

TAMARISK COALITION

www.tamariskcoalition.org



Impacting Our Rivers

In Colorado alone, only 1.5% of total habitat is wetland or riparian, and yet more than 80% of wildlife species depends on this small resource for survival.

These riparian areas (the corridors along stream and river banks, typically characterized by a distinct set of water-loving plants and trees) are increasingly



threatened by invasive and non-native plants such as tamarisk, Russian olive, Siberian elm, and other species.



Having many advantages that allow them to out-compete native plants, invasive plants invade riparian areas, creating dense thickets, or monocultures, that alter the landscape. Their presence can degrade native ecosystems and wildlife habitat, increase fire risk and severity, cause harmful river channel modifications, and discourage recreation and agricultural uses of the river.



Tamarisk Coalition (TC) has been helping people manage invasive plant species and restore riparian areas since 1999. In the process, we help to create recreation opportunities, facilitate jobs for at-risk youth and local contractors, protect water resources,

revitalize our natural heritage for future generations, and engage local community members as volunteers to implement restoration activities.

"The Tamarisk Coalition understands that protecting and restoring priority watersheds will take creativity, commitment, and the involvement of local communities. I support this work because the returns from such efforts will benefit the rich diversity of wildlife which depends upon healthy waterways and riparian plants, as well as the human communities who rely upon rivers for their well-being."

- Sue Bellagamba, TC Board Member



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OUR VISION

We envision healthy and self-sustaining riparian ecosystems throughout the American West, resilient to invasive plant species and supported by enduring communities of stewards.

Message from the Executive Director

Stacy Beaugh

Dear Friends of the Tamarisk Coalition,

There is a community movement afoot, one that impacts all of us. It is a movement to protect and enhance one of the most unique and important resources in the West, our rivers.

Thirty years ago, many of the rivers in the West were in a dire situation. My current hometown river, the Colorado River, was a prime example. This river was degraded to an unimaginable point – polluted by uranium mill tailings, junk cars, trash, acres of noxious weeds, and not valued by the local community. Community action by groups such as the Colorado Riverfront Commission, advocated for funding, encouraged commitment by local leadership, and organized loyal volunteers. The result is a river system that now supports robust recreation and agricultural economies, serves as the defining landmark of our valley, and is highly valued for its wildlife and water resources.

There is still a long way to go to protect the future of these rivers; they are increasingly at risk from invasive plants, drought, increased water demand and user pressure, and other stressors that degrade these systems to a point where they have little ecological benefit. Fortunately, many rivers are now being cared for by a growing number of community groups that are dedicated to addressing these issues. In 2002, when TC was incorporated as a nonprofit, there were few stakeholder groups that addressed the noxious weeds that had invaded our rivers systems. Now, there are more than twenty watershed-scale partnership groups working on this issue in the states of Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico alone!

Tamarisk Coalition is proud to be a part of this movement by directly coordinating projects to reduce the impacts of invasive, noxious weeds, and by supporting the education and distribution of resources to the vast array of local groups and individuals dedicated to riparian restoration.

One particular example of a passionate individual paving the way to healthy river systems is Jamie Nielsen, TC's Restoration Ecologist. Jamie has dedicated the past five years of her career to helping the Verde Valley community in Arizona. As their number one advocate, Jamie has helped the Verde Valley plan and implement a watershed-scale restoration project, secure funding, and teach volunteers how to identify noxious weeds. Jamie recently moved on to new life adventures; we would like to thank her for her passion, drive, and enthusiasm, and wish her and her family the best!

As you go about your day, please think about how important rivers are to your life, and then find a local champion, like Jamie, and thank him/her for helping to protect and enhance our quality of life in one of the most special places on earth. I'll start by thanking all of you for your actions and investments that help us advance riparian restoration in the West.

Thank you for caring about our rivers!

Respectfully,

Stacy Beaugh
Executive Director

2015 Staff



Stacy Beaugh
Executive Director



Ben Bloodworth Program Coordinator



Shannon Hatch *Restoration Coordinator*



Kristen Jespersen Program Coordinator



Julie Knudson Staff Scientist



Cara Kukuraitis
Outreach Coordinator



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Lindsay Murdoch Cross-Watershed Network VISTA



Jamie Nielsen Restoration Ecologist



Daniel Oppenheimer *Restoration Coordinator*



Michele Rorhbach Bookkeeper

Restore. Connect. Innovate

Tamarisk Coalition

P.O. Box 1907 · Grand Junction, CO 81502

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

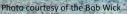
1,494

practitioners from 15 states were educated via our training series, annual conference, and outreach events 537

youth participated in our education programs

99%

of the individuals we trained said the program was meaningful and they will use what they learned in their work





Our Toolbox for Restoration

TC's programs range from providing direct assistance to land managers on an individual basis, to providing broad-based education programs and support to multi-stakeholder groups tackling riparian restoration.

The goal of our outreach and education program is to inform and inspire land managers, land owners, community members, and the next generation to manage and steward riparian lands.

To do so, we gather and distribute the latest research, best management practices, and lessons learned from restoration practitioners. We deliver educational programs and resources through our workshop and training series, annual conference, online riparian restoration resource library.

Training Riparian Restoration Professionals

One of the most effective ways that TC delivers riparian restoration education to private and public landowners and land managers is through our Riparian Restoration Training Series. In 2015 we provided a host of workshops and training events by working closely with local private and public entities to design educational events tailored to the needs of their riparian community.

In 2015, we provided education and outreach through our Riparian Restoration Training Series to 504 community members across 10 field-based training events. Workshops were held in Colorado and Arizona spanning 5 different watersheds including the Verde River Basin, the Arkansas River Basin, the Dolores River Basin, the White River Basin, and the Colorado River Basin (western Colorado region).

Events spanned a wide variety of topics including an introductory overview of riparian restoration



techniques, native and noxious plant identification, native birds of the Dolores River drainage, identification of grasses of western Colorado, setting realistic and achievable restoration goals, best restoration seeding techniques, and equipment demonstrations of broadcast and drill seeding techniques along with willow bundle harvesting and planting.

To find future trainings, workshops, or demonstrations, click here.

"Now I understand the importance of collaboration with other agencies to achieve goals, and share knowledge and advice."

—2015 Riparian Restoration Training Attendee



"The seed and plant sessions have given me more resources and information that will help our program successfully implement several projects."

—2015 Riparian Restoration Training
Attendee

Bridging the Gap Across the West

2015 Conference: Advancing Riparian Restoration in the West

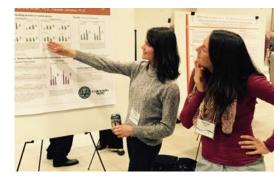
For the past 13 years, our Annual Conference has been a core TC program designed to forge new connections and share valuable information as a means to improve river health through riparian restoration.

In 2015, we hosted our conference in Albuquerque, NM. More than 165 scientists, land and water managers, tribal representatives, researchers, students, and consultants were in attendance from 15 states, 7 tribes, and 2 countries. Along with 55 presentations that were recorded and made available on our website, the conference featured networking opportunities that allowed participants to connect with one another and share important resources, methods, and solutions necessary for restoring riparian landscapes in the American West.

Overall, attendees ranked the entire conference 4.3 on a 5.0 scale, with 99% of the respondents saying that the contacts made at the conference will be helpful in achieving their conservation goals and/or organizational mission. View recordings of conference presentations on our YouTube page.

"Getting a big picture view is critical when working in a small community. These contacts will provide a wealth of information and inspiration!"

-2015 Conference Attendee



"It is easy to get 'down' these days in our field.

I realized a lot of exciting things that were
going on and that I need to push a bit harder."

-2015 Conference Attendee

2nd Annual Raft the River

Complete with presentations from local water experts, tours of restoration sites along the way, a barbeque, and live music, our Annual Raft the River event takes interested community members of all ages for a one day float on the Colorado River. In 2015, 50 participants

attended. While the event is an opportunity to reach new audiences and reconnect with old friends, the goal is to give attendees a unique behind-the-scenes look at the restoration work happening in the community and foster a deeper connection with the river.

For more information about our 2016 Raft the River trip on August 27th, <u>click here</u>, or visit our Facebook page.

INSPIRING YOUTH

Our commitment to supporting the restoration of riparian areas includes providing educational opportunities to the next generation of stewards. Through classroom instruction and hands-on learning in the outdoors, we provided education to 529 students in 2015 to raise awareness and knowledge of river restoration and the impacts of riparian invasive plant species.

Providing Riparian Restoration Resources

Visit Our New Online Resource Center!

We created the Resource Center (RC) to serve as an important web-based community and regional resource for housing riparian restoration tools, best management practices, how-to videos, and lessons learned.

In 2015, the RC's utility has grown; 175 documents are now posted and 1,117 practitioners have utilized the RC to date. The RC continues to transform into a user -friendly online platform for accessing riparian restoration resources that educates and connects our partners with the information they need to succeed. Click here to visit our Resource Center and see for yourself!

Looking Ahead

TC's event and funding board, the Riparian Restoration Connection (RRC), is being integrated into TC's website!

More than five years ago, we created the RRC (formerly at www.riparianrestorationconnection.com) to act as a hub for important riparian restoration-related funding opportunities and events.

riparian

restoration

Powered by

In 2016, the RRC will be integrated into the TC website as a one-stop-shop for finding events and funding opportunities.

Visit www.tamariskcoalition.org for updates to the RRC and our newly developed Resource Center!

2015 Restoration Progress at a Glance

DOLORES RIVER
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

150 acres of tamarisk and Russian olive removed 375 acres retreated for resprouts *Numbers are approximate

ACRES TREATED



DESERT RIVERS COLLABORATIVE

415 acres of tamarisk and Russian olive removed 475 acres retreated for resprouts

NATIVE PLANTS PLANTED

More than 147 acres revegetated with native plants after invasive plants were removed



More than **31** acres revegetated with native plants after invasive plants were removed

JOBS CREATED



More than **115** jobs created for young adults and local contractors

 $\label{eq:more than 52 jobs created} \text{ for young adults and local contractors}$

VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED



tamarisk and planting native grasses, shrubs and trees



Volunteers contributed more than **805 hours** to cutting tamarisk and planting native grasses, shrubs and trees

ECONOMIC IMPACT



Nearly \$175,000 invested into local communities through partnership expenditures

SECONDARY WEEDS TREATED

More than **938 acres** of secondary (herbaceous) weeds treated

Nearly \$1 million invested

into local communities through partnership expenditures



More than **465 acres** of secondary (herbaceous) weeds treated

LEADING RESTORATION PARTNERSHIPS

As part of our effort to promote cross-boundary, ecosystem-wide restoration approaches that employ a landscape-scale perspective, Tamarisk Coalition is the lead coordinator for two public and private, multi-stakeholder partnerships. Our leadership brings resource managers and communities together to address common challenges, leverage resources, build capacity, and collectively implement riparian restoration actions in an effective manner that promotes stewardship and long-term success.

Desert Rivers Collaborative (DRC)

Colorado and Gunnison Rivers, CO — During its fourth year of operation, the <u>Desert Rivers Collaborative</u> (DRC) undertook a number of restoration activities throughout the Grand Valley in western Colorado.

While DRC partners removed tamarisk and Russian olive from a handful of sites, the bulk of work in 2015 concentrated on addressing resprouts and secondary weeds on previously treated sites. This work was completed under the guidance of the DRC 5-Year Implementation Plan, which was finalized in 2015. Planting of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs, also occurred on 30-plus acres, with much of this work being completed by volunteers. Many of the plants used in these projects were provided by partners, such as the Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center, which grew materials for TC through its plant materials program.

In April 2015, representatives from a number of neighboring partnerships, including Southeast Utah Riparian Partnership (SURP) and the Middle Colorado Watershed Council, joined DRC members on a tour of several restoration sites across the Valley to explore opportunities for collaboration and share lessons learned around several restoration themes. In 2016, this visit will be reciprocated, with DRC members traveling to the Moab area to learn from SURP managers and scientists about their projects and research undertakings.



Looking Ahead

No rest for the weary in 2016! Shortly after the New Year, DRC partners planted nearly 1,000 cottonwoods and several hundred shrubs and willows along the Colorado Riverfront Trail; this project will improve riparian



habitat and trail user experiences upon the main alternative transportation corridor that unites the communities of Palisade, Grand Junction, and Fruita. The majority of the cottonwoods used in the project were grown at a cottonwood pole farm established by TC in 2011 to provide a reliable source of restoration materials.

A number of additional projects are on tap throughout the Grand Valley, including removal and restoration work on sites managed by the City of Grand Junction, Mesa County, and Colorado Parks & Wildlife. In addition, the DRC will be undertaking work on private lands through a cost-share program. The DRC is also exploring options to locally hire two Environmental Stewards to assist with mapping and treatment activities - providing young adults valuable natural resources management experience.

Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) Looking Ahead



of agency personnel, conservation corps crews, volunteers, local businesses and schools, and private landowners who are focused on restoring the river corridor to a sustainable and thriving

system. In 2015, several publications—including Restoration Ecology, Yale Environment Report, and the River Management Society Journal—highlighted the partnership, which is committed to sharing its lessons learned with other restoration practitioners.

To see a full report on the Dolores River activities, click here.

New initiatives for 2016 include development of a comprehensive bird monitoring protocol and community stewardship



program, as well as working with new partners to reconnect several side channels to provide important backwater, nursery habitat for fish.

Partners also will host a series of volunteer projects to remove tamarisk and plant native shrubs and

initiate new projects along the San Miguel River (the largest tributary to the Dolores) and along several reaches in Utah.



that holds together riparian restoration in our area. It serves both as a partner and a practical resource, without which organizations like ours could not accomplish watershed-wide projects such as the DRRP or any others."

- Jake Deslauriers, Program Director, Canyon Country Youth Corps

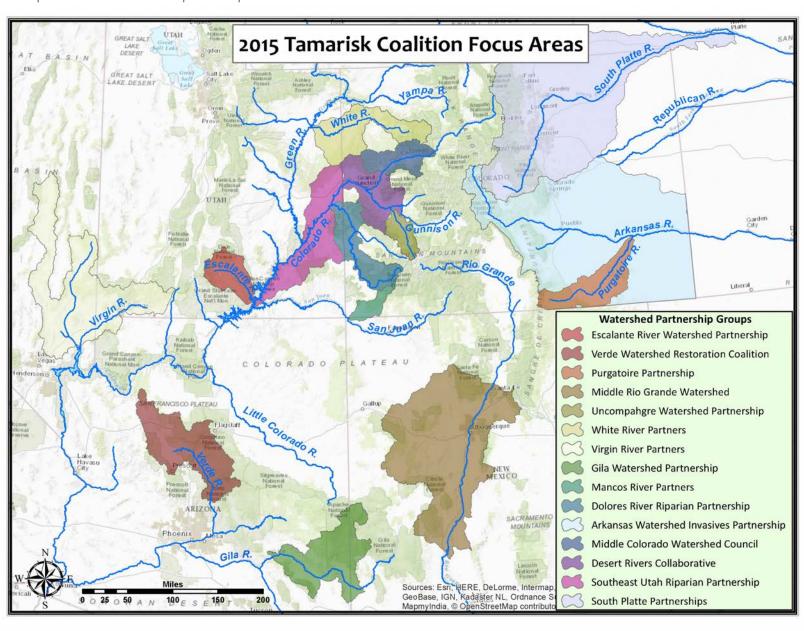
Photo courtesy of Jenna Whetzel

Supporting Watershed Partnerships

An important component of empowering practitioners is to provide <u>support to restoration partnerships</u>. Our objective is to "prop up" local and community-based organizations that are best positioned to conduct, coordinate, and sustain riparian restoration efforts through capacity building, technical assistance, education, and information sharing.

While TC's role in these partnerships can vary, our dedication to helping these groups be effective and successful does not waver. We provide assistance and education to a vast group of stakeholders – from the private land owner to the public land manager — that are committed to enhancing the riverside lands they manage, leaving a legacy of stewardship.

In 2015, TC provided capacity support, technical expertise, grant writing, planning, monitoring, and project management to the following riparian restoration-focused partnerships:



RESTORATION COMMUNITY

Collaborating with the Cross-Watershed Network



In 2015, the <u>Cross-Watershed Network</u> (XWN) found its stride as it completed its third year of practitioner-driven programming. XWN is a peer-to-peer network designed to connect restoration practitioners across boundaries to improve watershed health. With practitioners now building bridges across dozens of watersheds, they are exchanging innovative ideas and implementing more effective restoration practices to enhance river systems across the arid West.

This year, TC assisted the XWN Steering Committee in connecting 100 practitioners through in-person workshops. The year's annual two-day workshop, hosted by the Arkansas River Watershed Invasive Plants Partnership in Pueblo, CO, focused on seeding and revegetation techniques, setting management goals for multi-use sites, and building restoration projects to withstand disturbance. This workshop was also the pilot for a new interactive tool, Case Clinic sessions. Four different practitioners presented some of the challenges from their work, after which workshop attendees offered up advice from their own experiences and engaged in collaborative problem solving. To learn more about these case clinics, view the 2015 workshop notes.



"XWN has been a great introduction into the watershed community." —2015 Workshop Attendee



In April 2015, Lindsay Murdoch was brought on as our AmeriCorps VISTA, a three-year position charged with strengthening XWN's ability to support stewards across the West. Lindsay (pictured left) has agreed to continue serving with XWN for a second year. This is the first year that XWN has increased capacity beyond the seven-member steering committee.

In 2015, XWN also bid farewell to two founding steering committee members, Jan Holder and Michele Straube. XWN is grateful for their contributions.

Funding Riparian Restoration

One of the most challenging aspects of conducting restoration work can be garnering and sustaining adequate funding to support all work components over the total life of a project. To help restoration practitioners with this aspect of project work, we have developed a variety of funding tools and continue to grow our Funding Program.

In 2015, our Funding Program helped restoration practitioners by providing the following services to advance riparian restoration:

- Year-by-year program budget development and cost refinement
- Assessment of current funding programs and recommendations for expansion
- Creation of a Restoration Funding Database and Funding Calendar (visit www.tamariskcoalition.org/funding to browse the funding database and calendar) that identifies new public and private grant programs specific to the program needs
- Identification and assessment of new ways to fund programs
- One-on-one or group training in new funding areas
- In-kind tracking tools
- Assistance in developing outreach tools and messages to attract donations
- Funding subcommittee coordination
- Grant-writing assistance
- Webinars on restoration funding techniques

For more information about our Funding Program, click here.



Mapping and Educating about the Tamarisk Beetle

Our Tamarisk Beetle Education and Mapping Program creates worthwhile restoration solutions by providing information on the movement of the tamarisk beetle, educates the public about its potential ecosystem impacts, and compiles data from applied research so that land managers can effectively employ new approaches for restoration in areas affected by the beetle.

We do not release tamarisk beetles; rather, we provide critical information concerning the tamarisk beetle to land managers. For example, in 2015, we hosted an expert panel and published a report from the findings of that panel, conducted a tamarisk beetle workshop, and continued with the coordination of mapping the spread of the tamarisk beetle.

Expert Panel and Report

In an effort to fill information gaps and provide useful solutions on the real-world effects of the tamarisk beetle, TC staff and outside experts developed and published a report based on a panel that convened in January 2015 in Tempe, AZ. The panel involved six experts discussing questions concerning the tamarisk beetle, expansion in

"I work with landowners who want to do restoration projects - this information and these contacts will be invaluable in planning out these projects."

- Tamarisk Beetle Workshop Attendee

the lower Colorado River Basin, and possible tools/techniques that land managers can employ to conduct restoration in a system that includes beetles. As a result, a 20-page report was developed, peer reviewed, and published in January 2016 by the Ruth Powell Hutchins Water Center at Colorado Mesa University. The much-anticipated report provides restoration practitioners with timely information for successful riparian work and is forming the backbone of a workshop series in 2016/17 to provide information to land managers in Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Oklahoma.



What is the Tamarisk Beetle?

The biological control option for managing tamarisk - the tamarisk beetle (*Diorhabda* spp.) - was tested and released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2001 and has since become an important component of tamarisk control. The tamarisk beetle can significantly weaken tamarisk so that mechanical and chemical controls are more effective, and also help to control the spread of tamarisk by reducing its reproductive viability. While it does not quickly eliminate tamarisk single-handedly, it has proven to be much more effective than many had initially imagined, and has become a significant factor in riparian restoration.

Tamarisk Beetle Monitoring

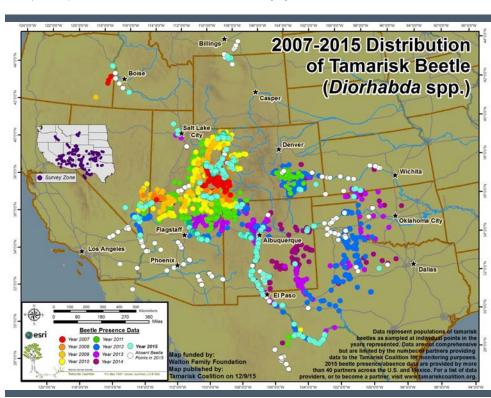
Monitoring the tamarisk beetle's presence and absence expansion across the West helps land managers to better understand how close the beetle is to their areas of work and how best to respond once the beetle has arrived. We work with partners to coordinate data collection, provide training on protocols, house the data in an online database, and raise general public awareness of the beetle and its impacts to river ecosystems.

In 2015, we gathered beetle monitoring data from 35 partners in 13 states and Mexico. The data showed an erratic distribution of beetles across the Southwest; populations in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Texas, and northern Mexico declined while populations in Kansas and Oklahoma

almost disappeared entirely. Some expansion was noted in the Middle Rio Grande River in central New Mexico (into highly sensitive habitat of the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher near Elephant Butte reservoir), and in the Little Colorado River basin in northern Arizona.

Beetle experts postulate that the atypical moisture this past summer, especially in the plains states, may have led to the greatly-diminished numbers of beetles found in 2015. The drop also may have resulted from an expected cyclical predator-prey relationship wherein beetle numbers grow and live tamarisk cover decreases, followed by lower beetle numbers until green foliage comes back and beetle populations rebound. Since the beetles have only been in the ecosystem for a decade, there is still much monitoring and population data that needs to be acquired before a true understanding of population growth and decline can be understood.

To learn more about the Tamarisk Beetle Education and Mapping program, click here.

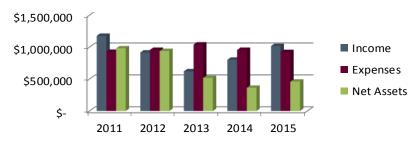




2015 TC Financial Summary



2011-2015 Year-to-Year Comparison



*Note: A multi-year pledge was received and booked in 2012, artificially lowering income figures in 2013 and 2015.



What's Next?

Save the Date for our 3rd Annual Raft the River trip on August 27, 2016 and our 14th Annual Conference in February 2017!

Stay involved by signing up for our e-newsletter; learn when you can get on the river with us, track the expanse of the tamarisk beetle in your area, or attend an interactive workshop! Visit our website to sign up, www.tamariskcoalition.org and LIKE us on Facebook!

Thank you!

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are credit to Tamarisk Coalition.

2015 MEMBERS AND DONORS

Thanks to investments from individuals like you, we have restored thousands of riverside acres impacted by invasive plants and continue to provide river restoration professionals and watershed groups with the knowledge, resources, funding and capacity to keep moving forward. Basic memberships start at \$50 for individuals, \$100 for organizations. TC welcomes and appreciates contributions of any amount. Please visit www.tamariskcoalition.org, call 970-256-7400 for more information, or complete and mail in the back page of this report to become a member.

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Arizona Department of Game & Fish Arkansas River Watershed Invasive Plants

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Big Bend National Park

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The Local

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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bitter Lake NWR, NM

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, New Mexico

Ecological Services

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, San Andres NWR, NM

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service, Oregon

University of Denver University of Utah Law: Wallace Stegner Center

for Water, Resource, & the Environment

University of Utah Rio Mesa Center

Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center Utah Department of Natural Resources

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Xcel Energy Foundation

Ute Mountain Utes

Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition

Virgin River Conservation Partnership

Walter Walker Foundation

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Before and After...

Thanks to support from individuals like you, there is an "after" photo and story for this habitat at Indian Wash in Grand Junction, CO. Once overtaken by dense thickets of invasive plants and not utilized by wildlife or the community, this area now provides spectacular opportunities for interactions with nature in the form of walking, biking, hiking, and outdoor environmental education.



