



Escalante River Watershed Partnership:

An Introduction

Our history and vision

The Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) was formed in 2009 to restore and maintain the natural ecological conditions of the Escalante River and its watershed and involve local communities in promoting and implementing sustainable land and water use practices.

ERWP Partners

The partnership is composed of diverse governmental, non-governmental and private individual stakeholders, with expertise in natural resource research and management disciplines, working together for the benefit of the Escalante River watershed. ERWP is open to anyone interested in being involved in helping to implement our goals and vision. See our website at: EscalanteRiverWatershedPartnership.org

Active engagement

The ERWP has developed a science-based Action Plan that provides a blueprint guiding efforts to restore the processes and ecological services of a healthy watershed. Current activities and approaches include:

Climate Change: Efforts are underway to understand the effects of climate change on key species and ecosystems through watershed-relevant research, information sharing, and adaptive management. Research needs have been identified to utilize citizen science/student researchers and facilitate interagency discussion of climate-related mitigation strategies involving basin-wide resources of management concern.

Stewardship and Community Engagement: Opportunities to participate in volunteer monitoring and restoration projects are available, including inventorying springs in the watershed and monitoring water quality in key locations throughout the watershed.

Uplands Restoration: These projects address the causes of decline in coverage, health and resiliency of forests in the Escalante watershed headwaters through site assessments, data gathering, restoration actions, monitoring, and maintenance.

Riparian Restoration: Since 2010, partners have completed the removal of Russian olive from public and private lands within the Escalante River watershed. Most notably, partners have worked with federal and state agencies, and private landowners to systematically remove this invasive species from approximately **90 river miles** of the Escalante watershed and restoring the riparian systems to natural states. During the past 12 years ERWP has:

- Restored and or treated over **1.3 million acres** within the watershed
- Created over **400 jobs** for youth and locals
- Raised over **\$10 million** for removal, monitoring and restoration efforts

Native Fish and Wildlife: Partners are identifying areas where native fish populations can be increased and expanded. Projects with partners are being implemented to increase habitat connectivity, create critical aquatic organism passageways and educate local communities on the importance of native fish conservation.

Springs: Springs and seeps occur in a variety of types and provide several important ecological services (e.g., water for livestock and wildlife). The Escalante River watershed is richly endowed with springs and seeps, including some of the largest on the Colorado Plateau, but the number of documented springs is likely a significant underestimate of what actually exists. ERWP is conducting a comprehensive inventory of these ecosystems including specific data on newly identified springs.

Partnership Accomplishments

- Completed initial removal of Russian olive along the main stem of the Escalante River
- Supported development of a Spatial Model to predict the occurrence of springs and seeps in the Escalante River watershed
- Coordinated efforts to monitor and remove non-native fish and improve aquatic habitat along the Escalante River
- Co-hosted the Grand Staircase-Escalante Symposium, which brought together land managers, Tribes, researchers, conservation groups and interested public to explore multiple perspectives on land and water, ecosystem management issues, and ways people engage with the landscape
- Conducted a comprehensive biological inventory of plants, mosses and lichens and constructed a past climate history using tree rings for the Upper Sand Creek Research Natural Area, Dixie National Forest
- Hosted regular number of workshops, field trips, and topical evening presentations to the public, providing information on current research, and encouraging discussion on important ecological issues
- Established several long-term monitoring sites to better understand changes to the system post RO treatment and restoration of native vegetation
- Raised over \$11.6 million dollars to conduct important work in the watershed

How we can assist land management agencies

We seek to establish new, collaborative projects with partners aimed at restoring and maintaining healthy and resilient ecosystems and ecosystem process within the watershed. We have a proven record of scientific expertise, fundraising capabilities, as well as community outreach and organization of volunteers for hands-on projects. Partnerships like ERWP can help to mitigate challenges such as limited staff, funds, and time.

We continue to build and strengthen important relationships with federal and state partners, particularly all three federal agencies that manage the majority of the watershed. We work across management boundaries to restore and protect the watershed; this is a cornerstone of the partnership.

Finally, we recognize the need to protect the investment of 10 + years of Russian olive removal and restoration throughout the watershed. ERWP is committed to continuing its monitoring and continued removal of Russian olive and with the support of the federal agencies we see a win-win future for the watershed.

For questions or more information, please contact:

Linda Whitham (co-chair): lwhitham@tnc.org, (435) 260-9660, The Nature Conservancy

Terry Delay (co-chair): terence.delay@usda.gov, (435) 826-5600, Dixie National Forest

Sophia Cinnamon (facilitator): sophia@swdresources.com, (505) 636-8153, Southwest Decision Resources

Lisa Clark (facilitation support): lisa@qsenm.org, (928) 853-7300, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners