

RIVERSEDGE WEST'S 22ND BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

2026

# RIPARIAN RESTORATION CONFERENCE

*Where Water, Wildlife, and People Meet*



MARCH 3-5, 2026

COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY • GRAND JUNCTION, CO



**RiversEdge West**

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

2026  
RIPARIAN RESTORATION  
CONFERENCE

*Where Water, Wildlife, and People Meet*

DAY 1  
MARCH 3, 2026





9:00-10:00am MST **Check-in and Networking with Refreshments** (Room: Atrium)

**WELCOME**

10:00-10:20am MST  
Room: North Ballroom

10:00-10:10am **Welcome**  
John Marshall, President, Colorado Mesa University

10:10-10:20am **Conference Kick-off**  
Rusty Lloyd, Executive Director, RiversEdge West

**SESSION**

**The State of the Colorado River**

Moderated by Rusty Lloyd, RiversEdge West  
10:20am-11:30am MST  
Room: North Ballroom

10:20-11:00am **What's Actually Happening on the Colorado River Right Now?**  
Luke Runyon, Center for Environmental Journalism, University of Colorado—Boulder

11:00-11:30am **Shoshone Water Rights Preservation**  
Rebecca Briesmoore, Colorado River District

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

11:30am-12:20pm MST

**Sourcing Native Plants**

Moderated by Christa Brown, RiversEdge West  
Room: North Ballroom

**Technology and GIS for Monitoring**

Moderated by John Leary, RiversEdge West  
Room: South Ballroom

11:30-11:55am **What Does it Take to Grow Native Plants?**  
Rebecca Wright, North Fork Native Plants

11:30-11:55am **Data Management Tools for Maintaining Compliance in Integrated Vegetation Management**  
Dan J. McLendon, American Conservation Experience

11:55am-12:20pm **Colorado Seed Tool**  
Danielle Bilyeu Johnston, Dani Neumann, and Troy Muzzio, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

11:55am-12:20pm **GIS Mapping of Invasive Species Using Different GIS Tools**  
Lucas Casias, Costilla County Noxious Weed Department

**LUNCH**

12:20-1:20pm MST  
Room: Food Service in Atrium, Seating in South Ballroom



**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

1:20–3:00pm MST

**Diverse Stakeholder Engagement**

Moderated by Shannon Wadas, CMU Water Center  
Room: North Ballroom

**New Approaches in Restoration**

Moderated by Melissa Neubaum, RiversEdge West  
Room: South Ballroom

1:20–1:45pm

**The High Line Canal Natural Resources Management Plan: A Regional Collaboration**

Susan K. Sherrod, Biohabitats

1:20–1:45pm

**Collaborative Construction Oversight Between Engineers and Ecologists Improves Erosion Control and Project Success in Riparian Restoration Projects**

Haley Ritter, ERO Resources and Adam Dungan, Muller Engineering Company

1:45–2:10pm

**Communicating with the Community: Complex Collaborative Conservation at the Creek**

Julia Lankisch, Center for Collaborative Conservation

1:45–2:10pm

**An Overview of Utah's State Sovereign Lands Restoration Program**

Keith Hambrecht, Utah Division Of Forestry, Fire and State Lands

2:10–2:35pm

**River Revitalization and Enhancement through Collaboration**

Kelly Wolff, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

2:10–2:35pm

**Floodplain Focused: Insight into Achieving Great River Restoration, Without the River**

Sydney Salzwedel, Biohabitats

2:35–3:00pm

**Engaging Community through the Yampa River Scorecard Project**

Kim Lennberg, Alba Watershed Consulting

2:35–3:00pm

**Integrating Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration with Invasive Vegetation Management in High Desert and Southwest Riverscapes**

Joseph Leonhard, The Nature Conservancy and John Leary, RiversEdge West

**BREAK**

3:00–3:20pm MST

Snacks available in Atrium



**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

3:20–4:35pm MST

**The Birds and the Beavers: Riparian Wildlife**

Moderated by Erin McDermott, RiversEdge West  
Room: North Ballroom

**Wet Meadows and Wetlands**

Moderated by Melissa Neubaum, RiversEdge West  
Room: South Ballroom

3:20–3:45pm

**Acoustic Monitoring for Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the Grand Valley**

Whit Blair, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

3:20–3:45pm

**Mending Central Utah’s Wet Meadows: Planning and Implementation Using Zeedyk-like Structures**

Clint Wirick, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Jeffrey Adams, TerraSophia LLC

3:45–4:10pm

**Results of a Beaver Inventory on the Aspen-Sopris Ranger District of White River National Forest, Colorado**

R. Clay Ramey, U.S. Forest Service

3:45–4:10pm

**The Difficulties of Monitoring Wet Meadow Restoration Projects in Central Utah**

Dallin Baker, Utah State University

4:10–4:35pm

**Beaver Management Planning & Human-Beaver Conflict Resolution**

Adria Surovy, National Wildlife Federation

4:10–4:35pm

**Shallow Water Wetlands for Migrating Waterfowl in Western CO**

Christa Brown, RiversEdge West

**SESSION**

**Integrating Freshwater Protection and Restoration into Wildfire Risk Reduction, Fire-Fighting Strategies, and Post-Fire Recovery Programs**

Moderated by Alex Funk, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

4:35-5:15pm MST

Room: North Ballroom

Given the increasing severity of wildfires and their associated impacts across the country, there is significant attention to the tools available to address these challenges. Recent research highlights that the conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems may play an important yet overlooked role in wildfire management.

Warming temperatures, persistent drought, and aridification are key drivers of increased wildfire risk and severity. New science is revealing the important role wetlands, healthy riparian systems, and beaver complexes play before, during, and after fires. When in a healthy condition, the saturated soils, braided stream channels, and vegetation associated with these freshwater systems do not readily burn. Thus, they can slow fire movement, provide refuge for wildlife and wildland firefighting crews, and serve as natural firebreaks. After a fire, freshwater systems filter out sediment, ash, and other pollutants that are left in a fire's wake, decreasing the amount of sediment that ends up in reservoirs and water treatment facilities. Fire refugia can also aid wildfire recovery by sustaining vegetation and facilitating seed germination, thereby supporting post-fire reforestation efforts.

This panel will explore the latest science on the intersection of wildfire risk mitigation and riparian system restoration and conservation, with a focus on beaver-modified riverscapes and wetland complexes. The panel will also touch on efforts underway within the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management regarding developing more formal guidance and training processes to support integrated stream restoration and wildfire risk reduction processes, and near-term opportunities for practitioners to work with these federal agencies to advance collaborative projects designed to reduce wildfire risk while enhancing the health of aquatic ecosystems. A spotlight of this discussion will include an overview of an active effort by organizations on the panel to model wildfire behavior responses to aquatic restoration and managed wetland projects that can inform federal agencies' approaches to better align wildfire risk mitigation efforts, where aquatic co-benefits may be better realized. The panel will also include interactive elements to learn more from the audience about potential projects where wildfire risk mitigation efforts could be incorporated into planned riparian treatments, unlocking new financial resources that were previously only available for more traditional wildfire risk mitigation efforts.

**Speakers and Panelists:**

Alex Funk, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Jessie Moravek, PhD, University of Minnesota  
Alicia Marrs, National Wildlife Federation  
Daley Burns, Foundation for America's Public Lands

**POSTER SESSION & HAPPY HOUR**

5:15–7:15pm MST

Room: Lounge and South Ballroom

Join us for appetizers and drinks at the poster session and happy hour! Discuss with poster presenters and exhibitors, catch up with familiar faces, and network with others in your field. Each attendee receives 1 complimentary beer, wine, or non-alcoholic beverage. Cash bar available. Posters will be displayed throughout the first 2 days of the conference.

**Effects on Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Community from Mitigating Impacts of Legacy Mining near Telluride, CO**

Antonia (Nia) Taubr, Colorado Mesa University

**Coupled Vegetation and Sediment Changes Along the San Juan River Arm of Lake Powell Reservoir**

Cynthia Dott, Fort Lewis College

**Russian Olive Invasion Accelerates Meander Migration and Channel Confinement in the White River, Utah**

Daniel C. White, Colorado State University

**Stone by Stone: Process Based Restoration for Upland Watershed Improvement**

Eve Fischer, Friends of the Verde River

**Genome-Wide Association Analysis of Life-History and Dispersal Traits in Wild Populations**

**Undergoing Natural Range Expansion**

Gabriel Rizo, Colorado Mesa University

**Encroachment of Gulf Coast *Phragmites australis* on the Lower Verde River**

James Holderer, Research Affiliate, Natural History Institute

**Tamarisk Beetle Map: Looking Back and Looking Forward**

John Leary, RiversEdge West and Amanda Stahlke, Colorado Mesa University

**Lower Gila River Initiative: Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management**

Kelly Wolff and Jake Eberspacher, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

**River Revitalization and Enhancement through Collaboration**

Kelly Wolff, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

**Using the Carson River as a Case Study for Successful Community Support and Collaboration in Nevada**

Marena Lovejoy, Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space

**Understanding Impacts and Opportunities for Harmony Between Beavers and Cottonwood Galleries**

Marena Lovejoy, Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space

**POSTER SESSION & HAPPY HOUR** (CONTINUED)

5:15-7:15pm MST

Room: Lounge and South Ballroom

Join us for appetizers and drinks at the poster session and happy hour! Discuss with poster presenters and exhibitors, catch up with familiar faces, and network with others in your field. Each attendee receives 1 complimentary beer, wine, or non-alcoholic beverage. Cash bar available. Posters will be displayed throughout the first 2 days of the conference.

**From Seed to Floodplain: Scaling Riparian Restoration Through Local Seed Sourcing, Drought-Adaptive Planting, Remote Sensing, and Private Landowner Engagement in Central Texas**

Marina Weikel Ramirez, TreeFolks

**Yampa River Stewardship Program - Landowner Guide and Practitioner Handbook: A Stakeholder-Driven Framework for Living and Working along the Yampa River**

Roddy Beall, Zenobia Consultants

**Where Restoration Flows: Highlights from RiversEdge West's Riparian Restoration Work Across the Southwest**

Sara Jurca, Christa Brown, Melissa Neubaum, and John Leary, RiversEdge West

**This is What Restoration Looks Like: Rearing Monarch Butterflies along the Gila River**

Sarah Sayles, Gila Watershed Partnership of Arizona

**Grand Valley Floodplain Resilience - Orchard Mesa**

Tyler Folkmann, Clara Henckler-Davis, Conrad Kallwick, Juliana Landefeld, Sabina Nachtigal, and Maya MacDonald, Colorado School of Mines

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DAY 2  
MARCH 4, 2026



8:00–8:45am MST **Check-in and Breakfast** (Room: Atrium)

**SESSION**

Moderated by Rusty Lloyd, RiversEdge West  
8:45am–10:00am MST  
Room: North Ballroom

8:45–9:00am **Welcome to Day 2**  
Rusty Lloyd, RiversEdge West

9:00–9:30am **Revisiting Tamarisk Biocontrol in the Western United States: Ecological and Societal Implications**  
Pamela L. Nagler, Southwest Biological Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey

9:30–10:00am **Colorado River Health Assessment Framework (CoRHAF): Bridging the Data Gap for Scalable Riverscape Monitoring**  
Andrea Harbin-Monahan, Colorado Water Conservation Board

**BREAK**

10:00–10:20am MST  
Snacks available in Atrium

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

10:20am–12:25pm MST

**Plant Response to Changing Conditions**

Moderated by Sara Jurca, RiversEdge West  
Room: North Ballroom

**Restoration Project Planning**

Moderated by Christa Brown RiversEdge West  
Room: South Ballroom

10:20–10:50am **Let's Talk About *Phragmites australis*: Native and Nonnative Reed in the Grand Canyon**  
Emily C. Palmquist, Southwest Biological Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey

10:20–10:45am **Investing in Colorado's Watersheds: Update on CWCB Water Plan Grant Program**  
Ashley Garrison, Colorado Water Conservation Board

10:50–11:15am **Investigating Native and Invasive Riparian Species Under Varying Environmental Stressors in the Arid Southwestern United States**  
Amber Renee Archie, Northern Arizona University

10:45–11:10am **Lower Gila River Initiative: Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management**  
Kelly Wolff and Jake Eberspacher, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

11:15–11:40am **Climate-Driven Shifts in Vapor Pressure Deficit Tolerance May Favor Invasive *E. angustifolia* Over Native *P. fremontii***  
Rebecca M. Senft, University of Utah

11:10–11:35am **The Riparian Hero of Downtown Tucson, AZ—Tucson Waters Santa Cruz River Heritage Project: 6-Years of Habitat Restoration**  
Joseph C. Cain, The City of Tucson


**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

10:20am-12:25pm MST

**Plant Response to Changing Conditions**

 Moderated by Sara Jurca, RiversEdge West  
 Room: North Ballroom

**Restoration Project Planning**

 Moderated by Christa Brown, RiversEdge West  
 Room: South Ballroom

11:40am-12:25pm

**Plant Response and Climate Change Panel**

 Moderated by Rusty Lloyd, RiversEdge West  
 Panelists:

- Emily C. Palmquist, Southwest Biological Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey
- Rebecca M. Senft, University of Utah
- Daniel C. White, Colorado State University
- Marina Weikel Ramirez, TreeFolks

11:35am-12:00pm

**Developing the Montana Woody Invasive Species Management Plan**

Sara C. Ricklefs, Invasive Species Action Network

12:00-12:25pm

**Building the Dream of Collaborative River Corridor Management: Five Years of the Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative**

Erin McDermott, RiversEdge West and Hannah Holm, American Rivers

**LUNCH**

12:25-1:25pm MST

Room: Food Service in Atrium, Seating in South Ballroom

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

1:25-3:05pm MST

**Restoration on the Dolores River**

 Moderated by Sara Jurca, RiversEdge West  
 Room: North Ballroom

**Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration (LTPBR)**

 Moderated by John Leary, RiversEdge West  
 Room: South Ballroom

1:25-1:50pm

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

Melissa Neubaum, RiversEdge West

1:25-1:50pm

**The Limits to Flow Impacts from Beaver-based Restoration in Headwater Streams**

Joel Sholtes, University of Colorado Boulder and Wash Water Science and Engineering LLC

1:50-2:15pm

**The Dolores River "DRAMS" Project: Patterns of Vegetation Response and Rebound in the Face of Large Flow Variations**

Cynthia Dott, Fort Lewis College

1:50-2:15pm

**Lessons from the Cache La Poudre: Using Drones and GIS to advance River Restoration Monitoring**

Ben Sellers, Covering Ground Mapping

2:15-2:40pm

**Using New Satellites to Supplement a River Monitoring Program - an Example From the Dolores River**

Jonathan Harvey, Fort Lewis College

2:15-2:40pm

**Aggrade and Recover: Process-Based Restoration After Monsoon Floods on Dugout Ranch, UT**

Wally W. Macfarlane, Utah State University

2:40-3:05pm

**Barely Beating: Pulsed Flows in the Dolores River Below McPhee Reservoir Restore Habitat Connectivity and Suppress Water Temperatures**

Ryan Unterreiner, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

2:40-3:05pm

**Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Panel**

Moderated by John Leary, RiversEdge West

Panelists:

- Joel Sholtes, University of Colorado Boulder
- Ben Sellers, Covering Ground Mapping
- Wally W. Macfarlane, Utah State University
- Joseph Leonhard, The Nature Conservancy



**BREAK**

3:05–3:25pm MST  
Snacks available in Atrium

**SESSION**

**Community Navigator Program Models**

Moderated by Stacy Beaugh, Strategic By Nature, Inc.

3:25–4:55pm MST  
Room: North Ballroom

There are numerous programs in the Southwest that are working to accelerate watershed project funding and implementation. These “Community Navigator” programs are helping watershed groups and other local organizations navigate to funding and other supports to build funding, capacity and resources that can help with projects.

The session will share lessons, opportunities, and challenges from these models, and invite participants to explore how community navigators and related tools can accelerate watershed projects, close resource gaps, and strengthen local capacity. The session will help attendees to:

- Learn what a “Community Navigator” is, their scale, and how they can add value to your watershed work.
- Engage with various resources, models and tools employed by Community Navigators and others that can advance watershed projects and planning.
- Share ideas on gaps and other existing tools to support projects in your region.

**Speakers and Panelists:**

Stacy Beaugh, Strategic By Nature, Inc.  
Emile Elias, Strategic By Nature, Inc.  
Carrie Padgett, Harris Water/Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Lisa Clark, Southwest Decision Resources

**CLOSING REMARKS**

4:55–5:00pm MST  
Room: North Ballroom

Rusty Lloyd, RiversEdge West

**EVENING SOCIAL AT THE CONFLUENCE CENTER OF COLORADO**

5:30–7:30pm MST  
2596 Dos Rios Dr., Grand Junction, CO 81501

Join us at RiversEdge West’s homebase, the Confluence Center of Colorado, for an evening of food, drinks, and fun! Each attendee will be provided with 2 drink tickets for beer, wine, or non-alcoholic beverages. Attendees can buy dinner and snacks from local food trucks 505 Fix and Underdog Cheese on site. You are welcome to bring your own food as well.

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DAY 3  
MARCH 5, 2026



8:00–8:30am MST **Check-in and Light Breakfast** (Room: Atrium)

### FIELD TRIPS & WORKSHOPS

8:30am–12:30pm MST

Choose between the following options during conference registration (continued on the next page).

#### **Palisade Insectary Tour**

Hosted by Dan Bean, Colorado Department of Agriculture

**Time: 9:00–11:00am MST**

**Location: Meet at the Palisade Insectary at 9am—750 37 8/10 Rd, Palisade, CO 81526**

Transportation is not provided but carpooling is encouraged.

Meet at the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Palisade Insectary for a walking tour. The Palisade Insectary has long been a promoter of the use of biological control in weed and insect pest management and is home to about 20 different species of biological control agents. Join us for a closer look at these insects and their unique rearing processes, as well as general information on past and future efforts by the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Biological Pest Control Program.

#### **Using AI (Artificial Intelligence) in Fundraising for Conservation**

Hosted by Stacy Beough, Strategic By Nature, Inc.

**Time: 8:30–12:30am MST**

**Location: Colorado Mesa University, University Center; Room: West Ballroom**

Stacy Beough, Strategic By Nature, Inc.

Dakota Duff, Virga Labs

Fundraising is a key function within our nonprofit organizations, with administrators and staff constantly balancing myriad other needs to prioritize fundraising tasks amidst limited capacity and full workloads.

Strategic By Nature and Virga Labs are collaborating with Walton Family Foundation to assess the ways in which community-based conservation organizations currently identify, access and secure revenues, manage relationships and communicate with funders. The team is interested in the “pinch points” encountered in the revenue generation process – i.e. activities that are cumbersome or otherwise frustrating – and how technology, particularly AI (artificial intelligence) tools, is being or could be used to make the process smoother and more effective.

The project has included gathering information from on-the-ground practitioners and other important stakeholders, researching available tools and contemplating/testing potential applications of AI technology, with findings to be “previewed” during this session at the RiversEdge West conference.

Participants will engage in an interactive workshop where they will share their perspectives and experiences, inform/test potential AI applications, and learn about the possibilities and limitations of new and emerging tools to support and maximize fundraising activities.

**FIELD TRIPS & WORKSHOPS**

(continued)

8:30am-12:30pm MST

Choose between options during conference registration.

**Exploring the Biological and Ecological Foundation of Invasive Plant Management**

Hosted by Bailey Goldberg, Western Colorado Conservation Corps

Time: 8:30-11:30am MST

**Presentation**

**8:30-9:30am**

**Location: Colorado Mesa University, University Center; Room: East Ballroom**

This presentation will focus on the importance of understanding invasive species to better implement management techniques. We will begin with classifications of invasive plants in Western Colorado and basic biological factors as they pertain to treatment success. I will discuss the process by which invasion occurs, and the characteristics that define the viability of an invasive plant in an ecosystem. We will then discuss Integrated Pest Management and its role in promoting native diversity. Finally, we will use these topics to explore species commonly targeted by conservation crews around Mesa County.

**Site Visits**

**9:30am-12:30pm**

**Location: Fruita, CO (Riverfront Trail and Big Salt Wash)**

(Some transportation provided and carpooling is encouraged.)

Join Western Colorado Conservation Corps and RiversEdge West at 2 sites near Fruita, CO. First you'll head to the [Riverfront Trail in Loma](#) to view a planting project and compare sites before and after invasive plant treatment. Then, you'll meet at [Big Salt Wash in Fruita](#) to take a look at a longer term restoration site where improving access for recreation is a top priority.

# Thank You Sponsors



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