White River
PARTNERSHIP

2021 Annual Report

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Mission

The White River Partnership (WRP) is committed to restoring and maintaining healthy riparian areas along the White River in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah through collaboration among public, private, and non-profit entities.

Vision

The White River is a dynamic riverine ecosystem where the threats from Russian olive, tamarisk, and related invasive plant species have been mitigated and native, resilient vegetation communities reflect a healthy river system beneficial to fish and wildlife habitat that supports the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of the multiple land uses found along the White River corridor.

Collaborative Restoration

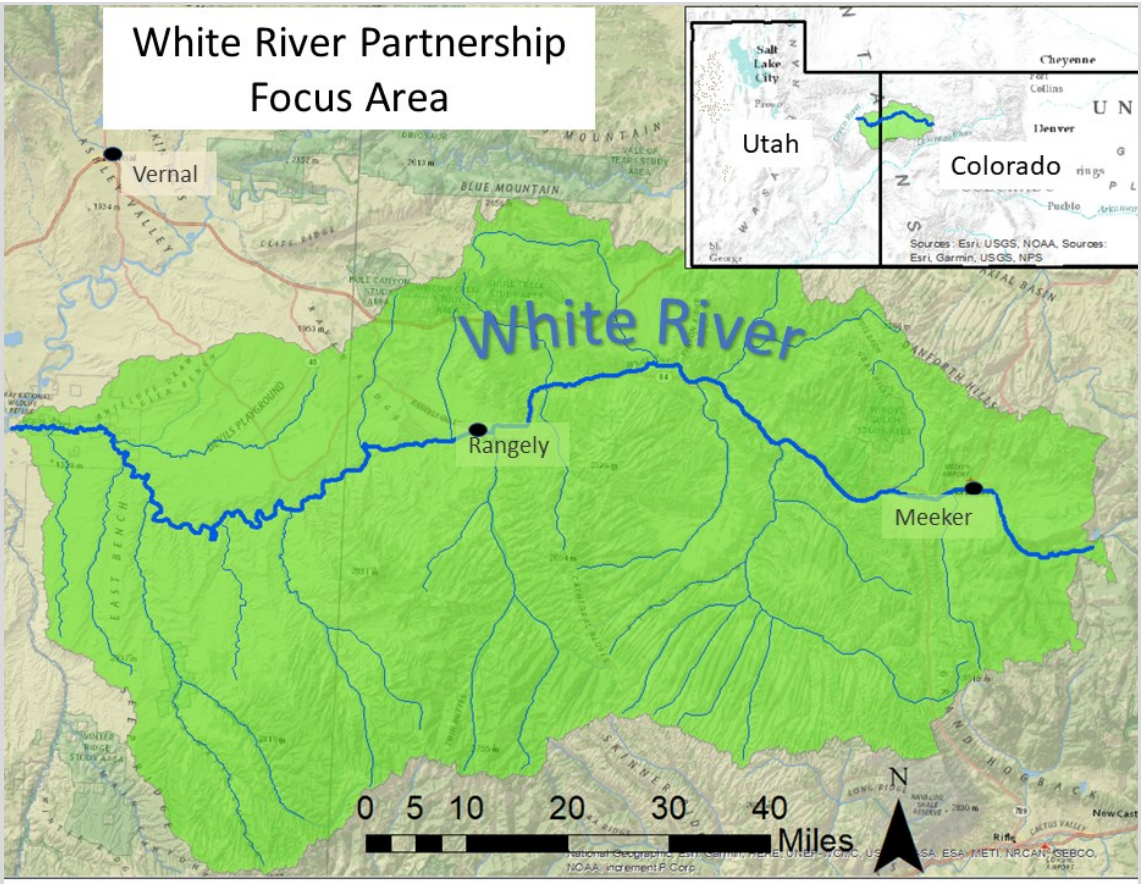
Successful riparian restoration that benefits the White River basin's multiple land uses and land management goals requires long-term commitment, adaptability, and collaboration. In 2021 WRP partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a non-binding agreement to encourage collaborative riparian restoration along the White River. The MOU was signed by the following entities:

- Bureau of Land Management White River Field Office
- Canyon Country Discovery Center
- Colorado Northwestern Community College
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Meeker, CO
- Rangely, CO
- RiversEdge West
- State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration
- Uintah County, UT
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Utah Conservation Corps
- Utah State University
- Western Colorado Conservation Corps
- White River Alliance

The following entities provided technical, research, and policy information to the WRP :

- Bureau of Land Management Vernal Field Office
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts

Click here to see the WRP MOU.



The White River Partnership focus area is in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah.

Planning for success

In 2021, WRP partners also completed the WRP's Riparian Restoration Plan which provides a guiding framework for riparian restoration along the White River by identifying:

- Partners' shared ecological, socio-economic, and management goals
- Ecological stressors on the riparian system and how to address them
- Restoration site prioritization criteria
- Scientific information to inform restoration approaches
- 3-year goals for riparian restoration and partnership development

In addition to the WRP Restoration Plan, partners in the White River are developing plans to address different aspects of riparian health and working together to ensure that these 3 plans complement one another.

Utah State University's Conservation, Restoration and Monitoring Plan for the Lower White River is an adaptive management plan that identifies conservation and restoration actions aimed at maintaining and enhancing native riparian habitat and instream habitat for native fish in the lower White River.

The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts' White River Integrated Water Initiative completed 21 riparian assessments on public and private land using the Proper Functioning Condition protocol. These assessments provide a broad snapshot of overall riparian health, identify potential management actions, and create opportunities for community outreach.

The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts' Riparian Assessment Team training with the Bureau of Land Management in the field.

Ecological Enhancement

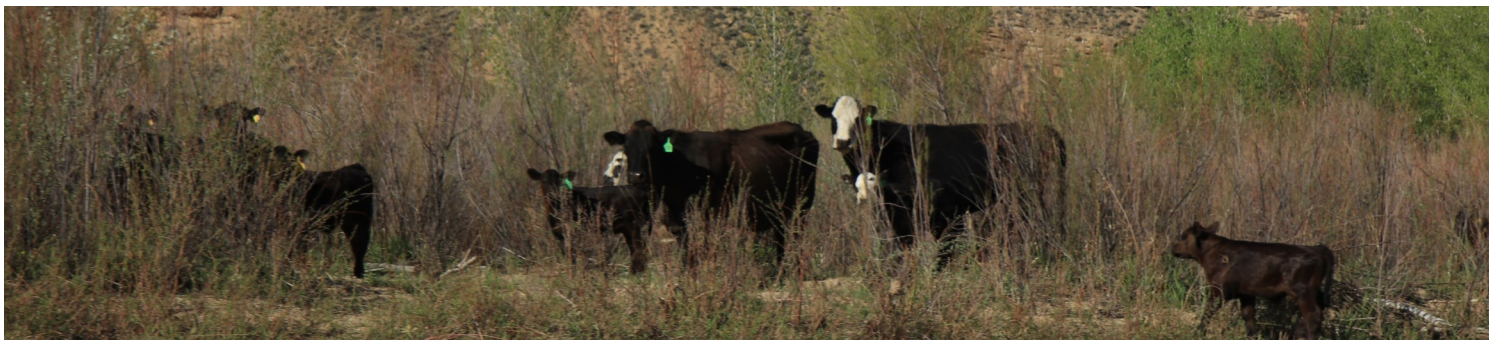
Invasive tamarisk and Russian olive trees crowd out native vegetation, increasing the risk of wildfire, degrading habitat for wildlife, reducing access for recreation and agriculture, and impairing natural river functions and aquatic habitat.

The WRP's efforts to restore native riparian vegetation communities enhances habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife including endangered, conservation agreement, and state conservation priority species.

Before

After

A WRP goal is to restore and protect cottonwood gallery forests by removing invasive tamarisk and Russian olive trees that increase the risk and spread of severe wildfire in riparian areas. In the photo above, tamarisk and Russian olive were treated to create a fire break between patches of cottonwood trees. (Photo by Utah Conservation Corps)



Cows grazing along the White River near the Utah-Colorado border . Riparian restoration improves access and grazing for livestock. (Photo by Rig To Flip)

Ecological Enhancement

Above: Tamarisk and Russian olive have deep roots that colonize the banks and point bars of rivers. This process channelizes the river and reduces native fish habitat. In the above photo, Utah Conservation Corps crews cut Russian olive that was taking over a bank of the river. Rising waters in the spring will carry off the cut material, contributing woody material to the river system that is an important component of endangered fish habitat. (Photo by Utah Conservation Corps)

Right: Riparian enhancements and invasive plant management on private lands helps landowners manage their land for resiliency while facing changing water flows and climate. In the photo on the right, Russian olive trees are beginning to encroach on a fenceline located between the river and a field.

In 2021:

Over 40 acres
of invasive tamarisk and Russian olive removed

3.5 acres were revegetated with
539 native plants

Right: [The White River Alliance](), a WRP partner, holds an annual volunteer Russian olive removal event near Meeker, CO.

This year, 8 volunteers removed 40 trees from 6 acres of land. (Photo by White River Alliance)

Left: A member of the Utah Conservation Corps using a chainsaw to cut and remove Russian olive from a restoration site. (Photo by Utah Conservation Corps)

Fundraising

From 2017-2020, WRP partners

RAISED OVER

$620,000

to support restoration implementation and planning.

In 2021, WRP partners

RAISED $245,000,

for restoration efforts.

Above: Bureau of Land Management, Western Colorado Conservation Corps, RiversEdge West, and White River Conservation District staff discuss site plans for Yellow Creek, a major tributary of the White River.

Below: The White River on a stormy winter day. (Photo by Rig to Flip)

Looking into 2022

The WRP will:

- Continue to implement restoration projects
- Develop prioritization criteria for efficient, cost-effective restoration efforts that provide multiple benefits
- Seek out opportunities for outreach and engagement
- Share technical support between partners and to other interested parties
- Encourage collaborative restoration across jurisdictional boundaries

Photo by Utah Conservation Corps

For More Information

The WRP maintains a publicly available map to track treatment areas, monitoring data, and other geospatial information relevant to riparian restoration.
Check it out here: https://arcg.is/10bujL

RiversEdge West coordinates the White River Partnership.
Visit riversedgewest.org/white-river-partnership
or call 970-256-7400.

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Utah Conservation Corps (UCC) crews loading up boats after removing Russian olive from a remote restoration site. The brown trees in the middle ground are invasive tamarisk that have been defoliated by the tamarisk leaf beetle. (Photo by Utah Conservation Corps)

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