

## THE COLLISION OF RECREATION WITH RESTORATION

*Launching the 'Restore our River' phase of SE Utah Riparian Partnership*



### PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING

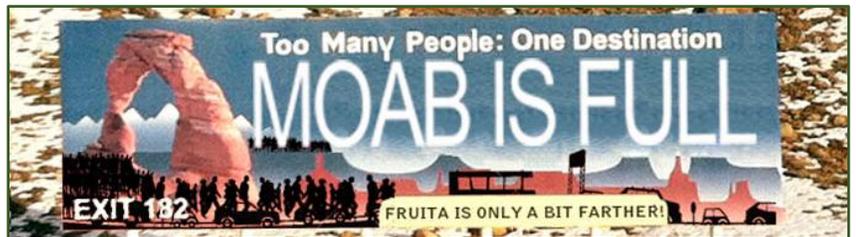
One of the most challenging issues currently facing land managers in the Moab area is the increasing number of visitors. Before we can find workable solutions, we must first understand the scope of the situation: whether it's ever growing visitor numbers; challenges in advertising; Fish and Wildlife rules and restrictions; camping creep; or resulting trampling and encroachment on sensitive restoration project sites. It's time to find ways that we as a community can work together to help integrate recreation and restoration priorities in a way that sustains the local economy and ecology.

### HOW TODAY WILL WORK

Our goal for this meeting is to share information to help us all better understand what influences increasing recreation numbers in Moab, as well as the resulting, largely invisible challenges of maintaining, regenerating and restoring the plants and habitat that are part of why so many people travel across the world to come here.

The first hour of the day is focused on recreation information. For example, we all know some Transient Room Tax (TRT) funds advertising, but how much and how is the advertising focus and planning done? How is the Mighty 5 campaign, and the new Road to the Mighty, related to TRT? Next, we will focus on public land management. What is the new planning effort that Sovereign Lands is launching along the Colorado River? How is BLM managing user conflicts through trail designations? How does BLM decide where to locate campgrounds, manage all the excrement left behind by visitors in a nearly 50 mile radius, and develop and enforce land use regulations? What are the county requirements for special event permits?

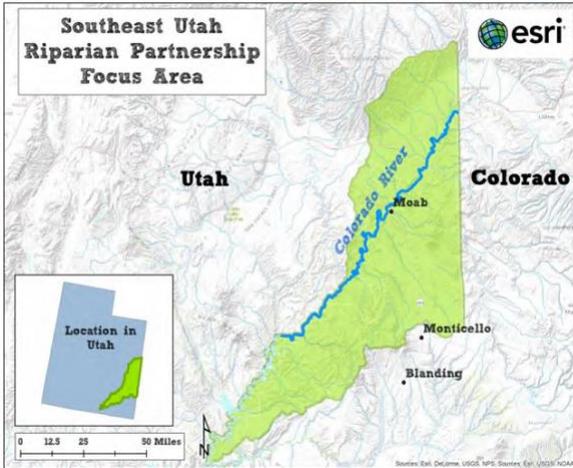
The second hour of the day will focus on restoration activities. Restoration and plant regeneration work is not as visible as search-and-rescue or emergency services, but it is important. We will take a step back to look at the context of how we have gotten here – the impetus for Sand Flats and Riverway regulations and development, why these have been implemented, and perhaps how these efforts have shaped where we are today. Some feel that recreation is “taking over the world” and it is important to look back at what recreation management has done to protect values in the landscape. We'll explore Fish and Wildlife Service rules that may soon dictate some of what can be done to address human impacts on the landscape as well as the sometimes hidden mechanics of regenerative and restorative activities that are not always valued in the mad dash to clean up after visitors. And we'll talk about seed collection, plant regeneration, as well as tamarisk leaf beetle and vegetation monitoring efforts and how these relatively invisible tasks can be used to inform plans and projects.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

The SE Utah Riparian Partnership has an opportunity to increase work on planning and monitoring, which are typically hard to fund. We see this meeting as a stepping point towards redefining the issues facing us, learning from past efforts, and charting a path forward working together to get ahead of the visitor increases to protect the riparian and sensitive areas that draw people to come to our area on their days off.

Through anticipated private donations in the next two years, the SE Utah Riparian Partnership will: better communicate with the larger partnership making sure to disseminate information in a timely and useful way; assist partners in cataloging current conditions at all removal/reveg sites since 2006; and assist the County and Rim to Rim Restoration with compiling summary analysis reports of the beetle and vegetation response monitoring efforts that have been undertaken over the past 10 years. Collecting this baseline information is critical for revising the SE Utah Partnership's 10 year old plan document with a new focus that may include detailed plans for some key representative areas as samples of techniques to address the increasing pressure of human use as well as effective invasive species reduction and native plant regeneration.



## WHAT IS THE SOUTH EAST UTAH RIPARIAN PARTNERSHIP?

The SE Utah Riparian Partnership formed in March of 2006 to examine and determine strategies for better managing riparian corridors in SE Utah. The group was initially called the SE Utah Tamarisk Partnership. Our planning area extends on either side of the Colorado River from the Colorado state line to the confluence with the San Juan River. In 2007 the group generated a planning document called the **Woody Invasive Species Management Plan**. According to the Plan the *“Vision of the SEUTP is the commitment to restore, protect, and maintain a healthy riparian ecosystem in our Colorado River watershed”*. Initially, significant focus was on work to better understand and strategize how to respond to the defoliation of tamarisk by the tamarisk leaf beetle.

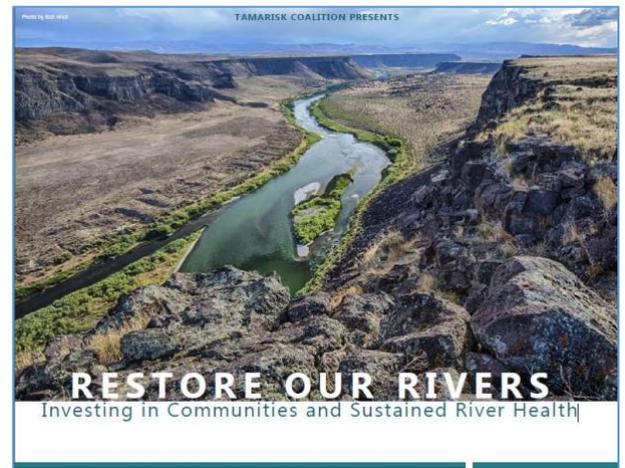
Rapid browning and defoliation of tamarisk trees from Dewey Bridge to Potash in 2007 prompted significant removal activity on federal, state and private lands. Grand County initiated detailed beetle monitoring efforts starting in 2004, when the beetles were released. Rim to Rim Restoration launched a long-term vegetation response monitoring program in 2007 with an aim to monitor sites on private and public lands, along the main stem and side drainages, where tamarisk and olive had been removed. The BLM also monitored their tamarisk removal sites.

Since that time, the name of the group has changed, as has our focus. Almost all agencies and organizations working in riparian and upland areas where tamarisk, Russian olive, Russian knapweed and other invasive species are common emphasize regenerating native plants rather than just removing exotic species. It has been about 10 years since our plan was drafted, and it is time to revise it to better reflect the emphasis of our work and the changes in the impacts on riparian and upland areas within our planning area. The tamarisk leaf beetle has become established in our region, and its population cycles are becoming better understood through monitoring efforts. Revegetation work is underway, and some invasive removal projects are still proceeding. We know much more now than we did 10 years ago about best practices for this kind of work – and while each site is very unique, we can better plan for effective exotic plant removal and native plant regeneration than we could when the beetle first defoliated tamarisk trees. And, recreation numbers have increased substantially since 2006, which is undeniably having an impact on riparian areas.

## THE RESTORE OUR RIVERS CAMPAIGN

In 2017 the Tamarisk Coalition, a non-profit organization, is launching a funding campaign called Restore Our Rivers (ROR). The SE Utah Riparian Partnership has been invited to participate in this campaign.

Funds raised through the ROR Campaign will support critical restoration activities that are difficult to finance via traditional (governmental) funding programs: restoration planning, project coordination, fundraising and outreach, and project monitoring and maintenance. To achieve our vision of sustained river health these essential but underfunded activities must happen in conjunction with on-the-ground restoration. Campaign support is expected to come from private foundations, corporations, and individual/family donors.



Discussions between SE Utah Riparian Partnership members about potential RoR funded activities have focused on revising the nearly 10 year old restoration plan and, in the process, re-defining the baseline information about our area through cataloging project sites, funding reports from monitoring data to share monitoring information more easily, and reviewing the pressures on riparian areas to include recreation impacts and realities. Ideally today's meeting is a launching point to reinforce the health and sustainability of the partnership through tangible planning for collaboration on projects now and into the future.