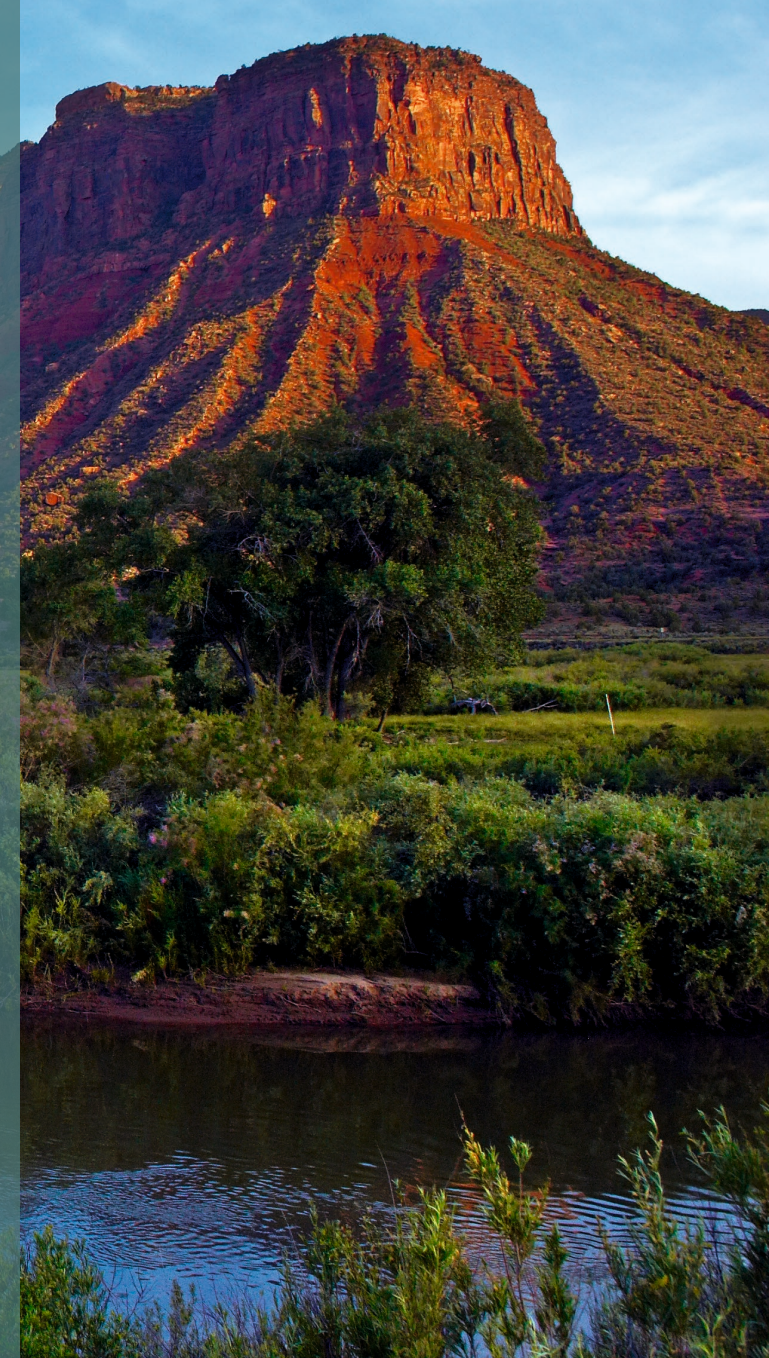




Adapting Together
Lessons from the Dolores River
Restoration Partnership
(DRRP)

RiversEdge West
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The Dolores River

Ecologically diverse and socially complex.

- Cultural history and beauty
- Working lands, wilderness, recreation
- Multiple jurisdictions and management objectives
- Dam-influenced with highly managed flows
- Increasing drought stress

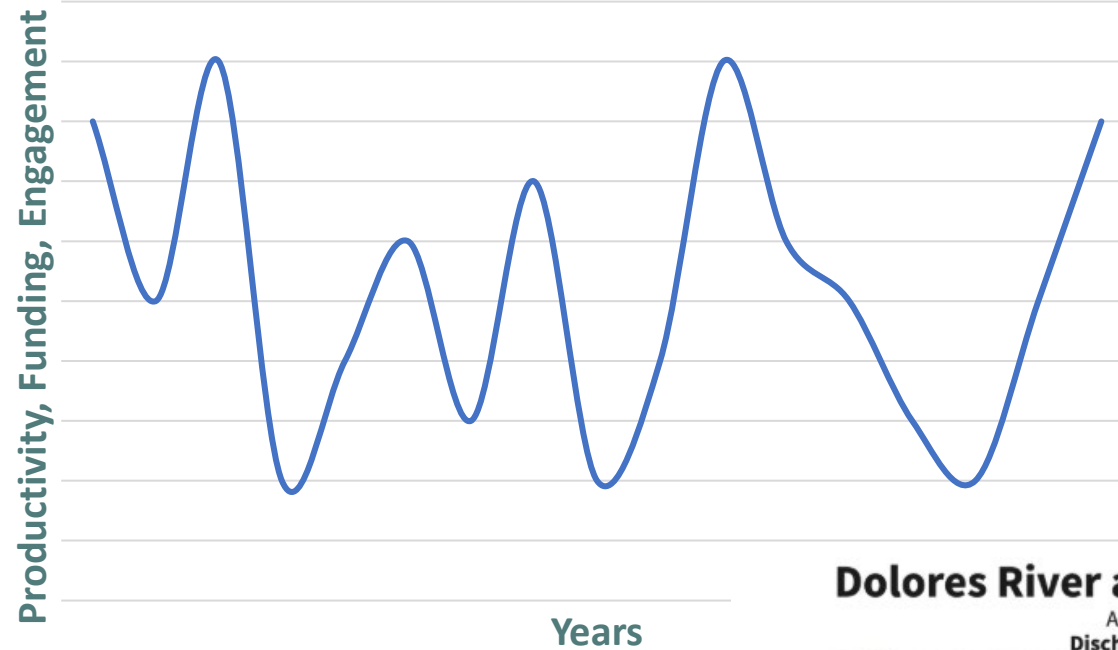
Unique, Complex, and Changing





CHANGE IS
THE ONLY
CONSTANT

Partnership Dynamics



*Partnerships Cycle
Like a River*



Dolores River at Dolores, Co. - 09166500

April 1, 2020 - April 1, 2024

Discharge, cubic feet per second

62.0 ft³/s - Apr 01, 2024 11:45:00 PM MDT



USGS 2019-2024 flows on the Dolores River.

HOW HAS THE DRRP ADAPTED?



Lesson 1: Relationships are Infrastructure

Trust keeps partners at the table.

- Invest early and intentionally in building trust
- Establish shared values and clear norms
- Be hard on issues, not on people
- Make decisions based on consensus
- Apolitical space for all stakeholders

Relationships help navigate conflict



Lesson 2: Structure Enables Flexibility

Clarity and structure enable adaptability.

- Dolores River Restoration Action Plan (DR-RAP)
 - Shared science-based vision and framework for implementation
 - Formalized values and common goals
- Core team and subcommittees
- Co-leadership and formal MOU

Governance anchors strong partnerships



Lesson 3: Collaboration Builds Resilience

One river, many hands.

- Shared and leveraged resources
- Capitalize on strengths and expertise
- Collective capacity = continuity
- Landscape scale perspective
- Shared decision making

Collective Capacity > Individual Authority



Lesson 4: Turnover is Inevitable

People leave. The river stays.

- Partnerships fail when knowledge is lost
- Recurring communication and coordination
- Consistent monitoring framework
- Shared GIS database
- Formalized collective vision (DR-RAP)

Structure holds memory



Lesson 5: Funding Shapes Ecology

Short-term grants. Long-term ecological timelines.

- Long-term funding strategy
- Diversified funding streams
- Leveraged partner relationships with funders
- Secured long-term agreements when possible
- MOU strengthens collective fundraising capacity
- Steward grants well

Funding constraints influence restoration design



Lesson 6: Maintenance & Monitoring are Critical

Persistence determines long-term outcomes.

- Re-treatment is essential
- Maintenance protects prior investments
- Maintenance funding is challenging
- Monitoring informs adaptation
- Monitoring needs to be consistent and repeatable

Restoration is commitment, not completion



Success Can Be Hard to See



The Plan

- Large-scale tamarisk removal
- Native revegetation
- Follow up maintenance
- Strong partnership, secured funding
- Aligned goals and good planning
- Solid crews and science-based plan

The Reality

- Restoration assumes a river behaves like a river
- Highly regulated flows and dam influence
- Prolonged drought and aridification
- Changing disturbance regimes
- Persistence of invasives and secondary weeds

ANOTHER TRANSITION

- Updating MOU and short-term management plan
- Adapting to shifting priorities and partner capacity
- Learning how to restore in intensifying drought



Questions We Are Asking Ourselves

What does success look like in a drying basin?

How do we sustain engagement?

Are we communicating value clearly to funders?

Is our governance structure still serving us?

Are we investing in learning?

What 17 Years Has Taught Us

- Plan for change
- People and process matter as much as science and data
- Invest early in relationships, governance and collaboration
- Partnerships aren't always efficient – but they are resilient

Still on the River Together

