

# 2020

## ANNUAL REPORT



## LETTER FROM EMILY AND RICA DRRP CO-COORDINATORS



*Rica Fulton (left)*  
Restoration Coordinator,  
RiversEdge West

*Emily Kasyon (Right)*  
Watershed Programs Manager,  
Conservation Legacy's Southwest  
Conservation Corps

Dear Partners,

While there is not much to say about the challenges 2020 posed that has not already been said, we would like to thank everyone who continues to prioritize their work restoring the Dolores River. The Dolores River Restoration Partnership (DRRP) was able to follow through with critical monitoring and maintenance work across two states, four BLM Field Offices, five counties, and on private lands along nearly 200 miles of the Dolores River.

Furthermore, the DRRP was adaptive and coordinated larger tamarisk removal projects with Conservation Corps crews, worked with landowners to improve areas along the river, and worked with Wildland Restoration Volunteers for the sixth annual volunteer event.

Some other accomplishments in 2020 include:

- Partners signed a new MOU, symbolizing the continued commitment to the river and working collaboratively;
- Ramped up fundraising efforts to diversify our funding sources;
- Participated in stakeholder processes to continue to advocate for restoration and a healthy Dolores River.

As the drought in 2020 continues to impact us all, it is important to consider what stewardship actions we can do to monitor and actively improve ecosystem functions along the Dolores River. We know that we are more effective when we work together, just as a biodiverse ecosystem along the Dolores River is more resilient to change and challenges.

With Gratitude,

*Emily Kasyon*  
Emily Kasyon  
Conservation Legacy

*Rica Fulton*  
Rica Fulton  
RiversEdge West

## EMILY KASYON—LETTER TO THE PARTNERSHIP

Hello Everyone!

As I transition out of my role at the Southwest Conservation Corps and as DRRP co-coordinator I've been reflecting on how this partnership has impacted me. It is truly difficult to put my experiences with the DRRP into words – my involvement with all the wonderful people in this partnership has really changed my life. I've learned just how hard restoration work is; how patience truly is a virtue. I've also seen how the riparian landscape can transform from tamarisk jungle, to post-treatment noxious weed apocalypse, to beautiful habitat with chirping birds and cottonwood saplings. Every day I have been humbled and inspired by how much we can get done when we work together.

I've never thought of the Dolores River in terms of boundaries. I've always seen the river as the long canyon snake that it is – water flowing down the path of least resistance, not knowing where the CO/Utah border is or where public meets private land. I've realized over the years just how much work goes into the collaboration that enables me to see the river in this way. We now stand on such a robust foundation of strong relationships and shared experiences. I'm so excited for the new initiatives coming down the pipeline, from geomorphic monitoring in partnership with Fort Lewis College to tamarisk removal in the remote Wilderness Study area. We have so much to be proud of and so much to look forward to.

THANK YOU to everyone in this group for contributing to this monumental restoration effort. I still pinch myself that I got to be part of the DRRP. Even though I am leaving the Southwest Conservation Corps and my role as DRRP co-coordinator, I plan to continue my career in river restoration and will be attending graduate school in this next chapter of my life. I will always remember that my roots are on the Dolores River, where I picked up my first chainsaw and saw my first river otter. It has been a pleasure working with all of you!

Stay in touch,

Emily Kasyon,  
719-930-0377, ekasyon@gmail.com



## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: ADAM PETRY

One of the most important factors to the longevity and success of the DRRP is the variety of partners with unique skills and roles. One of those individuals is Adam Petry, owner and biologist of Western Biology, LLC, who has been fundamental in conducting bird surveys prior to invasive species removal work along the lower Dolores for at least eight years. Bird surveys typically include breeding bird point counts, presence-absence inventories, nest searches and monitoring, and conducting protocol surveys from threatened/endangered avian species to comply with federal environmental laws.

Adam provides knowledgeable and thoughtful insight into how birds use the Dolores River corridor that span beyond basic surveys, and is an expert in communicating his findings. He also is willing to work within challenging conditions and logistics that come with the remote canyons of the Dolores. He says he loves the solitude and wildness of the Dolores River landscapes and is “simply fascinated with observing how birds adapt to and utilize landscapes over time.”

Adam describes how the Dolores provides critical north-south habitat for migratory, nesting and breeding birds: “from the steep ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir lined reaches of the Dolores Canyon, to the sagebrush meadows and pinyon-juniper hillsides of Slickrock Canyon, to the open scrub-shrub desert and cottonwood-willow galleries near Stateline and Lake Bottom, the greater Dolores complex supports an exceptional diversity of habitat types from the headwaters on down to the confluence with the Colorado.”

Finally, he offers that the collaborative approach the DRRP utilizes to conduct restoration work is impressive and on a scale he’s rarely seen in the West. With the increase in exceptional drought and increased water management, slow, phased restoration activities are critical to help ensure a more resilient waterway. Adam evokes author Marc Reisner’s quote when reflecting on the Dolores River, describing it as “a semi-desert with a desert heart.”

Photo credit: Canyon Country Youth Corps



## ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSES

In the face of drought, climate change, and other challenges, the DRRP's driving goal is to improve the riparian area along the Dolores River. By actively monitoring, treating invasive species and noxious weeds, and conducting active revegetation; the DRRP strives to foster a diverse and resilient ecosystem.

### PROGRESS TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL GOALS IN 2020

- 24** —→ Acres of tamarisk stands initially removed
- 18** —→ Acres of revegetation (seeding native grasses & planting forbs, shrubs, & trees)
- 45** —→ Acres of tamarisk re-sprouts treated
- 101** —→ The number of acres of secondary weeds (e.g. Russian knapweed, hoary cress) treated



*Willard Restoration Volunteers plant native trees along the Dolores north of Gateway. Photo: Emily Kasjon, SCC*



*Canyon Country Youth Corps members piling slash at the Stateline site in Utah. Photo credit: Chris Quirin Canyon Country Youth Corps.*

## SOCIAL SUCCESSES

Fostering the next generation of stewards through engagement with conservation corps, improving recreational experiences along the river, and increasing public safety are all examples of DRRP's social goals.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SOCIAL GOALS IN 2020

**31**



Number of Conservation Corps crew members and leaders engaged

**704**



Number of work hours by Conservation Corps crews

**24**



Number of volunteers engaged

## GATEWAY PLANTING EVENT

In October 2020, the DRRP sponsored the fifth annual volunteer event with Wildland Restoration Volunteers. 21 volunteers met DRRP Coordinators, the Grand Junction DRRP Strike Team, SCC Strike Team, and the BLM to plant over 200 trees and shrubs, cut tamarisk, and cage native trees. Freemont cottonwoods, box elders, 3-leaf sumac, mountain mahogany, New Mexico privet, alkali sacaton, Indian ricegrass, golden currant, and other species were planted at four sites.

Passive irrigation systems were set up using 75-gallon tanks and drip tape at two sites to improve the success rates of the plantings. The tanks will remain on-site during the growing season for the

first three years to help the species have a higher level of success becoming established in dry conditions.

Partners who made this event possible include the Bureau of Land Management, Western Colorado Conservation Corps Strike Team, Chelsea Nursery, Wildland Scapes, and Colorado Water Conservation Board.



*The WRV crew after a long day of planting! Phot: Emily Kasyon*



## MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

Funding for implementation, training, coordination, and outreach come from diverse funding sources from federal, state, private, and in-kind sources. A major benefit of conducting restoration within the DRRP is the ability to leverage funding, support a multitude of projects, and be adaptive with changing funding streams.

### 2020 ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

# \$570,350

\*Conservatively represents the expenditures and partnership in-kind resources invested towards DRRP work on the Western Slope of Colorado and in eastern Utah.



*The Monitoring Team tracking ecological progress on a restoration site. Photo: RiversEdge West*



*A Canyon County Youth Corps sawyer cuts a large Russian olive along the Dolores River in Utah. Photo Credit: CCYC*

## PARTNER UPDATES:

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY VEGETATION MONITORING

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has been a DRRP partner since 2011. DOE contractors from RSI Entech (formally Navarro) conduct weed control, restoration, and monitoring on a lease tract they manage spanning a 3.3-mile stretch of the Dolores River near Slickrock. Since 2013 the DOE has monitored the site across 16 monitoring points using three data collection methods: vegetation and ground cover measurements, noxious weed mapping, and photo monitoring.

The site is progressively trending towards being restored. Relative cover of noxious weeds has gone from 20% in 2013 to 2% in 2020, relative cover of native or desirable species has increased from 65% in 2013 to 83% in 2020, and species richness has gone from 9 in 2013 to 27 in 2020.

Find the DOE's 2020 Dolores River Restoration Monitoring Report [Here](#).

### FORT LEWIS COLLEGE SPEARHEADS EFFORT TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT GEOMORPHIC MONITORING ON THE DOLORES RIVER

The DRRP is working with Fort Lewis College (FLC) and other partners to develop and a geomorphic monitoring protocol and create a database to serve as a repository for all of the research and data. Collectively, this project is called the Dolores River Adaptive Management Support Project.

Currently, technical experts from FLC, Colorado Mesa University (CMU), Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management and more are working to develop a baseline and responsive protocol.

Students from FLC and CMU will conduct the first round of monitoring in the fall of 2021! This data will help inform management and restoration management decisions.



*The Dolores River in 2019. Photo: Rig to Flip*

## THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS PROVIDED CASH OR IN-KIND SUPPORT IN 2020

<i>AmeriCorps</i>	<i>Gateway Canyons Resort</i>	<i>Telluride Institute</i>
<i>Bird Conservancy of the Rockies</i>	<i>Gateway School</i>	<i>Telluride Foundation</i>
<i>Bureau of Land Management</i>	<i>Grand County, UT</i>	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
<i>Bureau of Reclamation</i>	<i>Jim Johnston</i>	<i>US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</i>
<i>Canyon Country Discovery Center</i>	<i>Mesa County, CO</i>	<i>US Department of Energy</i>
<i>Canyon Country Youth Corps</i>	<i>Mesa County Partners</i>	<i>US Department of the Interior</i>
<i>Colorado Department of Agriculture</i>	<i>Montrose County, CO</i>	<i>University of Utah Rio Mesa Center</i>
<i>Colorado Department of Transportation</i>	<i>Natural Resources Conservation Service</i>	<i>Utah Division of Wildlife Resources</i>
<i>Colorado Mesa University</i>	<i>RiversEdge West</i>	<i>Utah Watershed Restoration</i>
<i>Colorado Parks &amp; Wildlife</i>	<i>San Miguel County, CO</i>	<i>Initiative</i>
<i>Colorado State University Extension</i>	<i>San Miguel Watershed Coalition</i>	<i>Walton Family Foundation</i>
<i>Colorado Water Conservation Board</i>	<i>Navarro Research &amp; Engineering, Inc.</i>	<i>Western Colorado Conservation</i>
<i>Conservation Legacy</i>	<i>OP Ranch</i>	<i>Corps</i>
<i>Cross-Watershed Network</i>	<i>Paradox Valley Charter School</i>	<i>Wildlands Restoration Volunteers</i>
<i>Dolores County, CO</i>	<i>Southwest Basin Roundtable</i>	<i>Wildland Scapes LLC</i>
<i>Dolores River Boating Advocates</i>	<i>Southwestern Water Conservation</i>	
<i>Fort Lewis College</i>	<i>District</i>	



*Canyon Country Youth Corps observes a snake along the Dolores River in Utah near the state line. Photo: Chris Quirin, CCYC*



**TO LEARN MORE, CALL 970-256-7400**

**OR VISIT [DRRPARTNERSHIP.ORG](http://DRRPARTNERSHIP.ORG)**