

Escalante River Watershed Partnership

Full Partnership Meeting

Tuesday, May 23rd | 10:00-12:30 PM (MDT)
Virtual meeting

Participants: see [here](#)

Action Items:

- Send an email to gauge interest in helping to plan the next symposium (SDR, Marc)
- Share springs verification app with Erik (Mike)
- Send an email to gauge interest in a follow-up monitoring discussion (SDR, Kevin)

Updates:

Partners

- Dixie NF hired someone to replace Natalie; new hydrologist will be involved with ERWP but likely won't be on until July/Aug; was on the hydrology crew out of Cedar City for the past 4 summers so is familiar with the Dixie
- Wildlands Network went out to Deer Creek campground with Erin to do beaver coexistence work; Lydia volunteered with them as well
- UCC crew scheduled to help out on the Escalante, doing a trail inventory project helping Jake at Calf Creek in June; looking for funding and partnership opportunities
- Jake S is replacing Meghan Croft
- GSEP continuing the Russian olive removal this summer
- BLM
 - Monument Plan revision and update is taking up a lot of bandwidth; Monument staff very involved
 - Very few projects are currently moving forward until the Plan is done
 - Hummingbird and bee monitoring programs still going
 - Jake - doing revisit sites for the Lotic AIM this summer (about 20 sites)

Coordinating Committee - Terry DeLay

- Partnership formed in 2009 to involve the community and restore the watershed; collaborative effort open to anyone interested in working together
- Not able to get committee financial information together before this meeting
- Strategic conversations over the winter; main focus areas moving forward are Russian olive re-treatment, monitoring, and researching and identifying long-term funding sources
- New Sustainable Funding Team - open to anyone interested in helping, though it is a sub-team of the Coordinating Committee
 - GSEP just submitted to Catalyst Fund to help with moving toward a co-stewardship model with Tribes; want to work toward more meaningful involvement of Tribes in ERWP
 - All sources are being evaluated, including Federal and private
 - Each committee is still working on fundraising on their own as well

Native Fish & Wildlife - Erik Woodhouse

- UDWR - Mechanically treating Saddle Bench Spring, and had success with a rotenone test last year so plan to revisit this year to see how well it worked
- DNF - Mike Golden left, the position hasn't been filled yet, and no current timeline for this
- Financials:
 - Secured funding for FY24 (July): \$16k for 3 species monitoring, BLM grant \$10k for non native eradication
 - In-kind services from BLM (Jake S)

Upland - Terry DeLay

- All accomplishments listed on the slide are from the Dixie

- Second round of commenting for the Hungry Creek EA starting soon
- Upper Valley - 5 sales already awarded, one more coming
- Boulder Mountain
 - Small isolated aspen ponderosa pine system at relatively low elevation, likely that fire has maintained the system
 - Mountain shrub ecosystem has seen the most encroachment which fire would have maintained
 - Everything dependent on fire is out of the natural variability
 - This report will determine future vegetation treatments in the watershed

Stewardship - Kaitlin Martin

- Remediating impacts throughout the watershed
- Looking for more committee members, currently only GSEP and GCT - coordinate with Kaitlin and/or Audrey if interested

Riparian - Kevin Berend

- Partnering with Conservation Legacy for monitoring of 20 vegetation transects in September
- Financials:
 - Secured: Utah Landscape Scale Restoration (\$300k over 3yr), UT USDA - \$82k, Conservation Legacy, \$2k from The Nature Conservancy
 - Likely: waiting on Watershed Restoration Initiative funding should know this month; Forever Our Rivers - likely next month

Springs - Mike Scott

- John Spence has documented some springs, but it is likely that there are many many more
- The spatial model has given us the predicted locations of more springs
- Need volunteers to use field app to go to predicted locations, verify springs, and provide descriptions

Climate Change - Kevin Berend

- Monitoring at hobbit springs - invertebrate, birds, etc.
- Installed weather station
- Upper Sand Creek RNA: determining what kind of projects are possible and valuable, working to refine research goals and a proposal to do work with USFS
- Spencer Flat - tree/climate research to provide inputs on how climate is changing and impacting plant communities across the elevation gradient

[See slides for committee updates](#)

Symposium Overview - Marc Coles-Ritchie and Kevin Berend

- Grand Staircase-Escalante Region Symposium videos [available here](#) or from the agenda on the ERWP [webpage](#), please share
- Jackie Grant was on sabbatical, so this one was only sponsored by ERWP
- [Summary and comments](#) on the 2023 symposium
- In person at the interagency visitor center in Escalante, and over Zoom; way more people came virtually rather than in person, even many locals attended virtually
 - For next year, want to figure out ways to encourage people to come in person
- Will likely need more people to help out with the planning for the next Symposium; will send out an email for interest, and will try to be better about not scheduling at the same time as other events/conferences
- Very successful event overall

Panel discussion: Monitoring Research, New Tools, & Lessons Learned

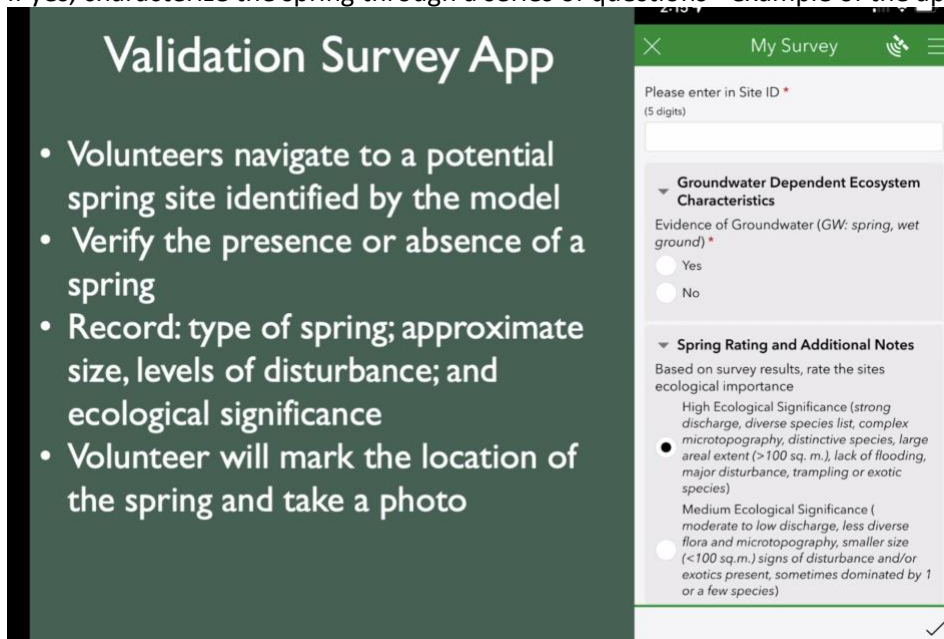
Overview - Kevin Berend

- Topic inspired by the [USU study](#) on the role of watershed orgs in the intermountain west; Kevin was interviewed on behalf of ERWP

- ERWP is in line with the majority of other partnerships in terms of priority focus
- Funding is a top issue for everyone
- ERWP focus areas: RO retreatment/maintenance, sustainable funding, monitoring
- Need for integrated monitoring strategies

Spatial monitoring and springs research - Mike Scott

- [See slides](#)
- University of Utah student developed tool with satellite and aerial imagery and known spring locations which helped train the model and predict new locations for springs and mapped known locations for springs
- Validation Survey App.
 - Navigate to site that model has predicted if springs is there or not
 - If yes, characterize the spring through a series of questions - example of the app.



- Field data will be uploaded from the app and stored in a central database and then this info will be housed by the Springs Stewardship Institute database
- Ecologically significant springs can then be further monitored
- [Mike can share the app if needed](#); it is still in beta testing, but the surveys should take no more than 15 min each
- Aerial spatial imagery to document response of river channel to the removal of Russian olive
 - Invasion took off around 1980 and lasted about 2 decades, narrowed the channel by about 50% (simplified the habitat, locked the channel in place and created levees); ERWP removal was started to mitigate this
 - Still need to answer whether the removal was effective at restoring the channel morphology
 - Mapped the 1980 channel, then mapped in subsequent years until about 2010 when large scale removal started; have taken segments of the river to map again (5, 10, and 15 yrs post-treatment), quantitative assessment
 - Has started widening by about a meter in most areas, but will still take more time

Remote sensing and riparian restoration on the White River - John Leary

- [See slides](#)
- Remote sensing is similar to what is being done on the Escalante; led by USU who were not able to come
- White River Partnership - similar structure to ERWP
- Desert Rivers Collaborative - main stem of CO and Gunnison Rivers (Mesa County)
- Rapid monitoring efforts: helpful to provide a snapshot of current conditions and inform where to start
 - Many sites are hard to access and require multi-day river trips
 - Examples of what the report looks like after monitoring data is processed

- Helpful to see where passive recruitment is happening and where it needs some help
- Important to use the same protocols/process every year
- Costs about \$2000/wk to have 2 interns do this work in a summer - easy to share the cost, great for local workforce development
- Lots of potential for the basic approach
- Baseline provides an important starting point for hypothesis-driven monitoring

Research and monitoring in the Glen Canyon - Seth Arens, Western Water Assessment

- [Link to video](#)
- Summary: level of Lake Powell dropping dramatically caused by water use, drought, climate change; 11 sites that will be monitored over the next 4 years that have recently been exposed
- Spontaneous restoration of ecosystems and rapid colonization where there is water
- Native plants are dominant on older landscapes post-emergence
- Could be some benefit to active management of Russian olive because there is not much of it yet

Discussion

- New tools: remote sensing
- Data
 - Where is the data? Raw and summarized – Glen Canyon Institute (GCI) great at sharing summarized data; need to think about where the raw data could be stored to analyze in the future; SSI does some of this but would be great to expand and make it accessible to other researchers
 - CO River wikimedia commons - as the Escalante is a tributary to Colorado, would be worth looking into; GCI also considering putting their data here
 - Veg data – REW posts this data on their website, [link](#)
- Monitoring priorities
 - Connect to adjacent landscapes - considerations for data coming from private land; GSEP is sensitive about collecting data on private land and doesn't make that data publicly available, consider a voluntary agreement with the landowner
 - Important to look at the landscape holistically rather than piecemeal by manager/owner
 - Keep better track of the work being done in the watershed and communicate results with each other to improve reporting and grant applications - will work on this in the Riparian Committee
 - Make sure our monitoring efforts are useful for management and applicable to tributaries that have different management than the mainstem
- Reach out to Kevin with any additional thoughts; important to maintain our successes in order to support future work

Wrap up and next steps

- **Additional brainstorm meeting focused on monitoring strategy - Kevin will reach out to get interest after meeting**
 - Mike - developing protocol for the Watershed; need to measure efficacy