

Conservation Connections

Newsletter of Plateau Restoration from Moab, Utah

Spring/Summer, 2007

Engaging the Public in the Long-Term Care of Native Habitats since 1995

www.plateaurestoration.org

Patagonia Supports Arches Project

The Salt Lake Patagonia Outlet Store recently awarded a \$1000 grant to Plateau Restoration to initiate a riparian restoration project near the Delicate Arch trailhead in Arches National Park. Plateau Restoration designed the project, which is aimed at restoring diversity of native vegetation and natural function to the floodplains of Salt Wash, following tamarisk treatment performed by the Park Service several years ago. Tamarisk (see p. 3) is an exotic species that, in addition to displacing native vegetation, alters the geomorphology of the watercourses it invades. The Park Service has had a long-term commitment to controlling tamarisk in Arches National Park through chain-sawing and applying herbicides. However, natural rehabilitation in tamarisk treatment areas can be extremely slow, particularly in sites like that surrounding Wolfe Cabin that lack a variety of native trees, shrubs and grasses.



Colorado State student, Will Vieth shows off a huge tamarisk stump that he helped remove.

Patagonia funds Arches project..... Cont. on p. 3.....

PRI brings service-learning to youth (see p.2)



Middle school students planting willows along Mary Jane Creek

Spring Education Seminars a huge Success

More than 135 people attended our series of three spring education seminars, "The Colorado Plateau - A Sense of Place", "The River Through Time" and "Interpreting the Land", held this March, April and May, respectively. The seminars were designed to be a great source of information for local guides and teachers as well as members of the public interested in learning more about the amazing canyon country.

Invited experts gave presentations on archeology and cultural anthropology, geology and landforms, in addition to a variety of issues including tamarisk and the salt cedar beetle (see this issue), recent changes to the Colorado River, damming of the Colorado, cattle grazing, recreation management and restoration challenges. Also previewed were historic slides and movies of river trips through Flaming Gorge and Glen Canyon before the dams. Thanks to the speakers, who graciously volunteered their time, and to Utah Guides and Outfitters Association and EPA who helped underwrite seminar planning and logistics.

PRI partners with CFI and others to bring service-learning to youth

In view of the incredible value of service-learning activities in environmental education, this year PRI has been actively expanding its audience to include high school, middle school and even elementary school children. Since 2005, we've been working on a project to integrate a service component into the curriculum of Canyonlands Field Institute, an educational non-profit organization in Moab and long-time partner of PRI. Through this project, which has been supported by a grant awarded to PRI from the EPA, we have engaged over 130 students and teachers enrolled in CFI programs. Participants have cut back Tamarisk, removed cheat grass and other annual weeds, seeded treatment areas with native grasses and planted willows along Mary Jane Creek in Professor Valley. And the best part was that students said they had fun, even pulling cheat grass!

We also had eighth-graders from a California Waldorf School, a class of fifth through seventh grade students associated with a program at University of Denver, and a group of Girl Scouts from Salt Lake City participating in projects. Students enthusiastically dug out tamarisk stumps in Arches NP, removed Diffuse Knapweed in Castle Valley, cut out Russian Olive along the Colorado River and weeded at Ken's Lake BLM Recreation Area near Moab.



Enjoying a hike in the fins after working at Arches National Park

Inspire, Involve and Influence

Plateau Restoration, Inc
A 501(c)3 tax exempt non-profit.

Mission:

To protect and restore native habitats of the Colorado Plateau through hands on education, landscape restoration, revegetation and research.

Plateau Restoration is a licensed and insured landscape contractor with the State of Utah and is a licensed and insured outfitter with the BLM and USFS.

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Patagonia funds Arches project *(cont. from p. 1).....*

During March, April and May, we hosted 75 student volunteers enrolled in service-learning programs contributing over 240 volunteer hours to the project. The north bank of the Salt Wash, in the vicinity of Wolfe Cabin, was cleared of hundreds of cut tamarisk stumps, and tamarisk duff and slash from previous cutting was piled for future burning. In addition, about forty willow cuttings were planted along the water's edge.

Volunteers included students on Spring break from University of Wyoming, Colorado State University, University of Texas at Austin, and Sonoma State University, as well as 5th through 8th grade students and teachers from Denver and Mendicino County, California. Although participants worked on a variety of projects during their stay in Moab, many cited the Arches project as their favorite. For Rebecca Apple from Laramie, WY, the most enjoyable experience was "working with a group to make a difference especially pulling up the tamarisk stumps in Arches. Just seeing the pile of stumps gave me a sense of accomplishment." Claire Nordlie from Coronado, CA, said "pulling tamarisk was fun because we all worked together" and Rachel Francis from Arnold, CA, found "it took so long and was a lot of hard work, but it looked awesome once we had cleared the bank".

The next phase of the project, which will involve seeding and transplanting the area with forbs and grasses, will continue this fall and early next spring. Thanks to Jeff Troutman, Gary Salamacha and several other members of the NPS staff for their help in getting this project underway. And, of course, thanks to Patagonia and our volunteers.

EPA grant received for Castle Valley watershed protection

PRI was awarded a two-year grant from the EPA Environmental Justice program to reduce herbicide impacts in Castle Valley, near Moab. Aimed at protecting the quality of well water, we proposed a multi-dimensional approach including volunteer and resident participation in manual weed removal, educational workshops on weeds and developing a communication network among stakeholders.

PRI has been working with the Town of Castle Valley, Property Owner's Association and Grand County Weed Department since 2004 on manual removal of Diffuse Knapweed, to try and mitigate the need for herbicide as a control measure. A biocontrol agent was introduced a number of years ago and is still actively spreading beyond initial release sites.



Root boring insect larva feeds on diffuse knapweed

This spring, 40 student volunteers contributed about 300 hours of labor pulling knapweed from several sites in the watershed. Volunteers included students from Sonoma State University, Mendicino County Waldorf School, Wild Rockies Field Institute, and Northwestern University.

We are excited at the opportunity to take this project to the next level.

Tamarisk and the beetles

The recent releases of the "biological agent" known as the salt cedar leaf beetle, (*Diorhabda elongata*) along the Colorado River have created some excitement in our small town.

Evidence of the beetles' presence was especially obvious last year as browning of the exotic invasive, Tamarisk, rapidly spread from the initial insect release sites between Potash and Dewey Bridge, near Moab. This season, visitors and locals are finding beetles as far away from the river as South Spanish Valley in San Juan County and along Hwy 313, the road to Canyonlands NP.

This quick, highly visual result may lead one to believe that the Tamarisk may be dead and gone in just a couple of years. However, experts are predicting that the beetles will need 6-10 years to completely defoliate the trees a sufficient number of times to stress them enough and cause them to die. In the short term, the stress that has already been placed on the trees will reduce the number of producing seeds that could have established themselves this year, helping to contain the continued spread of tamarisk up side canyons and at other water sources.

PRI and student volunteers have been digging up tamarisk for the past 7 years, primarily at spring sites and in side canyons. Knowing how hard the work is, one can't help but be excited about the release of the beetles. Extensive research has been done on the beetle, and although significant uncertainties still exist, there appear to be some real opportunities for restoring native riparian vegetation to the river.

More information can be found in an excellent brochure published by USU Extension and available online at www.utahweed.org.

Volunteers mean so much.....thanks!

Jane Jackson originally met our Founder at a Master Gardner training almost 10 years ago. Now retired and living in Idaho, Jane joined us for several weeks this spring, helping out with our student programs, building up our native plant nursery and running essential errands. We hope that Jane will be able to join us again for next spring's service-learning programs.

Brad Jones, Advisory Board Member of PRI, took 3 weeks from his job in Tennessee to help out with our service-learning programs this spring. Brad, also a Master Gardner and field naturalist, shared his wealth of knowledge and humor with the students and was adored by all. Brad is making plans to join us again next spring.

James Norris, a previous participant in two alternative spring break programs with University of Texas helped get the group from Texas out to join us again this year. A recent graduate of UT, Austin, James came out to Moab to volunteer for several weeks in June, assisting with a variety of office and field tasks.

BECOME A CONSERVATION PARTNER

Join our organization for any amount from \$5 to \$25 and show your support. Memberships are good for one year. You may also take advantage of a lifetime membership for \$295.

Member benefits include: our newsletter in the mail; first opportunity to sign up for trips, programs, events; invitation to "members only" trips; discounts on outdoor "Plateau" clothing, equipment, native plants and seed through our members purchase program, use of our "Harare House" guest facility in Moab and rental of outdoor equipment.

SPONSOR A VOLUNTEER, SPONSOR A PROJECT

Friends who wish to help further can directly sponsor our volunteers and restoration projects. Contributions over the \$25 membership are applied towards our Nature's Legacy Fund, inspired by our former BLM advisor, the late Linda Siebert. Plateau Restoration uses this fund to identify, plan and implement conservation projects and to underwrite our student service-learning programs. As a token of our gratitude, we offer a Plateau Restoration baseball cap, visor or T-shirt for contributions of \$50 or more.

Your donation not only offers a powerful learning opportunity for our future leaders, educators and land managers, we stretch your dollar by contributing volunteer labor to direct conservation work on our public lands.

Plateau Restoration is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization and contributions are tax deductible. To make a contribution, please fill out the following form and mail it, along with your check payable to Plateau Restoration, to: Plateau Restoration, P.O. Box 1363, Moab, UT 84532

Feel free to contact us by phone at (435) 259-7733 or toll-free at 1-866-202-1847 or by email at info@plateaurestoration.org. Also, visit our website at www.plateaurestoration.org and contribute on-line.

Yes, I'd like to join or renew my membership. Enclosed is my contribution of: \$_____ (amount)

I want to sponsor volunteers and conservation projects at the following level: _____(amount)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Specify one (for contributions of \$50 or more, including membership):

Baseball Cap

Visor

T-shirt: Size: med. large

X-large

