



Full Stream Ahead

Winter 2012

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



“What’s going on: A Creeks and Communities Update”

A message from
Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader

Welcome to the 2012 winter edition of Full Stream Ahead – for what I am calling “the winter that never was” because I have only taken my snow shovel off the hanger in my garage once. Please take a moment to look at this issue of our network newsletter.

Some of you have asked about the status of the Creeks and Communities Network Meetings so I want to take this opportunity to update you on recent Creeks and Communities happenings from the NRST front. You may recall that the last meeting we had was in March of 2009. While we believe the network meetings are very important and we work hard to have them every other year, circumstances have prevented us from convening a meeting both last year and this year. Travel ceilings are one of those circumstances that have affected us all and are forcing people to make hard decisions regarding travel. This obviously presents a significant challenge for holding a network meeting. While this is a reality and likely will be for the foreseeable future, we are working towards a 2013 meeting. In addition, we have initiated the process of updating the 2002 Creeks and Communities Strategy and would like the next network meeting to coincide with the appropriate step in that process so we can have timely dialogue with network members. In the meantime, however, we hope to have some discussions with the State Team Leaders and others yet this year so we can integrate additional strategic thinking from the network into the strategy revision effort.

On a related note, you may be aware that Oregon State University has been working on a very thorough evaluation of several aspects of the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This evaluation will be finalized in the coming months and we expect to incorporate those findings into the Creeks and Communities Strategy revision.

That’s all for now; happy reading and thanks for all you do. Please keep in mind that if any of you ever need us to provide letters of support or telephone calls on your behalf for your work in Creeks and Communities, let us know. I can be reached at 541-416-6703 or sjsmith@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Steve

Ranching Heritage Alliance - Moving Forward

It all started with a request to have the National Riparian Service Team conduct a Riparian Grazing course in Springerville, AZ in 2008. The University of Arizona and the U.S. Forest Service had a working grant to provide educational opportunities to the Apache-Sitgreaves (A-S) National Forest. At the same time, A-S permittees were concerned about the ability to continue to graze livestock on the forest given the recent history of decreased stocking rates and removal of grazing on parts of the A-S and other forests. The group decided that they wanted to be proactive in their efforts to continue to graze in a sustainable manner that was beneficial to all multiple uses on the forest as the A-S moved ahead with range NEPA.

The riparian grazing course was held in 2008 with an amazing turnout of 70 people. Almost half of the group were permittees who stayed for all 3 days of the workshop. By the following spring, the group loosely formalized themselves into the Ranching Heritage Alliance (RHA), inviting all who were willing to work for positive outcomes in sustained resource management to participate. The group felt that working together with other stakeholders would be beneficial in improving understanding of all resource management goals and that after working with RHA permittees people would see that everyone has a common goal of sustainable resources. The permittees also recognized that they couldn't just sit back and wait for the agencies to tell them how they were going to graze their allotments, but become informed on the process and how they could help managers determine best alternatives that not only worked for the resources but also for the permittees grazing operation. The NRST assisted the RHA for four years by providing a Creeks & Communities Consensus workshop, Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) riparian assessment workshop, and three riparian monitoring workshops.

In 2011, the Wallow Fire had a big impact on the permittees of the A-S and the Forest Service. Post-fire assessments were needed to help guide managers in determining where funding and manpower would be placed first - a balancing act at best. Would all permittees be taken care of in livestock placement and feed, and how soon would they be able to move back onto the allotments? The Burned Area Emergency Rehab (BAER) Team mapped burn intensity areas and post-fire 2011 was spent seeding severely burned areas and assessing damage to the infrastructure of fences, water developments, and hazard trees, and potential danger to animals and people.

One goal of the RHA has been to improve communication with the Arizona Game & Fish (AG&F). Concerns had been raised on more than one occasion as to the validity of monitoring to answer the question of manageable levels of elk populations. Participation by AG&F occurred throughout most of the workshops, building understanding and relationships with those who felt that the agency was a critical player in the management of allotments that had been missing prior to the creation of the RHA. Subsequently, AG&F worked on acquiring hay for ranchers who lost the majority of their grazing due to the fire.

As with most collaborative processes, changes in personnel within the agencies create opportunities to assess progress and establish new lines of communication. As with many other group processes, RHA has had its ups and downs and this will continue, however, they still feel they are in a better place than when they first began. Currently, the continued support and participation of the University of Arizona and Arizona Cattlegrower's Association is helping maintain a level of trust among all participants by ensuring that the latest science and monitoring is used to evaluate management options.

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@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, questions and articles for us to publicize. For the Spring edition, all submissions must be received by June 1, 2012.

Creeks and Communities Project: San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area

In the fall of 2010, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Arizona requested National Riparian Service Team (NRST) assistance relative to issues concerning the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). The request focused on two main areas:

- 1) *Create a mechanism to blend the scientific and social perspectives sufficient to support development of a shared strategy for moving forward over the next 10 years, including a focus on agreed upon purpose and priorities. Create a mechanism to promote better coordination among individual efforts under the umbrella of a larger community-based effort.*
- 2) *Bring together community members/stakeholders and technical specialists to: consider existing data and analyses; develop a common understanding of current conditions and trends in terms of surface water flows; determine the implications of baseline condition and trends for riparian function and values; and outline the scope of management options that are currently occurring and additional actions that might be important to maintain and enhance riparian function.*

In an effort to meet this request, the NRST is working with the BLM and interested stakeholders to establish a common vision for the future management of riparian areas within the SPRNCA based on a shared understanding of current riparian condition in relation the area's potential and capability. This understanding will form the foundation upon which objectives relating to desired future condition will be set and alternative management and monitoring approaches will be considered. In addition to assisting with the collection of important riparian information, the Creeks and Communities effort within the SPRNCA is viewed as an opportunity for the BLM to begin working with stakeholders in a different and more collaborative way. Activities associated with this effort will be conducted in conjunction with the BLM's Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision and will have a strong community-based component. The intent is that the information gathered and the relationships built will feed directly into the RMP revision process.



SPRNCA Creeks & Communities 2011-2012 Project Activities

March 2011: Situation Assessment

Informal in-person or telephone conversations were held with over 60 BLM employees and stakeholders to: learn about the local situation; meet involved parties and begin building relationships with them; understand their perspectives of the situation regarding surface water flows in the San Pedro and the management of the SPRNCA; gauge their interest in participating in a collaborative effort and identify possible strategies for creating an effective community engagement effort. [Situation assessment report on file.]

May 2011: Situation Assessment Report-Out

The NRST met with BLM and stakeholders to review the situation assessment findings, discuss recommended next steps and gauge support for moving forward. A decision was made to focus on developing a clear and comprehensive vision for the future management of riparian resources within the SPRNCA rather than tackling some of the larger watershed scale issues. [Meeting report on file.]

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

July 2011: Technical Riparian Workshop

The NRST met with technical specialists from BLM and partner agencies and organizations for two days to review existing information and gain an understanding of current riparian condition and trend. An action plan for 2012 was developed for gathering additional information needed to develop a comprehensive description of potential and current riparian condition within the SPRNCA on a reach-by-reach basis in a manner that satisfies AZ BLM Land Health Standards. This will be done in a collaborative manner in advance of BLM's RMP revision process. [Proceedings CD on file.] A half day community meeting was also held for interested stakeholders who were not able to participate in the full technical meeting. At this time, NRST members and BLM staff met with stakeholders to review the outcomes of the technical workshop and get feedback on the proposed action plan.

October 2011: Community-Based Riparian Workshops

The NRST will work with BLM and interested stakeholders to host workshops designed to help participants gain a better understanding of attributes and processes that constitute riparian-wetland function, including the link between groundwater and surface water, and the importance of sustaining riparian-wetland areas on the SPRNCA. Background information on the Creeks and Communities effort currently underway within the SPRNCA will also be provided, along with information on how stakeholders can participate in various 2012 activities. A one day workshop (classroom and field component), focusing on river systems, will be co-sponsored by BLM and the Friends of the San Pedro River. A second one day workshop (classroom and field component), focusing on cienegas or wetlands, will be co-sponsored by BLM and the Community Watershed Alliance.

Winter 2011-2012: Define Riparian Potential and Capability for the SPRNCA

The NRST has hired a contractor to lead an interdisciplinary effort to synthesize existing information, as well as identify any data gaps that need to be filled, to provide a written description of riparian potential and capability within the SPRNCA on a reach-by-reach basis. The contractor will coordinate with BLM specialists, NRST members and specialists from partner agencies and organizations as needed.

Week of February 6, 2012: Technical Review of Riparian Potential and Capability Document

The NRST will work with technical specialists from BLM and partner agencies and organizations for a day and a half to review and discuss the written descriptions of riparian potential and capability. The final description will provide a benchmark against which to compare current riparian conditions (status) and trend within the SPRNCA using the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Riparian Assessment Method, and will assist in the development of management objectives relating to the desired future condition of these areas. To promote transparency and openness, this technical meeting (like the first) will be open to public observation and followed by a community meeting to update those interested stakeholders who were unable to participate in the full session.

Week of March 19, 2012: PFC for Professionals Training

The NRST will host a four day, intensive training session for natural resource professionals who either perform riparian-wetland assessments as part of implementing land health standards, range NEPA or other programmatic efforts or are interested in better understanding the process by which PFC assessments are integrated into a broad planning, implementation and monitoring program. This session will be open to non-BLM participants as space allows.

April 9-10, 2012: Pre-Assessment Community Workshop

As a counterpart to the PFC for Professionals Training, and as preparation for the field assessments, the NRST will host a one day community-based workshop (classroom and field component) to provide an introduction to the PFC assessment-method and how it is used within a planning process. Time will also be allocated to describing the Stromberg Riparian Inventory method, which is also being utilized within the SPRNCA. An evening overview will also be provided for those who are unable to attend the full session.

April 11-20, 2012: Field-Based SPRNCA Riparian Assessments

The NRST will work with the BLM interdisciplinary team over a ten day period to revisit Stromberg's riparian condition inventory and conduct updated PFC assessments on the 40 miles of the San Pedro River included within the SPRNCA. Other technical specialists and interested publics will also be invited to join the core IDT in this endeavor. In addition to gathering the most updated information regarding current on-the-ground condition, this effort will also enable the verification of the written potential descriptions and allow for discussions regarding the identification of a range of riparian management objectives, potential management actions designed to achieve those objectives and integrated monitoring strategies to measure success. A final report documenting assessment results will be written and reviewed by internal and external technical specialists.

Week of September 17, 2012: Post-Assessment Community Workshop

The NRST will host a one day community workshop to explain the results of the assessments and explore next steps, both in terms of (1) how the BLM can best use the information and stakeholder interest that has been generated as they move forward in their RMP revision process and (2) how the larger community can use the assessment results, coupled with resultant BLM decisions regarding desired future riparian condition, to inform watershed scale efforts.

For more information contact: Ryan Pitts, BLM Gila District, 520-439-6409 or rpitts@blm.gov or Laura Van Riper, National Riparian Service Team, 541-416-6702 or lvanripe@blm.gov

Riparian Grazing and Water Quality Risk Management Strategies Project in Washington State

Sandy Wyman, NRST and Tip Hudson, WSU Extension

A grant from Western Centers for Risk Management Education provided funds for four workshops as a major component of the *Riparian Grazing and Water Quality Risk Management Strategies Project*. Environmental regulations, especially non-point-source water quality regulations, represent a financial and legal risk to range- and pasture-based livestock operations in the Pacific Northwest. Disagreement between regulatory authorities and conservation districts over what the statewide approach to non-point source pollution mitigation should be and what management practices are sufficient to protect water quality and reasonable to implement has heightened the already significant legal risk of noncompliance with water quality regulations. The financial risk is real: failure to meet standards can mean fines of \$10,000/day.



Rhod McIntosh, Ranger discussing his grazing management strategy with Dr. Linda Hardesty, WSU. He has seen his riparian area widen by narrowing the stream channel.

riparian-wetland areas will also aid in water quality benefits. These relationships are complex, and livestock exclusion may not be an effective solution. The two-day workshops include classroom instruction and field time assessing a grazed stream reach and designing management plans to protect water quality. Two workshops were offered in Colfax on October 17-18 and Ellensburg October 20-21 with over 50 people in attendance. Two more workshops are scheduled for May 21-22 in Mt. Vernon and May 24-25 in Goldendale.

Washington State University Extension is partnering with the National Riparian Service Team to conduct four workshops throughout Washington State to educate livestock producers on how to identify their risk of causing water quality problems and link risks to specific strategies that are proven to improve riparian function, plant/soil health, and water quality. The workshops provide livestock managers with the grazing management processes and strategies for riparian-wetland areas including tools and strategies to effectively manage livestock in a manner that is sustainable to their riparian-wetland resources and animal health. Managing their livestock to maintain proper functioning condition of their



Rhod's cattle, shown here in a riparian pasture, rotate through a number of pastures on the ranch.

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”

Riparian Grazing Management Forum at 2012 Annual Society for Range Management Meeting

Sandy Wyman, NRST and Jeff Goodwin, NRCS

Close to 200 people participated in a forum highlighting successful ranchers who practice progressive and ecologically sound riparian grazing management practices in their day-to-day operations. Hosted by the Society for Range Management (SRM) and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) Committee, the forum featured a number of ranchers and targeted a rancher audience. It highlighted the conservation benefits of not only riparian systems and their ecological function, but how cattle can be utilized as an effective natural resource management tool. Speakers focused on the value of grazing management in riparian systems and the benefit provided by the proper use of sound grazing principles during the following presentations:

- Jeff Goodwin, Grazingland Specialist, NRCS, Temple, Texas, “Welcome and introductions”
- Sandy Wyman, NRST, Prineville, Oregon, “Riparian function and grazing management “
- John Williams, OSU Extension, *who spoke about the Swamp Creek Allotment, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Enterprise, Oregon, for Rod Childers, RL Cattle Ranch;*
- Stacey Davies, Roaring Springs Ranch, Frenchglen, Oregon, “Cows saving fish – sustainable ranching in the high desert.”
- Duane Coombs, Smith Creek Ranch, Austin, Nevada “Migration grazing – riparian management strategies for large landscapes.”; and
- Rhod McIntosh, McIntosh Angus Ranch, Pullman, Washington “Will the real natural resource conservationists step forward.”

The forum was sponsored by the SRM Pacific Northwest, Nevada, and Texas Sections, and Leffel, Otis & Warwick Certified Public Accountants.

The SRM GLCI Committee is charged with increasing rancher participation in the Society for Range Management and plans to hold another rancher forum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in January, 2012.



Photo 1: Rhod McIntosh emphasized the ranching community manages landscapes, whether their operations are large or small, and by necessity are natural resource stewards.



Photo 2: Panel members (left to right) Stacey Davies, Sandy Wyman, Duane Coombs, and Rhod McIntosh) during a lively discussion as they entertained questions from the audience.



Photo 3: Duane Coombs provided a humorous and educational presentation of lessons learned throughout his ranching life.

“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”