

KERBER CREEK QUARTERLY

SPRING 2013

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

Kerber Creek Enters a New Field Season

As warmer days become common in the Northern San Luis Valley, the Kerber Creek Restoration Project prepares for another season of intensive restoration activities!

In this issue of the Kerber Creek Quarterly, learn more about the projects planned for the summer and fall of 2013, recent events co-sponsored by the Kerber Creek Restoration Project, the results of the San Luis Valley Regional Science Fair for Kerber's burgeoning young scientists, and the project's future once the project's last OSM/VISTA coordinator, Trevor Klein, leaves the Valley this summer. Additionally, check out our new "Partner Profile" section, which, this issue, will highlight the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



OSM/VISTA Trevor Klein with four NCCC volunteers, December 8, 2012.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Field Season, 2013
- ◆ Project Future
- ◆ Partner Profile
- ◆ Grants
- ◆ Science Fair, 2013



Note that an acronym reference is provided on the last page of this issue.

Mining for Solutions: Minnie Lynch Mine Site

After many hours of hard work and numerous revisions, a technical memo on the conditions of the Minnie Lynch Mine site and the risks it presents to the Kerber Creek watershed has been completed.

This memo models potential impacts of water quality improvements at the mine site and analyzes the extent to which metals concentrations in the soil and water pose a risk to wildlife. The final report is the culmination of the efforts to characterize the Minnie Lynch

Mine site that began in 2009.

Because the mine site sits on USFS land, the memo was designed to inform USFS decision-makers of the site's potential hazards and to help them prioritize the site through the agency's Abandoned Mine Lands program. In addition, the report will supplement future plans to develop restoration alternatives that will address the environmental issues at the site. Design will likely begin sometime in late fall.



Minnie Lynch Mine Site, 2012

Thanks to Brian Sanchez (USFWS), Laura Archuleta (USFWS), Jason Willis (TU), and Trevor Klein (OSM/VISTA) for writing and editing the memo. Thanks also to the Colorado Nonpoint Source Program, without whom restoration design at the site would not be possible.

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Realizing Restoration: Field Season, 2013

This year's field season may be KCRP's most ambitious yet! Plans include extensive restoration at our most recently added site, an intensive monitoring program, and at least two large groups of volunteers.



Stream restoration site for this field season.

This summer and fall, the project will restore over 5,000 feet of stream (that's over 10,000 feet of stream bank!) and treat and revegetate nearly 20 acres of mine wastes, weather and time permitting. In addition to active restoration, BLM,

TU, and USFWS staff, OSM/VISTA Trevor Klein, and local volunteers will monitor the watershed extensively, including sampling water quality, examining vegetation cover, determining fish and macroinvertebrate populations, and surveying stream morphology.

In conjunction with BLM/Adams State University intern Jared Skadberg, project staff will be installing a number of shallow monitoring wells at our newest restoration site to investigate the effects of restoration on depth to water table. This project will be one of very few that quantitatively documents the effects of stream restoration on the water table, one of the most important factors to consider when designing stream restoration projects. The capacity to monitor the water table will expand KCRP's ability to evaluate the success of future restoration projects.

In addition to restoration and monitoring, volunteers from the Boy Scouts of America, the Ramah Outdoor Adventure service group, and the Southwest Conservation Corps will spend a total of two weeks working in the Kerber Creek watershed. The volunteers will work mainly to install wattles and erosion control blankets at recently restored sites.



Stream restoration and phytostabilization site for this field season.

The End of an Era: OSM/VISTA Leaves Saguache

Since 2008, the Western Hardrock Watershed Team has filled the coordinator position for the Kerber Creek Restoration Project with OSM/VISTA volunteers, each of whom has served a year-long term and brought unique skill sets to the project.

Due to shifting VISTA priorities, however, KCRP will cease to employ a full-time OSM/VISTA in August of 2013, when Trevor Klein, current OSM/VISTA, completes his term and moves on to Philadelphia,

where he will pursue a graduate degree in geology.

Once Trevor leaves, TU Mine Restoration Field Coordinator Jason Willis will absorb many of the OSM/VISTA's current duties, including working directly with contractors, agency employees, and landowners to ensure that restoration projects are completed and monitored on schedule. Jason has worked



Jason Willis

with the project for almost two years, and funding is in place for the next several years to keep him involved in the project. While the loss of a full-time coordinator is a blow to the project, Jason and the project's other partners will ensure that on-the-ground restoration continues uninterrupted.



Winning Big: Science Fair, 2013

After winning big at the San Luis Valley Regional Science Fair this March, Alamosa High School senior Brisha Wakasgui took first place in the Earth and Space Sciences Division at the State Science Fair in Ft. Collins, in addition to a number of other scholarships and prizes. Brisha will take her project, which investigates the effects of the underlying geology at the Minnie Lynch Mine site on surface water quality, to the international science fair, to be held this May in Phoenix, AZ. Brisha's success



Brisha at 2013 San Luis Valley Regional Science Fair

is an appropriate culmination to her work with the project, which began four years ago.

Center High School freshman Carmen Ruggles took home second place in the Environmental Sciences Division at the Regional Science Fair for her project on the effects of Groasis Tree Boxes, which were

planted along Kerber Creek. Congratulations, Carmen!



Installing Groasis Tree Boxes at Kerber Creek, 2012. Carmen pictured in center.

The Once and Future Event: Conferences, Volunteers, & Presentations

KCRP's calendar has been full since December 8, when a group of four brave National Civilian Community Corps volunteers joined OSM/VISTA Trevor Klein for a volunteer day on Kerber Creek. Together, the volunteers installed 25 wattles along a recently restored stretch of stream, fighting freezing weather and even a little snow! Thanks, volunteers!



NCCC volunteer hard at work.

We also helped to organize two events in collaboration with the Saguache Public Library, including a discussion of racial inequities and the importance of diversity and tolerance in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and a presentation on the history and methods of KCRP in honor of Earth Day. In collaboration with Penny Bruce, Saguache Public Library program director, we are planning one more event before August. Watch your e-mails for more info!

In addition to local outreach and events, Trevor gave a 25 minute presentation on the history, methods, and successes of KCRP at the San Juan Hardrock Mining Conference in Lake City, CO, held April 18-19. The presentation emphasized the project's collaborative nature and its focus on involving watershed landowners. Trevor will also present at the American So-



Trevor and fellow OSM/VISTAs at San Juan Hardrock Mining Conference.

ciety of Mining and Reclamation Symposium, which will take place in Laramie, WY during the first week of June. The presentation will discuss an original case study that employs robust statistical techniques to analyze the effects of KCRP.

Finally, KCRP will offer a public watershed tour this summer in concert with the Northern San Luis Valley Conservation Roundtable. Look out for more information in your inbox later this month!

Partner Profile: Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS has been an essential KCRP partner since the project's inception in 2008. NRCS cost-share programs have served as the vehicle through which the vast majority of in-stream restoration has been completed. Without these programs, KCRP would have required hundreds of thousands of additional dollars, either through grants or through landowners' private coffers, to accomplish all the restoration that has been completed in the last five years.



NRCS meeting with landowners, 2008.

In addition to financial assistance, NRCS staff members have dedicated countless hours to KCRP. Laurie Clark, the NRCS engineer, has surveyed and designed every restoration project implemented along Kerber Creek since 2008 at no additional

cost to the project. Shelly Anderson, NRCS resource conservationist, has also spent much of her time working directly with landowners and assisting Laurie. Regarding the project, Shelly states, "The watershed-wide project is exciting as it is setting a national precedence for cleaning up mine tailings. Kudos to these conservation-minded landowners!"

We cannot thank NRCS staff members enough for their dedication to KCRP!

Grants: The Received, The Proposed, & The Potential

In February, the Norcross Wildlife Foundation awarded KCRP \$1,700 for the installation of three interpretive signs at sites throughout the watershed that reflect the history and progress of the restoration project. Sign design is currently in progress, and installation is expected as early as next summer. Thanks to ScSEED for serving as fiscal agent for this grant!

Currently, the project is applying for a grant through the Water Supply Reserve

Account, a CWCB program administered, in this area of the state, through the Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable. If received, the approximately \$34,000 will be used to implement additional in-stream restoration at our most recent restoration site. TU will serve as the grant's fiscal agent.

We are also working with the Orient Land Trust, a non-profit organization in the Northern San Luis Valley, to develop a

new partnership that will apply for a grant to support additional restoration along Kerber Creek and a collaborative education program for local youth. This summer, OLT will work with RGWCEI, CCD, and KCRP to implement a trial run of the education program, which will produce information that can be incorporated into a future grant application focused on program enhancement and expansion.





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SUSTAINING THE
HEALTH OF OUR
WATERSHED THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE
RESTORATION
PROJECTS AND
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Acronym Reference:

- BLM:** Bureau of Land Management
- CCD:** Center Conservation District
- CWCB:** Colorado Water Conservation Board
- KCRP:** Kerber Creek Restoration Project
- NRCS:** Natural Resources Conservation Service
- OLT:** Orient Land Trust
- OSM/VISTA:** Office of Surface Mining Western Hardrock Watershed Team / AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America
- RGWCEI:** Rio Grande Watershed Conservation & Education Initiative
- ScSEED:** Saguache County Sustainable Environment & Economic Development
- TU:** Trout Unlimited
- USFS:** U.S. Forest Service
- USFWS:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Ser-

The Kerber Creek Restoration Project is an award-winning collaboration of 16 federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit groups, and more than 20 local landowners dedicated to the restoration of the Kerber Creek watershed from historic mining impacts. Since 2007, 60 acres of mine waste have been treated, over 200 in-stream structures installed, more than \$2 million raised through grants, and over 13,000 volunteer hours donated.

Please contact us with any questions or comments.



Reminders

- 1) Check out Kerber Creek in the news! • Value of Water: Kerber Creek Restoration Project Continues: http://www.alamosanews.com/v2_news_articles.php?heading=0&page=75&story_id=28628
- 2) Has your family visited your Kerber Creek watershed property recently? Have you truly noticed a significant change in your property since restoration work began? Please send in your stories at the e-mail listed above! If you e-mail a story, please indicate whether or not we are permitted to quote you directly. Thanks!
- 3) If you have volunteered in any capacity for the Kerber Creek Restoration Project—including through restoration work on your or others' properties, attending meetings, or assisting new staff members—please send in your hours! Volunteer hours serve as in-kind donations for grant applications, and as such can both help attract grantors to our applications and provide matching funds.
- 4) Please join us for our next Bonanza Stakeholders' Group meeting on **Saturday, June 29 at 1PM at the Villa Grove Baptist Church**. In addition to general project news, Jacob Mohrmann of Colorado Mountain College will offer a brief presentation on the Soil Lift technique, a new restoration strategy that may be implemented along Kerber Creek. Light refreshments will be served. Contact Trevor at 719-655-6107 for more information.

