



Full Stream Ahead

November/December 2008

News and Highlights of Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration

YOUR remarkable RIPARIAN – Creating a Nueces River Headwaters Riparian Network in Texas

After attending a riparian function workshop sponsored by NRCS and Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative in Kerrville, Texas conducted by the National Riparian Service Team in October 2006, Sky Jones-Lewey with the Nueces River Authority had the idea to share this same information in a one day format with all the landowners who own Nueces River and tributary frontage. Hence, the Riparian Landowners' Network was created to raise awareness and cultivate understanding among riparian landowners about the relationship between healthy riparian areas and abundant clean water in the Nueces Basin. Grants from the Dixon Water Foundation and The Meadows Foundation, along with contributions from landowners, initially funded the project.

To market the Riparian Network, Sky uses the Nueces River Authority brochure map to give people a sense of all the riparian areas in the basin, an eye-catching brochure titled YOUR remarkable RIPARIAN with photos and descriptions of healthy riparian systems and degraded riparian systems. She regularly connects to the network via email sharing Steve Nelle's Riparian Notes, and offers of riparian function workshops in communities all around the upper basin. Sky found interested landowners to host the workshops in their homes and on their riparian areas who invited neighbors and friends that own Nueces River and tributaries frontage. Resource professionals also expressed an interest in learning more, so one workshop each spring and fall cycle is dedicated to them. In the evenings or on weekends, landowner visits are scheduled to assess riparian condition and talk about adaptive management on a more site specific basis.

The first round of riparian function workshops and landowner visits took place May 2-7, 2008. The second round took place October 16-21, 2008. Instructors of the workshops are Wayne Elmore, Janice Staats, Steve Nelle, and Sky Lewey. At least 192 individuals participated in ten different workshop locations; most being landowners that control or influence management on approximately 426,000 acres in the catchment. The third and fourth rounds of workshops are being planned for May and October 2009 with the plan to give the Creeks & Communities Texas Riparian Team an opportunity to teach and get feedback.

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Texas continued

The workshops begin and end with the same “test” of nine questions to see if workshop participants change the way they look at streams and rivers. Test results show increased awareness and understanding concerning riparian plant species and their rooting and bank holding characteristics, as well as the importance of floodplains, sinuosity, and large woody material for energy dissipation of high flow events.

For more information, go to the Nueces River Authority Land Stewardship and Water Resources webpage link: <http://www.nueces-ra.org/CP/LS/>, which includes a link to YOUR remarkable RIPARIAN brochure (listed as Riparian Network Project Introductory Brochure), as well as Riparian Notes; issues 1-24.



Steve Nelle demonstrating the above ground biomass and rooting characteristics of riparian-wetland species. Each plant has an index card which lists the species name, stability rating, and wetland indicator status.



Group photo from Rancho Real Property Owners Association sponsored training. Sky takes a photo with the Riparian Workshop sign after each workshop.

Riparian Ecology and Riparian Monitoring Course Development

The National Riparian Service Team is leading the development of two training courses, 1) Riparian Ecology and 2) Riparian Monitoring, through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) National Training Center (NTC). An interdisciplinary group of individuals from the BLM, Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS) Fish & Wildlife Service, University Extension and the private sector, are developing the week long pilot courses scheduled for 2009. During their second meeting, the design team set the following timeline for the pilot sessions:

The Riparian Ecology Pilot Course - May 18-22, 2009 in Albuquerque, NM. This course will enable practitioners to apply an understanding of the attributes and processes of riparian areas to improve the effectiveness of assessments, management recommendations and decisions, and monitoring.

Riparian Monitoring Pilot Course - October 5-9, 2009 in Reno, NV. This course provides a foundation for critical thinking about riparian objectives and the measurement of vegetation and channel characteristics. Participants will use case study examples of the repeatable collection, analysis and use of data for management interpretations in addition to gaining hands on field experience.

Collaborative Riparian Assessment on Upper Antimony Creek, Utah

In January 2008, the National Riparian Service Team received a request from the Escalante District Ranger, Dixie National Forest to assist with the Antimony Creek watershed. The team was asked to help in three different ways: development of a collaborative approach to work with stakeholders, assessment of riparian conditions, and beginning work towards addressing any issues and opportunities arising from the previous two steps.

The first phase of the NRST's work was conducting a *situation assessment* which was completed the week of June 16, 2008. This consisted of having conversations, in person, with involved stakeholders. The situation assessment was designed to provide a complete understanding of the issues, including the nature of any conflicts and scale of the issues. It also helps answer the following; Are collaboration needs information based, value based or both, and are they linked to a particular place, or more regional or national in scope? Through this process key stakeholders were identified, including individuals and organizations that have an interest in Antimony Creek and are important in creating and implementing solutions.

Themes that emerged centered on the issue of riparian conditions coupled with livestock grazing, ATV use, elk management, the importance of water, and aspen management needs within the watershed. Coordination and inclusion of all interests, as well as logistics of driving distances between the towns of Antimony, Escalante, and the Antimony Creek field sites on National Forest lands, were important social issues addressed in the situation assessment.

Information from the situation assessment led to the second phase for the NRST; a three day workshop held August 5-7, 2008. The first day was a classroom format presenting riparian function information and Proper Functioning Condition assessment protocol at the Community Center in Escalante. The second day was spent assessing riparian areas on the District close to Escalante, and the last day assessing the upper two reaches on Antimony Creek.

National Riparian Service Team was represented by:

Mike Lunn – Facilitator (situation assessment and workshop)
Maggie McCaffrey – Facilitator (situation assessment and workshop)
Janice Staats – Hydrologist
Wayne Elmore – Riparian Specialist
Steve Leonard – Ecologist
Justin Jimenez – Fisheries Biologist and Utah Riparian Team Leader
Mark Petersen – Riparian Specialist and Utah Riparian Team Member
Rick Hopson – Hydrologist and Utah Riparian Team Member

The District Ranger followed-up with a letter to all workshop participants. She summed it up well when she stated, “.....I hope you join me in saying that we had a lot of excellent discussion during our three days together. A lot of different perspectives were represented, and a lot of different views were shared. The workshop on the Riparian Proper Functioning Condition assessment and discussions while the assessment was being conducted on Antimony Creek were informative. While everyone may not have agreed with each other, I hope that we have begun to form a basis for common understanding of the conditions we are trying to address.”

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Upper Antimony Creek continued

There is interest from the group to walk more miles of Antimony Creek together along with the Utah Riparian Team, and continue discussing potential and current conditions in order to collaboratively identify resource objectives that will help guide the development of future activities.

In summary, the main lessons that the Creeks and Communities Network can learn from the Antimony Creek experience are:

1. The National Riparian Service Team is available to help with such situations;
2. State Team members should be part of the team;
3. It is worth the effort to do a good situation assessment prior to the site visit to help guide the work design;
4. There will still be things to do after the National Riparian Service Team site assistance and the

Proper Functioning Condition Workshop for Flashy and Intermittent Systems of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Kanab, UT - September 30-October 2, 2008

The interdisciplinary team from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument requested a workshop focusing on the technical aspects of assessing riparian-wetland areas on flashy stream systems and intermittent flow channels in southwestern Utah. The National Riparian Service Team partnered with the Utah and Arizona Riparian Teams to conduct the workshop. Instructors included:

Janice Staats (Forest Service Hydrologist),
Don Prichard (BLM Riparian & Fisheries Specialist),
Steve Leonard (Private Consultant - Ecologist & Grazing Management Specialist),
Wayne Elmore (Private Consultant - Riparian Specialist),
Justin Jimenez (BLM Fisheries Biologist & Utah Riparian Team Leader),
Mark Petersen (Farm Bureau Water Resources & Riparian Vegetation Specialist & Utah Riparian Team Member), and
Dave Smith (Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries Biologist & Arizona Riparian Team Leader).

There were 23 workshop participants from the Monument, BLM Kanab Field Office, BLM Moab Field Office, BLM Monticello Field Office, NRCS Utah State Office, National Park Service (Bryce Canyon & Glen Canyon), Utah State University Extension, Wild Utah Project, and The Nature Conservancy. We were joined in the field by two permittees from nearby allotments.

The State Team instructors assisted the Monument interdisciplinary team in essential pre-work activities; reviewing references, existing files, aerial photographs, and USGS gage data on the workshop's field sites, as well as determining watershed size. Doing adequate "pre-work" is critical in preparing to do PFC assessments, and proved valuable for all field sites visited. One of the field sites had a discontinued USGS gage, so it is important to remember to check the USGS website for active and discontinued flow data when doing "pre-work." Before going to the field, the Monument interdisciplinary team shared insights they had gained from the "pre-work" to all

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Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument continued

workshop participants, and while in the field discussed other information sources that should be investigated to help understand those sites, i.e., more analysis of stream gage data, water chemistry of hyporheic zone water, documentation of aerial photograph interpretations, again reinforcing the importance of “pre-work.”

Reviewing references, existing files, and other pertinent information along with going to the field and seeing a stream reach helps an interdisciplinary team understand potential and capability. There is a tendency to assume that a riparian-wetland area and stream have always looked like they appear in the present, or at least within the past decade. However, the current state is not always potential, thus reinforcing the need to search for pertinent information and carefully documenting the interdisciplinary team’s rationale on how they describe potential.

The potential of flashy and intermittent sites depends on the duration of flow and what happens to the water in the subsurface after surface flow ceases. As documented in TR1737-9 (revised 1998), a PFC assessment team should include specialists in vegetation, soils, and hydrology, and a biologist also needs to be involved because of the high fish and wildlife values associated with riparian-wetland areas. In southern Utah where there are so many interesting geologic layers, it is important to also include someone on the assessment team who understands the geology to help interpret the soil-water states, and whether hydrophytes have the potential to establish and thrive.

Thanks to Dave Smith, the group learned about and used the Moody, Wirtanen, and Yard 2003 Regional Relationships for Bankfull Stage in Natural Channels of Arid Southwest, which is available online at <http://www.naturalchanneldesign.com>. Dave stressed the importance of taking good notes and photographs on what an interdisciplinary team is calling the “floodplain” so that future crews know what was used to answer item 1) Floodplain above bankfull is inundated in “relatively frequent” events. Also, available for viewing are bankfull identification training videos on the Forest Service Stream Team’s website: <http://www.stream.fs.fed.us/publications/videos.html#eastandwest>.

Lively discussions occurred at the Henrieville Creek and Paria River field sites about whether or not large woody material is required for proper functioning condition on both those systems. Everyone agreed that live trees and shrubs are necessary for function, so as more cottonwood grows and falls over, it can be documented whether the large woody material captures bedload and builds streambanks, helping to narrow the channels. Of course this will take 2-3 generations of cottonwood cycling, so be sure to teach your kids about riparian function so they can check this out for us!

The main Paria River within the Monument generally flows through a wide valley with gently sloping sides (drainage area of 647 square miles at the Highway 89 bridge), which would lend itself well to using aerial photographs to do PFC assessments as described in Technical Reference 1737-12 (revised 1999). Don Prichard offered to assist the Monument interdisciplinary team with this. Training for using aerial photographs for PFC assessment can be requested through the BLM National Training Center by contacting Jim Fogg, at 303-236-0539, or jim.fogg@blm.gov.

Offers of follow-up from the State Riparian Teams included help with determining potential on a smaller catchment (Mill Creek, BLM Kanab Field Office), and another workshop in Moab, UT for the interdisciplinary team(s) in that area. As the Monument interdisciplinary team and partners continue to assess PFC on their flashy and/or intermittent systems, they will be able to compile information on different stream types and catchments of various sizes resulting in a very useful listing of visual indicators for important attributes and processes on those types of systems.

Full Stream Ahead

Is there something you would like to see in a future issue of *Full Stream Ahead*? If so, send an email to nrst@or.blm.gov. The NRST utilizes this newsletter to share highlights, news and hot topics that pertain to the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This newsletter is for the entire network and we encourage you to send in ideas,

The National Riparian Service Team can be contacted at:



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