

## Southeast Utah Riparian Partnership Spring 2018 Meeting Notes

**Date & Time:** March 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Location:** Utah Department of Forestry, Fire & State Lands Conference Room

### **Attending:**

- Liz Ballenger, National Park Service
- Natalie Conlin, UT Div. Forestry, Fire & State Lands (FFSL)
- Jake Deslauriers, Utah Conservation Corps (UCC)
- Kara Dohrenwend, Rim to Rim Restoration
- Elaine Gizler, Moab Area Travel Council
- Tim Graham
- Makeda Hanson, UT Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)
- Shannon Hatch, RiversEdge West
- Kenny Heneger, UCC
- Tim Higgs, Grand County
- Arne Hultquist, UT State University Ext.
- Morgan Jacobsen, DWR
- Alyx Levine, Rim to Rim Restoration
- Page Kannor, FFSL
- Tony Mancuso, FFSL
- Tamsin McCormack, Plateau Restoration
- Todd Murdock, Bureau of Land Management
- Nichole Nielson, DWR
- Bob O'Brien, Town of Castle Valley
- Linda Whitham, The Nature Conservancy

### **Partner and project updates:**

#### **Mill Creek (Kara)**

- Approx. 15 year long project
- Now writing joint proposals with BLM; ranked high this year
- Partners should meet earlier in the year to submit Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) proposals
- 'Site conditions in the long term' (see monitoring handout)

Castle Valley project funding has come from WRI and some non-point source funds (MAWP) - these fund proposals are due April 13.

#### **Tim Higgs and Wright Robinson's beetle study**

- There is a variety of mortality levels in different areas depending on treatments.
  - 40%-80% mortality in mature stands
- Tim Graham: the beetle population crashed in 2013, and then dropped again in 2014/15. This happened at the same time when monitoring activity decreased, so hard to compare numbers, but clearly the populations are down.
  - There is concern about tamarisk re-invading. However, the beetle populations have been increasing since 2016. Given the conditions this past fall and winter, we're assuming the beetle is in good shape. (see graph on monitoring handout)

- There are a lot of stands with significant canopy mortality. Tamarisk is no longer a dominant part of the riparian system. Native perennials (grass, shrubs), willows, and exotics (Russian knapweed) coming back in its place.
- Kara noted that some areas have an increase in natives, and decrease in exotics.
- Examining overall trends and also site by site basis on what is occurring.
- Tamsin asked Tim G if this data was correlated to water flows; Tim G noted that the dramatically different flows in 2011 added additional species, but then they were gone in 2012. 2018 may be a low flow year, so tamarisk will be hit with water stress. Beetles should be in good shape, peaks in larval numbers and in the fall expected.
- Kara has noted knapweed reduced in some untreated sites- may be due to drought stress. Annuals were also decreased.
- Tim H noticed the increased willow growth along the river.
- The goal is to have a draft report ready for the fall partnership meeting.
  - Tony mentioned that the State needs some kind of formal report by the end of the fiscal year (June) in order to use State funding- Tim G, Kara, and Tony will work on this.

#### **Matheson Preserve, TNC (Linda Whitham)**

- Restoration efforts have been happening since 2003 in collaboration with DWR
  - Also, mosquito abatement, fire, floods, vandalism, etc.
  - Have received funding from a variety of sources, including NRCS (WRP)
    - Water control structures, plantings, prescribed burning, olive removal
- Working with DWR fish biologists and USFWS to enhance endangered fish habitat; want to bring water into preserve during high flow periods to keep them safe from predation.
  - Widen an existing channel, deepen a pond to meet the specs for razorback sucker habitat
- Looking into alternative water sources for the Preserve- this year's drought is particularly bad on the wetlands- working with the City on additional water sources.
  - Sewage water is currently going into river; however, to use this water on land, there is a special treatment process that may be required involving the creation of additional settling ponds, etc- this would be a very involved process
- WRI collaborative watershed proposal ranked high this year, Matheson included in this.
  - Upcoming prescribed burn

#### **Tamsin McCormick, Plateau Restoration**

- They have an existing 'nursery' site to recruit plantings from
- Kochia is down this dry winter, so salt grass and native ground cover is spreading
- Challenges of planting in these dry conditions
- Liz mentioned yellow bee plant is found in the Canyonlands housing area- seems to do well in drought conditions (Liz said it can be collected if needed)

**Tony-** youth corps removed 55 acres of tamarisk between Hittle Bottom and Moab along the river.

**Tim Higgs-** Grand County Weed treated most of Canada thistle and Russian knapweed along this stretch of river, also. He also collected gall midges off of knapweed in Preserve.

#### **Jake Deslauriers, UCC**

- Cross Watershed WRI Phase 1- crews are currently at Granstaff canyon; Kara's new Scope of Work is very comprehensive

- Chainsaw training and treatment at Goose Island- created clearings (wildlife corridors) to access Russian olives and exotics
- Plan on buying a motor for their boat this year

### **Liz Ballenger, NPS**

- Crews currently working in Courthouse Wash- lots of alternative spring break crews
- Removing tamarisk along the river- at confluence, lower Red Lake, Cataract, etc.
  - Their priorities are areas where visitors go, campsites, and around existing cottonwood stands.
- Also clearing tamarisk to access existing knapweed to treat. There are lots of knapweed-free areas now, so would like to keep it this way.
  - Trying to get biocontrol (knapweed gall midge) released at 4 sites on the Green River. Midges are on Colorado - getting into Arches, which is great. Midge releases on Green River didn't look too successful unfortunately, perhaps because they released them too late and it was a dry year (knapweed browned up quickly). This year, the NPS will release midges in upper Salt Wash near Delicate Arch. This area is wetter, so may be more successful.
- Reed canary grass- debate whether this is a native or not- NPS has a small handout and determined it is definitely not a native to this area. And, any canarygrass in the US is not from a native gene pool. They are currently treating it in the Parks.
- Kara noted that past WRI seed mixes had canary grass in it. Discussion needed to ensure recommendations are made not to include this in future seed mixes.

### **Middle Colorado Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area**

Liz, Tony, and Tim attend these meetings. Good updates on problematic species.

### **Sovereign Lands (Tony Mancuso)**

FFSL is in the middle of the process of the CMP for the Green and Colorado River; most people in SURP will be contacted for their knowledge/input. It will be a 2 year process.

### **Review Vision and Focus for SURP**

- A lot has changed since SURP started 10 years ago.
- Kara & Shannon proposed distributing an anonymous online survey to the group to discuss a summer meeting where we re-vision the process and focus for SURP- intentions, benefits to the members.
  - Tim H suggested proposing questions to think about
  - Linda is not a fan of Survey Monkey format; perhaps capture some thoughts today in person? Where do folks want to see things headed for this group?
- Shannon is working on renewing MOU and signatures.
- Stacy Beaugh from TC has funding to pay for a facilitator (from Third Sector Innovations) if needed. A facilitator allows everyone to participate in meetings.
  - Liz noted the potential of having a facilitator, but it's not necessarily needed
  - Jake mentioned the benefits of a moderator, but not much controversy in SURP, so may not be needed
  - Shannon thinks the moderator would enhance our process; she would keep the group focused on goals; adds a level of transparency and buy-in, has been helpful in past situations

- Having a moderator is not necessarily just about resolving conflict; but may allow the group to run more efficiently
- Moderator would not take notes
- Tamsin feels more comfortable with smaller, breakout groups to discuss any issues

### **Geodatabase update (Shannon)**

- Tamarisk Coalition provided funding to watershed initiatives to expand geodatabase.
- Group customized database to meet the needs of the group and what this data will be used for- something that all of us can access; technology has changed with ArcGIS online.
- This information helps people determine if their project is next to a past/existing project.
- May have RRR or another group be the portal to access the database. Goal is easy to use by anyone.
- Shannon showed online example from Desert Rivers Collaborative. Identifies priority areas, and includes categories such as planned treatments, invasive species inventory, etc. On the online map, you can click on/create polygons and information will pop up, including treatments, landowner, species treated, etc.
- Can run reports/ export data to get yearly summaries, etc. Will eventually link with Chris Rasmussen's work.
- Plan on doing a reassessment of past treatment sites to determine what species are there, take photos, etc.
- This database will be accessible on mobile devices, so data entry can be in the field; value of determining what treatments have worked best in past projects.
- Tim H suggested having the ability to add a species that is missing from the list; also, create a process for adding information for species that aren't known to the recorder- require a photo, for instance.
- Jake mentioned the benefits of having a generic/master login for Arc Collector and Gaia; A way to share information, but not able to alter other people's information.
- Owner of the map would be Ben Bloodworth (TC), then there would be authors and contributors.
- Benefits of standardizing data like this; project managers can compare sites.
- Gabe will be working on BLM dataset, then we can determine what is missing from that point forward.
- The geodatabase subcommittee will contact SURP members for data.

### **Education & Outreach goals for SURP (Linda Whitham)**

- Many documents and brochures have been produced by SURP over the years.
- Is the word getting out about all of our success stories? Collaboration, restoration completed. Important for community to learn about what SURP has been doing.
- Grand Junction reporter (Sharon Sullivan) doing stories on the Matheson Preserve, and interested in doing more stories. She has done past articles on the Tamarisk Coalition which are accessible online, and Shannon thought she did a really good job representing what the TC does.
- May 12<sup>th</sup>: migratory bird celebration at Matheson Preserve- educational booths, guided walks, bird count. Community-based event.
- Escalante Partnership newsletter: multiple partners wrote articles about projects; inexpensive; not time consuming. Benefit of including photos, graphs, etc.
- Tamsin agreed a small newsletter is a great idea.
  - Linda is willing to take the lead on this.

- Elaine suggested the Moab Happenings. Also, the Grand County website has an option to post an event.
- Tim H noted there is an upcoming Moab newspaper article on giant reed.
- Shannon asked if we should have a stand-alone website for SURP. MAWP has a website, but it's not utilized- the Facebook page has more action. Easy to put together a basic website.
- Elaine Gizler said CNHA and the MIC are good places to post informational flyers about SURP.
- Avoid logos for now on publications. These could also be used as a mechanism for public donations?

**Budget (Kara): See ROR expenses handout**

- Mill & Pack Creeks planning will happen within the next few months.
- FFSL funding is from sovereign lands noxious weed management funding, which is:
  - 50% secondary noxious weeds, 25% tamarisk control, 25% as needed. Sovereign lands funding is allocated by State legislature, so not consistent amount every year.
- In-kind tracked is mostly from RRR. We need to come up with a system so we have more diverse in-kind and matching funds sources. Need a way to better catch the matching funds from other SURP members. Show more diverse contributions towards these projects. Shannon suggested sending out in-kind and matching requests on a regular basis so people expect providing this information.

**Budget for new funding (Kara): See handout**

- Allocations spreadsheet
- Plan revision needed- steps lined out on how to get to this point.
- We have a long term dataset that shows some dramatic results.
- Reports can help with potential donors to see the value of providing funding.
- Coordination of facilitation- we had a facilitator in the past, but not a lot happened between meetings. Need to identify what we need to do to move forward; funding needs to keep the group going.
- Plant materials, propagation needs- Mayberry has been working with different partners on this; matching activities.

**Capacity funding**

- Hard to fund capacity, oversight, and administration through grants. Do SURP member agencies have access to funding that can be used on capacity/oversight/administration? How to build better capacity for when after ROR ends.
- Can the State, feds, etc. fund anything besides on-the-ground project work? Nicole mentioned that unlikely from WRI. WRI funds can pay someone to implement on-the-ground projects. So yes, admin for a specific project related activity. But not for general partnership activity.
- Makeda **suggested that an administration budget breakdown should be put together to show what the administrator does and what funding is needed.** 2010 SURP charter spells out some of this job description. Such a breakdown might help meet the needs of funding partners.

**Priorities for March 2018-2019:**

- Identifying priorities provides a framework by which we use to go after private funding.
- Benefit of group to individuals = partner training- field trips, such as plant identification; Information sharing. Spring time field trip during growing season.

*Priorities of the group, and priorities for funding:*

(40-50%) Monitoring- data collection and reporting. Needs to be in an annual report form by the end of the State fiscal year (June 30<sup>th</sup>). Sharing data in a way that can be shown as a deliverable that can be understood by anyone. This type of work can be funded by WRI, etc.

(30%) Collaboration facilitation: includes meetings, scope of work on WRI

(20%) Geodatabase

(10%) Plan revision- current plan is not being used; there are a lot of new members and on the ground changes since the 2007 plan. Back then, individual agencies were all doing their own thing, and that original plan reflected that. Now, there is more collaboration. Sovereign lands management goals have changed, too.

Once ROR funding is available, Core Team could put together a skeleton budget based on these priorities.

Jake volunteered for Core Team.

*Adjorn.*