

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

2:00–2:25pm

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

Marenn Lovejoy, Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Understanding Impacts and Opportunities for Harmony Between Beavers and Cottonwood Galleries

Marenn 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

2026 RIPARIAN RESTORATION CONFERENCE

Where Water, Wildlife, and People Meet

DAY 2
MARCH 4, 2026

2026 Riparian Restoration Conference

Where Water, Wildlife, and People Meet

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 — DAY 2



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.

2026 RIPARIAN RESTORATION CONFERENCE

Where Water, Wildlife, and People Meet

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 Beaugh, Strategic By Nature, Inc.

Time: 8:30–12:30am MST

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

Stacy Beaugh, 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.

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