

White River Partnership
Colorado Partners Meeting
January 28, 2021
9:00-10:00

In attendance: Lisa Cook, Mary Taylor, David Graf, Jojo La, Matt Jennings, Marcus Kissner, Kendra Young, Callie Hendrickson, Shawn Welder, Deirdre Macnab, Jane Turnburke, John Leary

Objectives:

- Updates on the White River Partnership
- Review the progress we have made so far
- Identify potential goals and needs of the White River Partnership
- Provide instructions for restoration plan comments and Memorandum of Understanding signatures

9:00 Welcome and introductions

9:05 WRP updates

9:10 Quick review of group accomplishments

Riparian health is important to a diverse group of people along the White River in Colorado and Utah. Examples include the Districts' Integrated Water Initiative, White River Alliance, BLM in Utah, etc. We worked together to develop a mission and vision; broad partnership goals; and a restoration plan that provides a broad restoration framework and criteria that are common to all of the different projects. Awarded the CWCB restoration grant for some work on the main stem and Yellow Creek in partnership w/BLM, CD, WCCC; REW has another grant pending as does the Conservation District.

There is concern about the effects of mosquito spraying on algae and good invertebrates, including the tamarisk leaf beetle populations. As per last night's meeting, there hasn't been a connection established between the two and the USGS is looking into it. Palisade Insectary would also be a good source of additional information. There was a suggestion that the White River Partnership (WRP) discuss this with the county. Might not be the best role for the WRP since it is non-advocacy and non-regulatory. Information opportunities may be available from USUGS, Palisade Insectary, universities, or ???.

9:15 Discussion on partnership direction and potential goals

WRP has built a great base, thanks to all the feedback and support that got to this point. Now is a good time to focus discussions on the direction of the partnership and what people would like to see now that the mission, vision, plan, and MOU and are mostly developed.

Deirdre: How do we engage ranchers and farmers? Funding would be an issue; maybe they can provide machinery and personnel; they won't want to go back and treat the same place multiple times; need financial assistance and education. How do we gain momentum moving downriver toward Rangely and up Douglas Creek? Yellow Creek is a great start.

Regrowth and retreatment is nearly unavoidable, monitoring is important. Matt mentioned to usually expect 10-15% regrowth from resprout, missed trees, and herbicide efficacy. Staying on top of things is key; one person with a backpack sprayer for follow up each season for a few years can have a dramatic impact on site success. It can escalate quickly if not addressed early and regularly.

The Districts (and the rest of the group) are supportive of WCCC fielding a locally-based youth crew. WCCC has done it in Gunnison and Montrose; Matt will follow up with Callie.

Machinery and farm/ranch labor can be helpful as matching funds. Potential funding includes NRCS Equip; CPW wetlands program. Should write retreatments into grant proposals so that we are prepared.

What is CPW's role in the WRP? They work on the ground, they know the landowners. Finding private landowners that are interested, connecting with Districts on their structure and riparian assessments. We need to focus on how we approach landowners and make them comfortable with the process. Landowner outreach is a great potential role for CPW.

Endangered fish and potential focus areas:

As part of White River Management Plan the Recovery Program and CWCB put together actions for endangered fish recovery, including the riparian component of fish habitat. If there is an opportunity to have an impact on the greater areas, especially below TDD in the critical habitat for endangered fish there's potential to combine management actions.

It's complicated to show anything beyond correlation between endangered/conservation fish habitat and riparian restoration but the connection is very important. Lower White River processes are pretty intact, we need to try to keep them intact. Keeping non-native fish out is also key. Most endangered fish habitat is downstream and in the Green River, to CWCB's perspective its important to keep existing conditions that support the fish; its a mostly functioning river. As water changes in the area, keeping the existing conditions is important. Tildon Jones (USFWS) may have more info for connecting fish habitat to riparian restoration; making sure the river doesn't get choked out.

Private lands:

River channel dynamics favored by native fish may not be preferred by landowners. It's a tricky balance between bank stability provided to tamarisk and RO and keeping healthy vegetation. Preferences are landowner specific; each will have their own thoughts; it probably depends on how thick the infestations on the property are.

Part of the Management Plan is so that irrigators can continue to use water, with that being said a lot of water users are willing to see this as one system, trying to preserve water for future ag and municipal use; we need to do mitigation as well.

Cottonwoods-how important is shade for fish; this is usually the focus of coldwater fish species. We should find out what the native plant community looked like prior to settlement. Or 200 years ago? Was it cottonwoods? Was it a gallery or in patches? Cottonwoods grow relatively

quickly, 10-15 years. If there are cattle or beaver fencing is needed. Re-establishing native riparian vegetation will benefit the largest elk herd, improve land values, and help sustain hunting economy in the region.

RO and public education:

Public education for dealing with low levels of RO in the area, potentially through NRCS or CPW for treatments and educational component; people should know that there is always low-level maintenance. Funding for RO removal on the upper section while RO is less dense would be helpful. Wording in the Rio Blanco County Mgmt plan supports treatment RO; increased involvement from Town of Meeker and the RB County Weed Dept with outreach and education and treatment would be beneficial. Also consider reaching out to Wade/Rosalyn from Lower White Weed and Pest District.

9:45 Restoration Plan and Memorandum of Understanding

Skipped to provide more time for discussion.

9:55 Final comments and adjourn