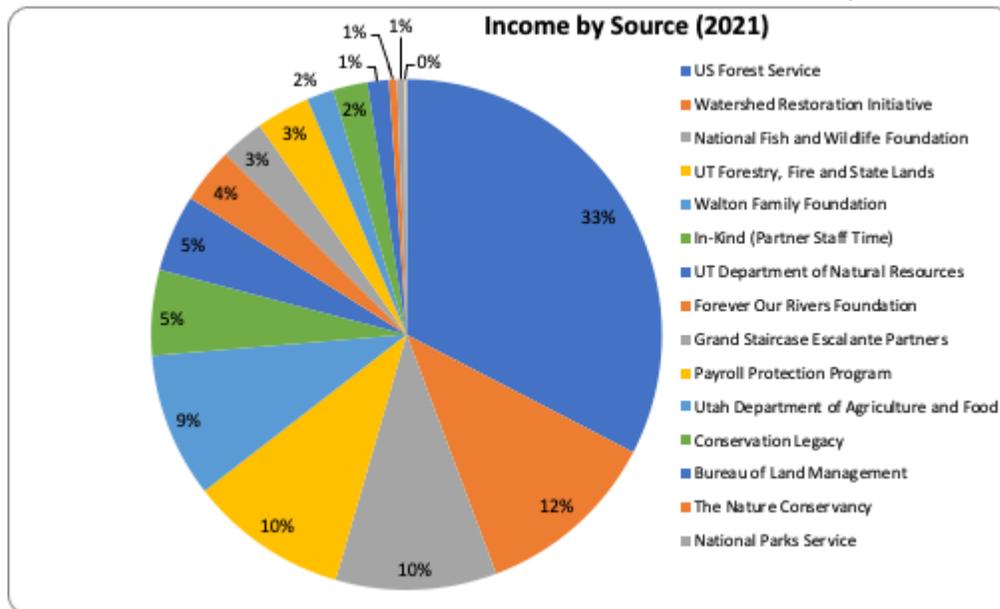
Transitions

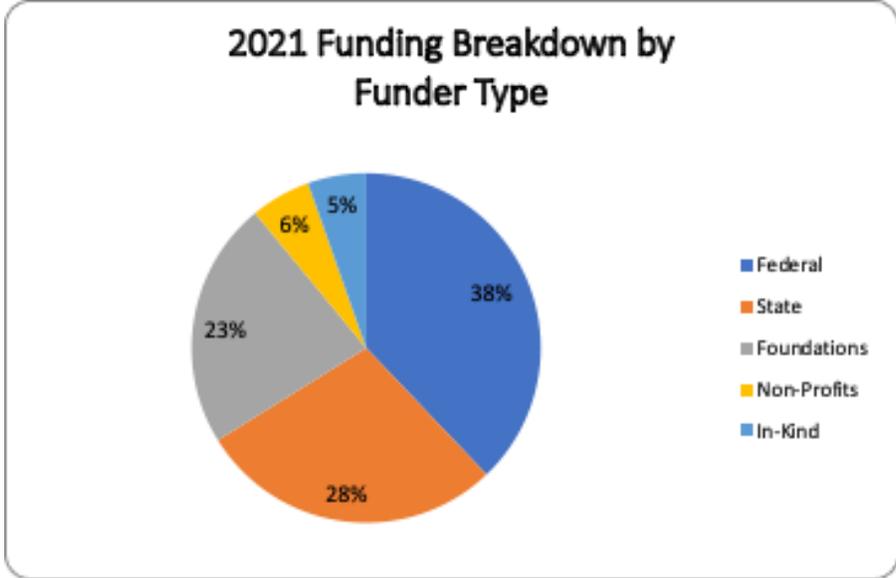
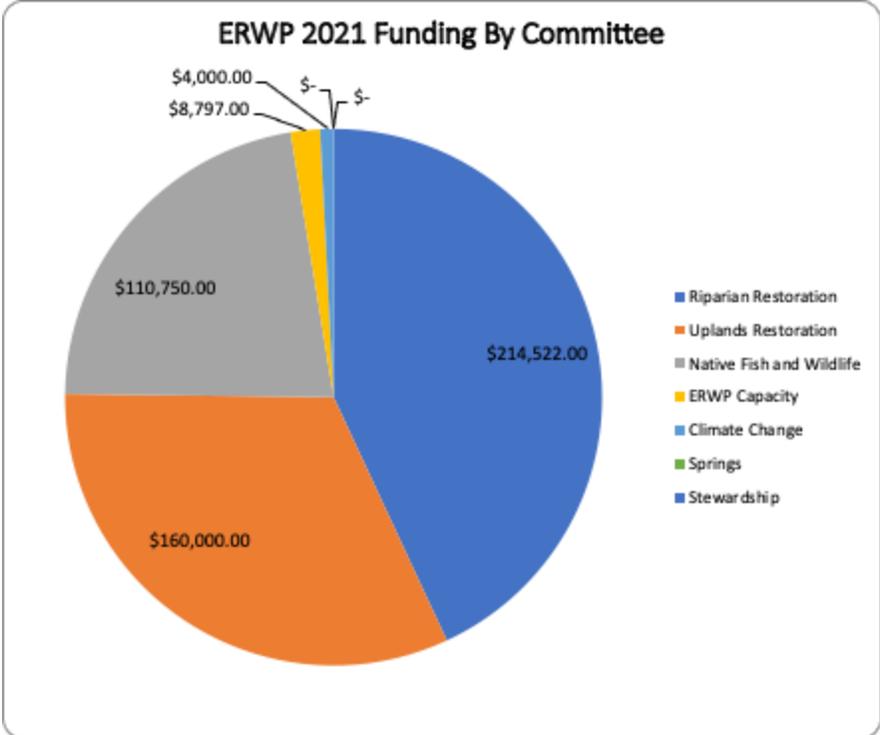
- Jonathan Paklaian left GSEP, new Conservation Programs Manager to be hired in 2022
- Kaitlin Martin is the new Stewardship Programs Manager of GSEP
- John Spence retired from Glen Canyon NRA, and Taryn Preston is now in that position

Coordinating Committee

Fundraising

- 2019 marked the end of most Walton Family Foundation funding for ERWP. The Partnership has been operating under a new shared funding framework with contributions from federal partners and has diversified other funding sources.





Breakdown by Funder

	2021
US Forest Service	\$ 162,499.00
Watershed Restoration Initiative	\$ 58,118.00

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$ 50,749.00
UT Forestry, Fire and State Lands	\$ 49,968.00
Walton Family Foundation	\$ 45,662.00
In-Kind (Partner Staff Time)	\$ 26,962.00
UT Department of Natural Resources	\$ 24,258.00
Forever Our Rivers Foundation	\$ 17,522.00
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners	\$ 13,743.00
Payroll Protection Program	\$ 17,000.00
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food	\$ 8,390.00
Conservation Legacy	\$ 10,950.00
Bureau of Land Management	\$ 6,749.00
The Nature Conservancy	\$ 2,500.00
National Parks Service	\$ 2,499.00
RiversEdge West	\$ 500.00
Total	\$ 498,069.00
Breakdown by Income Type	
	2021
Federal	\$ 188,747.00
State	\$ 140,734.00
Foundations	\$ 113,933.00
Non-Profits	\$ 27,693.00
In-Kind	\$ 26,962.00
Total	\$ 498,069.00

Expense Breakdown by Committee

	2021
Riparian Restoration	\$ 214,522.00
Uplands Restoration	\$ 160,000.00
Native Fish and Wildlife	\$ 110,750.00
ERWP Capacity	\$ 8,797.00
Climate Change	\$ 4,000.00
Springs	\$ -
Stewardship	\$ -
Total	\$ 498,069.00

Climate Change

2020:

- Established of **Upper Sand Creek Research Natural Area (USC-RNA)** as site for long-term climate change monitoring and study (2020).
- Organized an initial scouting trip and bioblitz (May) to begin documenting current plant biodiversity at the RNA.

2021:

- Implemented two more bioblitzes (June, September) to further record existing plant diversity and also began collections to establish the diversity of non-vascular plants (bryophytes) and lichens at USC-RNA. The lichen collections are being studied by Dr. Steve Leavitt at BYU.
- Began systematic collections of tree (ponderosa pine) cores with the goal of developing an historical record of tree responses to climate variation at the RNA. The cores have now been prepared (mounting, sanding) and the widths of annual rings measured. These measurements will next be statistically analyzed for meaningful relationships between long-term tree growth response to key climatic variables (e.g., annual precipitation, temperature, etc.). Current collections from USC-RNA provide a three ring record dating back to 1481. It is hoped that additional coring will extend the record into the 1200s and 1300s in order to compare the well-documented mega-droughts of those periods with the current extended drought that began in the year 2000.
- We are still hoping to work with Dr. Keith Moser, a USFS researcher based in Flagstaff, to utilize the USC-RNA as a reference area in connection with a project he is planning in connection with the upcoming Hungry Creek Project on the Escalante Ranger District. That project is currently in the scoping phase.

- The committee expanded its portfolio of climate change monitoring and research sites to include a spring complex located in the Upper Valley region near the western boundary of the Escalante River Watershed. **Hobbit Spring** and **Alvey Spring** are two physically close and hydrologically linked springs that are situated in very different environmental settings (cool, shaded, and closed vs. hot, dry and open). The springs offer an excellent opportunity to document the impact of climate change on key hydrologic resources in an otherwise water-limited landscape.
- A mini-bioblitz (September) began recording vascular plant and bryophyte diversity at the springs and gathered initial data on some of their physical attributes (water flow rate, temperature and chemistry). John Spence conducted an initial ecological assessment of the two springs. The springs are scheduled for fencing this summer to exclude livestock. Hobbit Spring is on FS land and will be fenced by the Dixie NF staff with volunteer assistance from the Grand Canyon Trust. The preliminary staging of fencing materials for Hobbit Spring was completed this summer. Alvey Spring is on private land and will be fenced by the owner.
- Recent committee meetings have been used to discuss future plans for development of USC-RNA, including monitoring infrastructure (long-term plots, weather stations, etc.) and management issues.

Stewardship & Community Engagement

- During the summer of 2021, the Grand Canyon Trust hired an intern, Lauryn Crabtree, to survey springs throughout the Escalante River Watershed. Lauryn visited over 80 springs during the summer, documenting infrastructure, grazing impacts, and overall site conditions. The data was collected using our Survey123 app and will be shared with the Springs Stewardship Institute's springs database.
- In September 2021, the Trust also hosted a 4 day volunteer trip to document springs' conditions with volunteers throughout Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. These 9 volunteers contributed 198 volunteer hours. For both of these projects, we use the springs monitoring data to help us advocate for springs protections and to prioritize springs for restoration projects.
- In the fall 2021, GSEP remediated scratched-in and drawn-on graffiti on sandstone walls and picked up trash along popular trails in the Escalante River Watershed. This included 23 volunteers and a total 182 volunteer hours for these projects.
- We also completed a sign installation volunteer event with the BLM where volunteers helped install signs along the Escalante River Trail to keep hikers on trail and off sensitive areas. This project included 3 volunteers who completed 42 hours of volunteer work along with 1 GSEP employee and 3 BLM employees.
- We also developed a Trail Ambassador program that will get volunteers stationed throughout the Escalante Watershed that will focus on educating visitors on how to reduce their impact when recreating in the area.

Uplands Restoration

Dixie National Forest

Ponderosa Pine Restoration

- Completed pile burning across 300 acres surrounding the Main Canyon Wildland Urban Interface private land inholding to reduce fuels.

- Awarded two timber sale (TS) contracts (CCC and Upper Valley South) covering 700 acres of thinning and fuels reduction.
- Continued implementation of the Allen Canyon TS and Mitchell Integrated Resource Service contract treating 450 acres of thinning and fuels reduction.

Escalante Municipal Watershed Restoration Initiative

- Awarded \$164,000 through the Utah Watershed Initiative funding for Phase 1 implementation.
- Completed 164 acres of fuels thinning and piling around the Escalante Town culinary springs and pipeline in the vicinity of Posey Lake.

Hungry Creek Vegetation Improvement Project

- Began NEPA analysis of a 100,000-acre fuels reduction, vegetation treatment, and watershed improvement proposal in the North Creek & Pine Creek watersheds.

Riparian Restoration

- Retreatment of approximately 1,100 acres (>100 miles of corridor) of public and private land.
- Surveyed 21 rapid monitoring points
- Conservation Corps participation included Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, Arizona Conservation Corps, Conservation Legacy, and Utah Conservation Corps

Native Fish & Wildlife

UDWR

- Warm water fish
 - Conducted Three Species monitoring at 13 long term monitoring stations in the Escalante River
 - Continued non-native fish monitoring in the off channel stream Slickrock Saddle Bench Spring and escapement evaluation sampling in the mainstem Escalante River.
 - Conducted fish distribution sampling in the rarely sampled lower Escalante River
- Cold water fish
 - Investigation of diploid Brook Trout distribution in the North Creek Lakes as part of Colorado River Cutthroat Trout restoration.

U.S. Forest Service (cold water fish)

- Implemented 160 acres of fuel reduction projects (lop and pile of conifers) around spring systems in the Posy Lake, Deep Creek and Hungry Creek area to prepare for a larger prescribed fire near Posy Lake

- Continued temperature monitoring on Pine Creek (two locations) and Birch Creek (Main Canyon).
- Completed six quantitative fish stations on four streams in the Escalante River watershed

Bureau of Land Management

- Four sites within the Escalante Basin were sampled using Lotic Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) protocol. Sites were sampled in Calf Creek, Sand Creek, and the mainstem Escalante River.

Trout Unlimited

- Initiation of wetland creation and potential stream restoration on Deer Creek with Boulder Mountain Guest Ranch.
- Continued work on improving stream flows in the Boulder Creek area and measured flows and flow losses on ditch systems throughout the Escalante River Basin.

Springs

- The work of this committee was put on hold because of COVID. They will be reconnecting with volunteers in 2022 to continue springs inventories and planning for spring restoration work.