

Thinking Like a Watershed

Partnership Reaches Across Boundaries

U.S. Forest Service. Bureau of Land Management. National Park Service. State of Utah. Private landowners. The land within the Escalante River watershed is owned and managed by many different people and agencies. Each has their own goals and management strategies, their own “turf.” In the past, collaboration across these boundaries was limited.

Yet ecological processes within the watershed transcend human-made boundaries. Watershed-level issues need watershed-level thinking—a sense that we’re all in this together. Consistent management has the best chance of success. What’s more, collaboration opens doors and builds community. That’s what the Escalante River Watershed Partnership (ERWP) is all about.

Step 1. Identify Shared Issues and Goals

In 2009, a diverse group of stakeholders who shared a vision of restoring and maintaining an ecologically intact Escalante River watershed met. During this meeting, and many more that followed, they identified common goals and key restoration issues. They created the ERWP to further the collaborative process and to pool funding, skills, and resources.

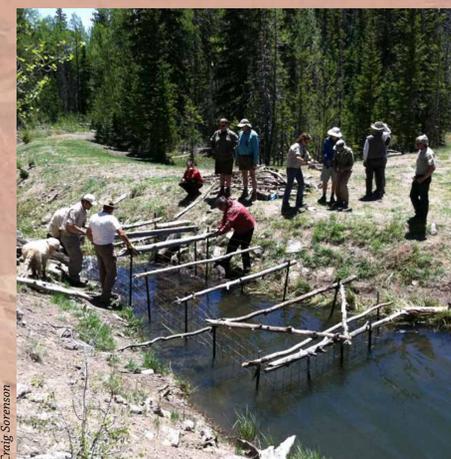
How does the partnership manage the Escalante River watershed? This process involves five key steps.

Step 5. Monitor and Adapt

How do you know if the actions you take have the effect you intended? Through detailed monitoring and assessment of ecological changes in the Escalante River watershed, ERWP scientists can hone in on the most effective strategies for restoring watershed health. They can then use these findings to make adjustments to the ERWP’s Conservation Action Plan, a process known as adaptive management.



All ERWP meetings are open to the public.



Craig Sorenson



Monitoring geomorphology at the Headwaters Demonstration Project.

Step 2. Assess the Resource

Before developing an action plan, you need to know what you’re managing and what threats it faces. The ERWP took stock of existing biological assessments and inventories and identified future research to fill in information gaps. ERWP scientists have gathered data on vegetation, wildlife, seeps and springs, ecosystem dynamics (for example, the impacts of climate change), and more.



Amber Hughes



Craig Sorenson



Collecting baseline data prior to Russian olive removal along the Escalante River.

Step 4. Take Action!

The ERWP’s action plan identifies more than 30 strategic actions, many of which are now underway. Some are highly visible, like Russian olive removal in the Escalante canyons. Others are less obvious, but still key parts of watershed health, like hosting a workshop on ways to avoid beaver damage on private property, or developing a protocol for monitoring the effects of tamarisk beetles.



Volunteer group creates a flow control device to mitigate potential flooding from beaver dams.

Step 3. Develop an Action Plan

The ERWP Action Plan Committee utilized The Nature Conservancy’s Conservation Action Planning process to develop a plan that identifies specific actions to address watershed issues. The plan serves as a blueprint for the ERWP as a whole, and guides ERWP committees (Science, Conservation Targets, Woody Invasives Control & Restoration, Education & Outreach) as they develop and implement annual work plans.