

Dolores Tamarisk Removal and Riparian Restoration Project

Canyon Country Fire Zone: Moab Field Office

OVERVIEW -The Dolores River is a testament to the diversity of riparian ecosystems found on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. Winding down from its headwaters in the San Juan Mountains, the Dolores passes through deep canyons, broad valleys, and beneath the breathtaking topography of Gateway to join the Colorado River in Utah. Most of the riparian zones along the Dolores River in southeastern Utah are dominated by an invasive species from Eurasia called tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.). Tamarisk has numerous undesirable effects upon our desert environment such as channelization of the river, out-competes native vegetation, limits human use of waterways, increases the risk of high intensity wildfire and degrades critical wildlife habitat. The Canyon Country Fire Zone Fuels Program is taking a collaborative leadership role between federal, state and nonprofit partners to combat the tamarisk problem. In late March 2011, 45 volunteers from all involved partnerships planted approximately 700 native trees and plants along 80 acres where the tamarisk had been removed. The BLM has more burning to complete in 2011-12 and more volunteer days are in the works. Over the next several years visitors to the treated portions of the river will see tangible signs of restoration.



GOALS –

- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect firefighters and public safety in the event of a catastrophic wildfire.
- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect infrastructure and recreational sites.
- Establish and maintain fuel breaks to protect and preserve existing stands of native vegetation.
- Restore and maintain native species and ecosystem health of treatment areas.
- The overall goal for tamarisk management is not eradication but rather control to enable native plants to become competitive and sustainable.

TREATMENTS - Treatment methods to remove tamarisk and restore native species varies by location and accessibility. Successful treatments include; Thin, Pile & Burn, Broadcast Burn, Mastication, Herbicide, Seeding, Tree Planting and Biological (leaf beetle). Between 2004 and 2010, the tamarisk leaf beetle (*Diorhabda elongata*) was released locally by the Grand County Weeds Department as a form of biological control. The Tamarisk leaf beetle feeds on tamarisk leaves by girdling them which results in a “brown out” of the tamarisk tree. It takes multiple years of infestation before a tamarisk may die. One impact of the “brown-out” condition is that for a period of time, often during the height of fire season, hundreds of miles of tamarisk vegetation becomes very susceptible to a fire start and presents an extreme fire hazard. During these periods, the Canyon Country Fire Zone has had to implement fire restrictions to combat the increased hazard which has impacted recreational use of the river.



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COLLABORATION- The Tamarisk Removal and Riparian Restoration Project collaboration includes; Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (UWRI), Southeast Utah Tamarisk Partnership, National Wild Turkey Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Rim to Rim Restoration, BLM Healthy Lands Initiative, Plateau Restoration, Dolores River Restoration Partnership and Canyon Country Youth Corps.

