

Lower Dolores Plan Working Group

Summarized points from the 9/12/09 Field Trip to Slickrock

26 people were present on the trip.

Slick Rock Boat Launch:

- We met with the Randolphs and they explained many issues. These landowners own a piece of land on the river and right off the highway. It functions as a rafting/boating put in/take out. Also, many motorists use it as a roadside park. They struggle with problems here with trash, human waste, vandalism, etc. They have put in their own money to rectify some problems. It was noted that all of the concerns are not necessarily from rafters. It is family land and they are reluctant to sell it.
- Ideas were generated such as: close it off, move the Boat Ramp somewhere else on BLM land (some problems with topography exist), charge people, and/or make it a roadside park with State and/or other dollars. The DPLO District Ranger Steve Beverlin agreed to work with the Randolphs around problem solving.
- This is an important recreational amenity on the Lower Dolores. Solutions need to be found, it was generally agreed.

Grazing Issues, Al Heaton

- Al explained how his cattle operation worked and gave locations of his grazing allotments and areas -- on both private and public lands. He stated that he would like the Lower Dolores Plan to respect property and grazers' rights.
- His grazing practices, he told the group, are based on best practices. These techniques result in the land being taken care of *while* allowing his family to make a living. The two things do not have to be mutually exclusive. Grazers in this reach have to work with many different types of land owners and the Public Land Managers to make it all work. He commended all the private landowners who allow him to graze on their bottomlands including the Crocker-Bedfords.
- Al noted that grazing best practices include rotation of pasture lands, keeping cattle out of riparian areas, use of fencing, etc. There was Q&A around what grazing best practices really entail from a scientific perspective.
- He believes that the oil and gas should be developed. However, it should be gathered using best practices. Our country needs the minerals/gas and people who own them have a right to earn money from them, he said. Plus, the industry provides jobs.
- Al ended by again saying he would like property rights to be very highly considered in recommendation-setting done by the Working Group.

Tamarisk

- Peter Mueller gave a talk on the Tamarisk Coalition which is very active in the Lower Dolores River Valley implementing a funded project. This project mapped the priority sites and is working to mitigate them. He said there is no more use of the tamarisk beetle. There was lots of discussion here around the pros and cons of using this insect which was imported from the Middle East. The beetle intervention works because it only eats tamarisk but concern exists for unintended consequences.
- The Coalition is using hand thinning crews to remove tamarisk at prioritized sites working with the Southwest Conservation Corps.
- The Nature Conservancy is leading the effort which is very collaborative with other entities and private landowners, and the BLM.

The Crocker-Bedford's Property and Issues

- Kara-Lynn and Cole were hosts for the day and planned the agenda. They said they do not claim to represent every landowner. They stated that every private landowner in the corridor covered by the Lower Dolores Plan does care about the health of their land. They also rightly have concerns for their personal financial health as related to their private land, they relayed.
- They went into detail about the location and design of their house which was based on river crossings, topography and aesthetics, and many other factors.
- While on the Little Glen Canyon Point, they relayed the history of their property and intentions to protect the land, both what they bought at first and the lands in near proximity. They gave their version of a very detailed history including challenges in getting protections for their land and dealing with the BLM around various issues and regulations. Their goal, they said, is to achieve considerable economic return – a nest egg in case of need - while also protecting this special place. They are concerned about the potential of a WSR designation and how it could affect easement values or BLM land trade values. They also relayed perceived problems with County zoning, BLM road access restrictions and other factors that they said negatively affect values of easement or land trades. Cole ended by going through a detailed list of suggested standards and guides that he and his wife feel should be recommended in the report to the DPLO from the Working Group. (Note: Cole's typed notes were sent out to the Working Group and give much more detail.)
- Steve Beverlin with the DPLO countered some of what the Crocker-Bedfords told the group and explained that the BLM does not get involved in managing or directing the financial decisions or purchases made by private land owners. He said in some instances, the BLMs version of the history was different than the Crocker-Bedfords.
- Rafters sometimes trespass on their land with varying degrees of problems.
- The field trip ended near the Crocker-Bedford's home where they showed examples of restoration efforts. Because of management of their land from a previously very degraded state the following outcomes have occurred: soil is no longer compacted; native grass is very abundant; knapweed is minimal; the sagebrush that existed near the river has been replaced by native plants that should be near the river; sapling cottonwoods are abundant and intermediate sized cottonwoods are numerous; and no new shooting of desert varnish of cliffs. Unrestricted OHV use, "bad" cattle grazing and partying/human presence as well as just lack of stewardship created a piece of property in need of care. They have spent a lot of time, money and energy bringing their property back. The benefits are many -- to them but also to myriad wildlife.