

Building the Dream of Collaborative River Management  
*5 years into the Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative*



**GVRCI**  
**GRAND VALLEY**  
**RIVER CORRIDOR INITIATIVE**

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*American Rivers*

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*RiversEdge West*

# Origins







**RiversEdge West**  
RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

**river**  
**front**  
Discover • Inspire • Belong



# GVRCI Vision

The communities of the Grand Valley are committed to a data-driven approach to steward a resilient, vibrant, and healthy river corridor that supports agriculture, habitat and wildlife, recreation, economic growth, and sustainable development benefiting today's and future generations.





# Objectives

- **Engage** river corridor stakeholder groups to identify common values and challenges
- Provide a **platform and resource** for river corridor stakeholders, fostering coordinated collaboration on future river-centric endeavors, leading to informed decision making
- **Develop strategies** to address shared goals, objectives, and challenges
- **Foster community**, education, and connection with the river

# GVRCI History and Progress

## Phase 1 (2020)

- Core Team formed
- Seed funding secured
- Initial stakeholder engagement
- Visioning and priorities

## Phase 2 (2021-2022)

- Advisory Council formalized
- Data review and gap analysis
- Stakeholder workshops
- Governance structure
- Fluvial hazard zone mapping

## Phase 3 (2023-2025)

- Operating principles
- Riparian and floodplain health assessment
- Flow preferences workshops
- Jurisdictional planning framework

## Phase 4 (2025-2027)

- River Corridor master planning
- Floodplain and riparian restoration project development
- Collaboration and outreach



# GRAND VALLEY RCI Structure

## Core Team

- Rivers Edge West
- American Rivers
- One Riverfront
- Wash Water Science and Engineering



# GVRCI Structure

## Advisory Committee

- Mesa County
- Town of Palisade
- City of Grand Junction
- City of Fruita
- Mesa Conservation District
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- US Fish and Wildlife
- Bureau of Land Management
- NRCS
- Colorado Canyons Assoc.
- Colorado West Land Trust
- Clifton Water
- Audubon Rockies
- Ducks Unlimited



# GVRCI Funding

- ONE RIVERFRONT
- MIGHTY ARROW
- COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
- COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT
- COLORADO HEALTHY RIVERS FUND
- WESTERN COLORADO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
- RIVER NETWORK
- XCEL
- CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION, CITY OF FRUITA, TOWN OF PALISADE
- *IN KIND SUPPORT!*



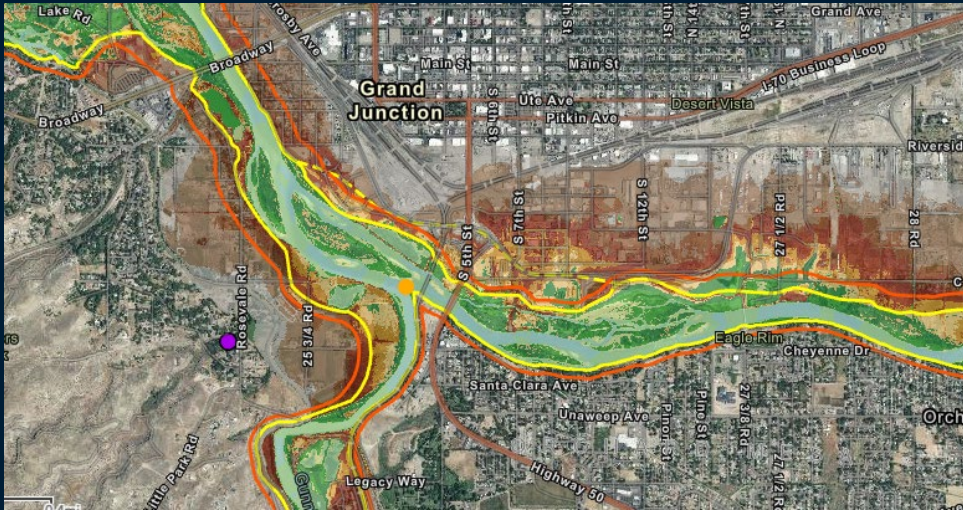
# Accomplishments & Learning



The 2nd Valley River Corridor  
Hydrology  
Biology  
Geology  
Socioeconomics

2nd Valley River Corridor	
Hydrology	
Biology	
Geology	
Socioeconomics	

# Fluvial Hazard Zone Mapping



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[Home](#) / [Departments and Services](#) / [Public Works Division](#) / [Floodplain Management Program](#) / The Grand Valley Fluvial Hazard Zone Map

## Floodplain Management

- Build Responsibly
- FAQs
- Flood Risk
- Flood Safety
- Insure Your Property
- Natural Floodplains Functions
- The Grand Valley Fluvial Hazard Zone Map

## The Grand Valley Fluvial Hazard Zone Map

### Fluvial Hazard Zones (FHZs)

FHZs show areas that a stream may:

- Currently occupy
- Have occupied recently
- Influence through erosion and sediment transport

The Grand Valley FHZ has been mapped for most of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers in Mesa County as part of the [Colorado Water Conservation Board's Fluvial Hazard Zone Program](#).

- Supplemental, Non-Regulatory Floodplain Hazard Mapping and Planning Tool
- Available via Mesa County Floodplain Management



An aerial photograph of a wide, brown river. On the left bank, there is a dense riparian corridor with various green shrubs and trees. The water flows from the top right towards the bottom left. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# GRAND VALLEY RIPARIAN AND FLOODPLAIN ACTION PLAN

PROTECTING AND  
RESTORING THE GRAND  
VALLEY'S VANISHING  
RIPARIAN CORRIDORS



# LAND USE CHANGE IN THE RIVER CORRIDOR

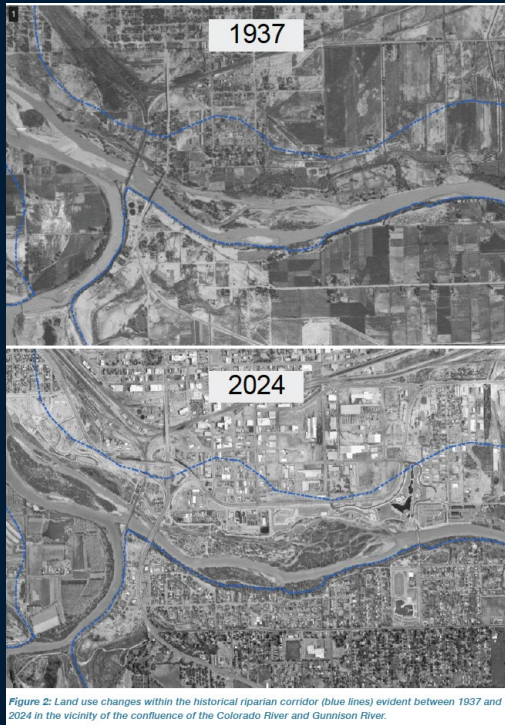


Figure 2: Land use changes within the historical riparian corridor (blue lines) evident between 1937 and 2024 in the vicinity of the confluence of the Colorado River and Gunnison River.

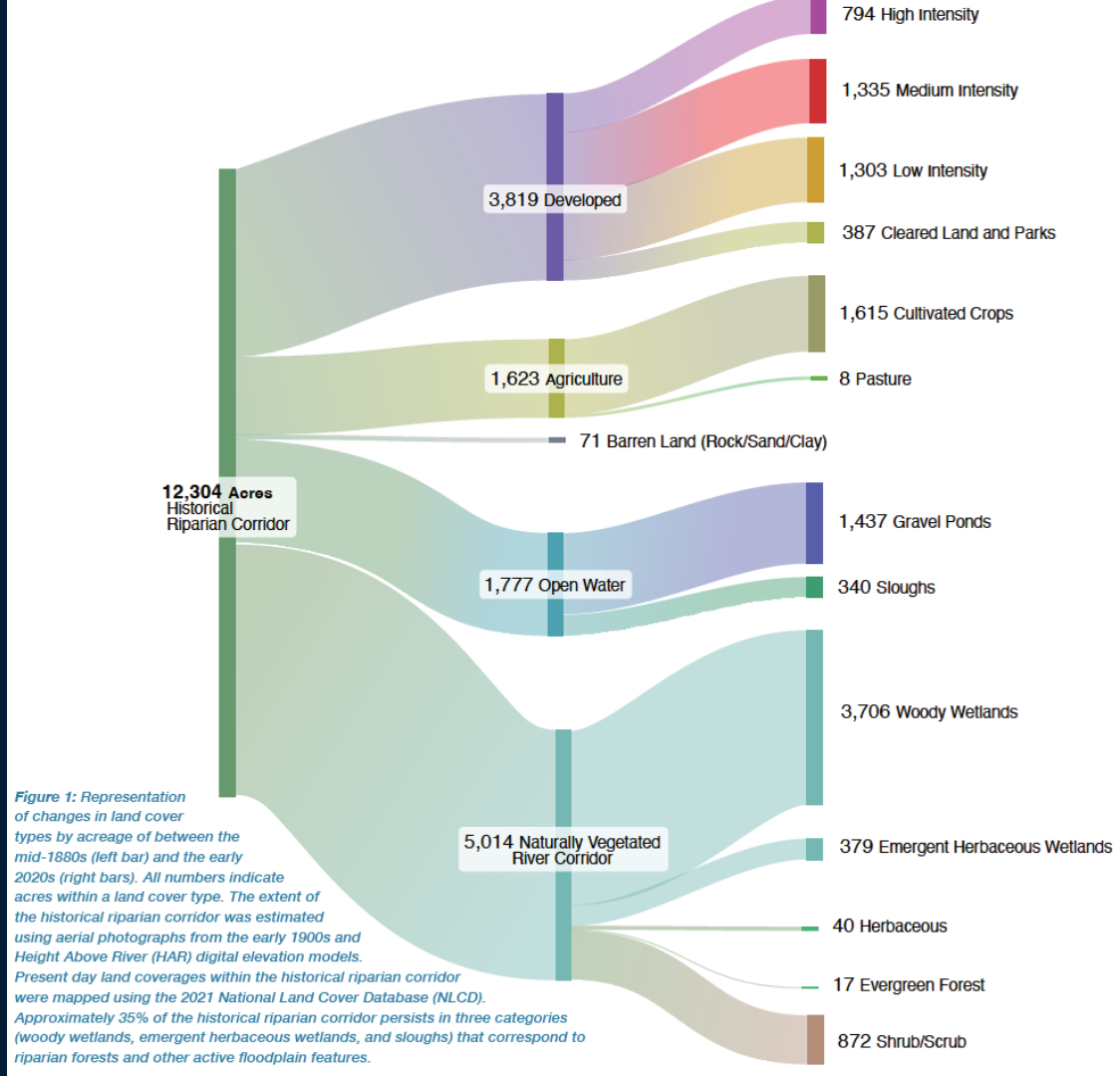


Figure 1: Representation of changes in land cover types by acreage of between the mid-1880s (left bar) and the early 2020s (right bars). All numbers indicate acres within a land cover type. The extent of the historical riparian corridor was estimated using aerial photographs from the early 1900s and Height Above River (HAR) digital elevation models.

Present day land coverages within the historical riparian corridor were mapped using the 2021 National Land Cover Database (NLCD).

Approximately 35% of the historical riparian corridor persists in three categories (woody wetlands, emergent herbaceous wetlands, and sloughs) that correspond to riparian forests and other active floodplain features.

# RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

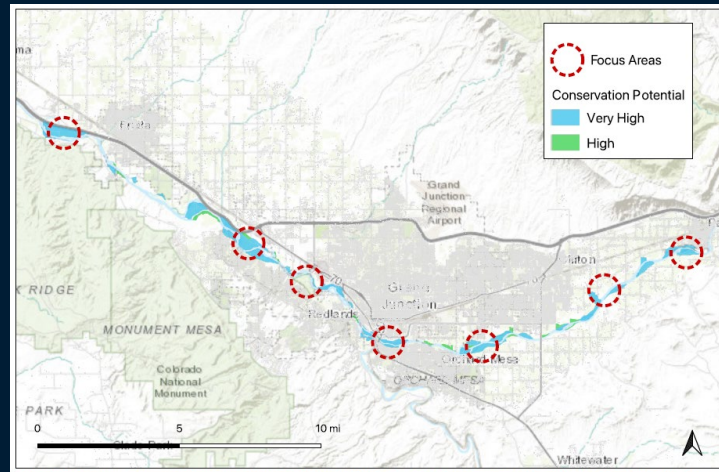


Figure 13: Recommended restoration and conservation strategy for the Grand Valley. Focus areas include public lands where barriers to large scale restoration activities were assessed to be somewhat lower than other positions on the landscape. Riparian patches intermediate the focus areas and mapped as either "Very High" (blue) and "High" (green) conservation potential represent the highest priorities for conservation action.

- Flood & Fire hazard mitigation
- Open space
- Resilient infrastructure
- Critical habitat

**Focus Area:**  
Water Walker

**Project Area:**  
339 acres

**Land Owner:**  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

**Site Description:**  
CPW manages this SIVA as a wildlife refuge and for fishing and other forms of recreation. The northern portion of the SIVA was an operational gravel mine prior to the 1983 flood on the Colorado River, which recaptured the gravel pits and filled them with sediment. The floodplain deck is among the youngest fluvial features in the Grand Valley. This location contains opportunities both for conservation of functional channel and riparian habitats, as well as enhancement of degraded ones.

**Concept 1**

Anticipated Cost: \$

Planning & Design: [X]

Legal & Admin: [X]

Maintenance: [X]

**Project Description:**  
Plant new willow and cottonwoods on the large floodplain north of the Colorado River with the intention of shading out invasive Kochia on floodplain surfaces. Planting may make use of containerized stock in areas within 4-6 vertical feet of the bankface water surface elevations, including walk-bank surfaces and other riparian areas. Some low planting with plant stock in the water table may be more successful. Flooding in higher elevation areas will allow roots of new vegetation farther from the saturated zone and dieback prior to establishment. Establishment success in these zones may be boosted by shading in the early summer months and/or before peak water table elevation prior to rainfall recession. Temporary mitigation may be required for new plantings in many areas.

**Concept 2**

Anticipated Cost: \$\$

Planning & Design: [X] [X]

Legal & Admin: [X]

Maintenance: [X]

**Project Description:**  
Partially breach the levee at the upstream edge of the floodplain to the north of the Colorado River adjacent to United Companies parcel on Railroad Ave. (A) to allow more flow into the depositional areas behind the levee during high flow periods. The breach may be constructed to include an automated lift gate for closure at a maximum of the level setpoint as an initial mitigation. Breach with the 1-in-2 year peak flow event. Combine levee breaching with floodplain restoration to increase the level setpoint of slough or shallow ponded backwater habitat (B) formed during regular high flow events. Restore existing wetlands. The existing slough along the northern edge of the SIVA is heavily encroached by vegetation that reduces the likelihood of sediment mobilization and dynamic floodplain processes when it is inundated. Consider vegetation removal or thinning along the margins of the slough.

**Concept 3**

Anticipated Cost: \$\$\$

Planning & Design: [X] [X] [X]

Legal & Admin: [X]

Maintenance: [X]

**Project Description:**  
Remove significant portions of the levee at the upstream edge of the floodplain to the north of the Colorado River and adjacent to United Companies parcel on Railroad Ave. (A). Bring levee grade down to the elevation of the floodplain deck bankface. Use increased material by partially (B) or improve the channel through the slough that runs along the northern edge of the SIVA and within other edge-bank wetlands on the floodplain. Restore existing wetlands. Work with CPW to develop a long-term management plan for the property that exceeds lateral migration, meander, or capture on any portion of the floodplain to the north of the Colorado River.

# Aligning goals with partners



## Focus Area:

Orchard Mesa

## Project Area:

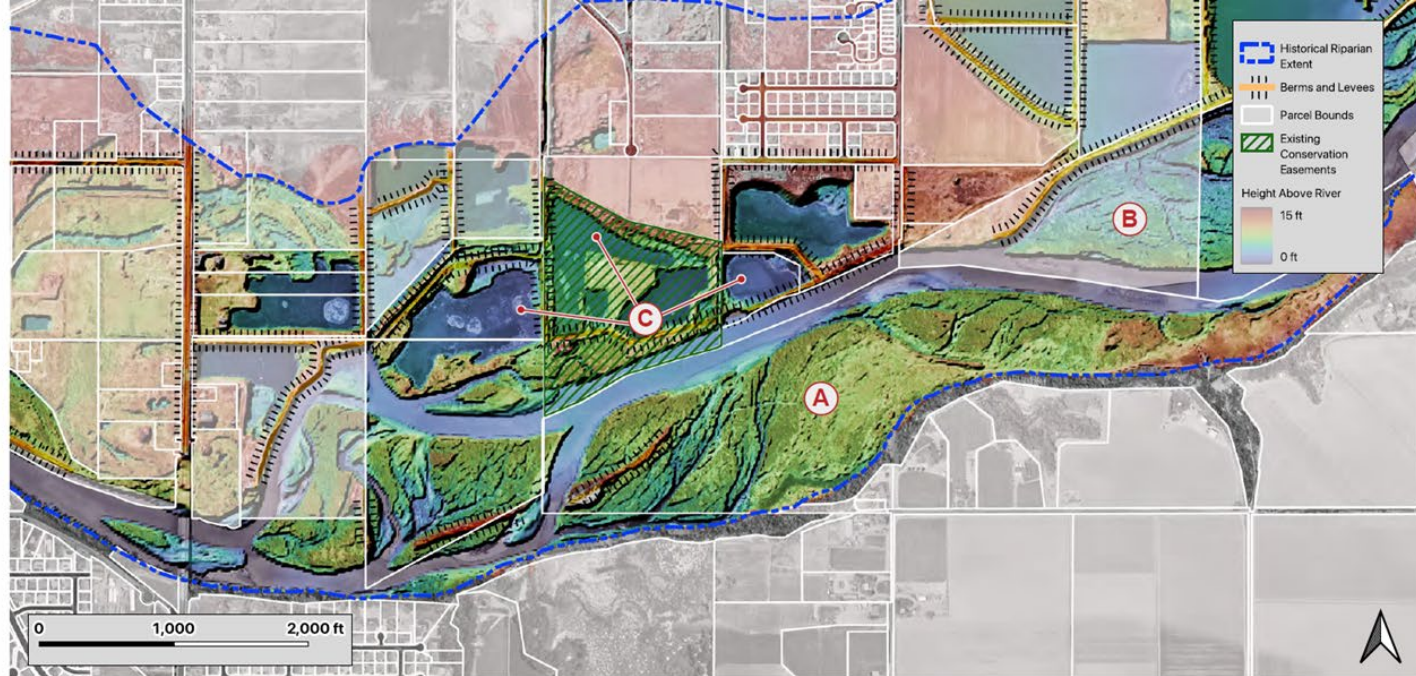
387 acres

## Land Owners:

Colorado Parks & Wildlife;  
Bureau of Reclamation

## Site Description:

This focus area comprises several parcels owned by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Bureau of Reclamation. One private parcel on the north side of the river includes a significant floodplain area. The floodplain pocket on the south side of the river is undeveloped and managed primarily for wildlife and waterfowl hunting. Vehicle traffic is prohibited. The parcels to the north of the river consist of abandoned gravel ponds that boast extremely high restoration potential. However, significant challenges must be overcome before work can proceed in this area.




## Concept 1

Anticipated Cost: \$

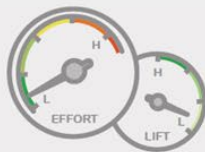
Planning & Design: 

Legal & Admin: 

Maintenance: 

Project Description:


Remove non-native woody vegetation and replace with native plants, including cottonwood and willow, on the large floodplain to the south of the Colorado River (A). Planting may make use of containerized stock in areas within 4-6 vertical feet of the baseflow water surface elevations, including low lying areas. Deep pole plantings with direct access to the water table may be more successful. Planting in higher elevation areas will place roots of new vegetation further from the saturated zone and risk desiccation prior to establishment. Establishment success in these zones may be boosted by planting in the early summer months at or before peak water table elevation prior to natural recession. Temporary irrigation may be required for new plantings in many areas.




## Concept 2

Anticipated Cost: \$\$

Planning & Design:  

Legal & Admin:  

Maintenance: 

Project Description:


Secure a conservation easement on the adjoining Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Bureau of Reclamation properties that comprise this focus area. Secure a separate conservation easement on the private floodplain parcel on the north side of the river (B). Supplement the conservation easements with a management plan that describes invasive woody species control, accommodates river movement across the floodplain, and restricts future development activity. Undesirable land uses for this focus area include hard-surface trails, boat ramps, park facilities and other types of more intensive development activities. A limited number of soft-surface trails may be acceptable, where construction and management of those trails does not depend on permanent structures, bank armoring, or other activities that would otherwise inhibit movement of the river channel across its floodplain.




## Concept 3

Anticipated Cost: \$\$\$

Planning & Design:   

Legal & Admin:   

Maintenance: 

Project Description:

Work closely with CPW and the Recovery Program to fill and reconnect gravel ponds to the north of the Colorado River (C). Several ponds appear shallow and may be filled with material excavated from adjacent berms or spoils piles. Use excavated material to reshape floodplain topography and create complex backwater habitat preferred by native fish species for spawning and rearing. Reconnecting these areas to the active channel will help mitigate against a unplanned, and potentially catastrophic, capture of these areas by the river in a future flood event. Ensure that reclamation and reconnection of abandoned gravel ponds to the river does not inadvertently enhance habitat access for invasive fish species. Plant reggraded floodplain surfaces with native woody and herbaceous vegetation. Restore degraded wetlands.



# Master Planning Process

# Vision Elements to Guide Future Planning

- Ecology and Wildlife Resilience / A Dynamic River
- Agriculture
- A Recreational Asset
- A Connected Corridor
- Community and Economic Vitality
- Balanced Land Use
- Collaborative Governance





# The Grand Valley River Corridor Master Plan

Loma  
Loma Boat Ramp

Fruita

Appleton

Grand Junction

Fruitvale

Clifton

Palisade

Cameo

James M. Robb Colorado River State Park (Island Acres)

Colorado River

Gunnison River

Whitewater

Whitewater Boat Ramp

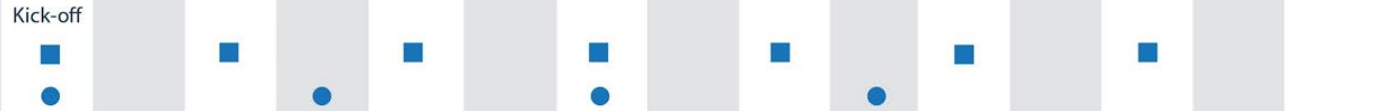
# Grand River Valley Master Plan

## Schedule



### WORKFLOW

#### Project Management & Meetings



#### Master Plan

Task 1



Task 2



Task 3



Task 3



Task 4



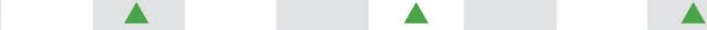
Task 5



### ENGAGEMENT

#### Engagement Strategy & Plan

Stakeholder Workshops



Public Engagement & Project Updates



# How does this all get done?

- Consistency
- Leadership and Roles
- Respecting Differences
- Relationship Management
- Facilitation
- Patience



# Looking Ahead

- Master plan implementation
- Project development
- Continued conversations with stakeholders

Thank you!

