

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Chris Sturm, Stream Restoration Coordinator
Steve Miller, Sr. Water Resource Specialist

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 21, July 17-18, 2012 Board Meeting
Watershed and Flood Protection Section and Interstate,
Federal, and Water Information Section, Presentation
by Colorado Youth Corps Association**

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

Background

Jennifer Freeman, Executive Director of the Colorado Youth Corps Association ("CYCA"), will speak to the Board about several areas of mutual interest and potential collaboration. The CYCA oversees 10 regional youth corps offices across Colorado, several of which have been actively engaged in tamarisk and Russian olive control projects funded in part by grants from the Board. See the attached article from the September 13, 2011 edition of the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel. In addition, the CYCA is promoting pathways into natural resources careers for young adults coming up through the youth corps training programs. See attached introductory statement re the CYCA's Pathways to Natural Resources Careers. Recently Ms. Freeman met with Director Gimbel and staff about these interests and it was agreed further discussion with the Board would be appropriate.

Discussion

Youth Corps field crews have been successfully used by many project sponsors as part of CWCB funded control projects. Both the 2009 grants and the proposed 2012 program (see item # 20) have set a minimum project size of \$10,000 for purpose of administrative efficiency. The CYCA has offered to provide an avenue for those projects needing less than \$10,000 of State assistance by running their own grant program for entities doing small projects utilizing youth corps crews. Basically the CWCB would provide \$50,000 to the CYCA and they would then select and manage 5-10 projects which would receive subsidized corps services to be paid in full or part using the \$50,000 provided by the CWCB. This would allow CWCB staff to focus on bigger projects, allow some State support to small scale projects, and give the CYCA a direct role in project management.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve using up to \$50,000 of the \$1,000,000 authorized for phreatophyte control in the 2012 Projects Bill in a small scale (less than \$10,000 per project) control project grant program to be administered by the CYCA.

The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel: Tamarisk project a ‘true success’

By [Gary Harmon](#), Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Killing tamarisk along the Dolores River demands a concerted effort, one as subtle as a minuscule beetle and as direct as an excavator ripping the plants from the riverside.

It’s also an expensive effort for the federal government, one made less so by a range of partners, from well-heeled foundations to young people just getting a start on life, Bureau of Land Management Director Robert Abbey said Tuesday during a tour of a tamarisk-studded section of the river.

“It’s a true success, one that’s been under the radar screens,” Abbey said after a daylong tour during which he helped pile tamarisk branches that had been cut down moments before by crews from the Western and Southwestern sections of the Colorado Conservation Corps.

Crew members, most of them in their 20s, worked chain saws and piled the slash, or tamarisk limbs and branches, into piles. They earn minimum wage and pile up credits toward college scholarships through AmeriCorps.

On Tuesday morning, they were joined by several bureau officials, including Abbey, and representatives of The Nature Conservancy, the Walton Foundation and other organizations that contributed to the battle against the tamarisk.

The tamarisk lining the Dolores River about seven miles from Gateway have been under assault from tamarisk beetles that were placed there in 2005. Those beetles were joined a year later by other beetles that crossed over the Uncompahgre Plateau from a foray among Utah tamarisk. The beetles now are laying waste to the Dolores River plants, said Sparky Taber, a natural resource specialist in the BLM’s Grand Junction Field Office.

Once the beetles, which feed only on tamarisk, defoliate the plants, the conservation corps crews move in with chain saws, followed by “swampers,” crew members who pile the slash. Next come bureau weed-management experts who paint the stumps with herbicide to prevent the root system, which reaches deep into the earth, from regenerating.

Eventually, the slash piles will be ground to mulch by heavy equipment and left to nourish a new generation of native grasses and plants.

In between, however, the bureau is deploying pesticides and a different wave of insects to rid the banks of such invaders as Russian knapweed, which chokes off native species.

As weeds and tamarisk are removed from a 175-mile length of the river, new access for mammals such as deer and elk is created, Taber said.

The Dolores River Restoration Project “sets the tone for what can be done elsewhere across the United States,” Abbey told the crews and others. “It’s a success that can be exported.”

The project also illustrates the extent to which federal efforts are supplemented by environmental organizations and foundations, Abbey said, noting such partnerships will become more valuable as government budgets shrink as a result of the nation’s economic woes.



Summary of Proceedings Pathways to Natural Resources Careers Inventory Inventory Meeting, April 24, 2012

The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) co-hosted a Pathways to Natural Resources Careers Summit on February 23, 2012 in Denver, Colorado.

Attendees included 40 representatives from public land management agencies, non-profit organizations, and higher education institutions. The Summit focused on identifying challenges, barriers, and actions to create more pathways for young people to enter and develop professional, sustainable natural resources careers. Special thanks to Katie Navin, Executive Director of the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education for co-facilitating this meeting.

Participants agreed to pursue collaboratively two immediate next steps and identified several additional short- and long-term actions for the future (*Figure 1*). The two immediate next steps were completed in April and May 2012:

- Organize a summit to inventory existing gaps and resources for natural resources job seekers – **DONE**. CYCA hosted a meeting on April 24, 2012 with the goal of inventorying.
- Create an electronic forum to facilitate communication among partners – **DONE**. CYCA launched a LinkedIn page and discussion group with accompanying Box.net file sharing in May 2012.

This document details the results of the April 24 Inventory meeting attended by 25 representatives from public land management agencies, non-profit organizations, and higher education institutions.

Figure 1: Additional conclusions from the Pathways to Natural Resources Careers Summit

Short-term Actions	Long-term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broaden network of partners• Organize an education session and job fair for young adults• Train non-profit staff to be effective natural resources career coaches• Partner with organizations already reaching students and schools-educate school counselors• Create a "How-to" Guide for accessing public land agency positions• Identify successful and replicable higher ed/non-profit/agency partnerships and work to replicate them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a comprehensive online clearinghouse of positions and resources• Identify agency challenges and determine opportunities for partners to mitigate them• Research and replicate successful internship programs• Create a mentor system

This summary describes the process the group undertook for the Resources Inventory, the conclusions at which they arrived, and agreed upon next steps.

INVENTORY PROCESS

Setting the Stage

CYCA set the stage by identifying some guiding parameters for the Pathways Initiative based on feedback from the Summit and ongoing research.

Target Populations – The target population for the Pathways Initiative is any youth or young adult that has gotten a “spark” of the outdoors and wants to explore a career in natural resources. We especially want to target young people who are currently not enrolled in 4-year natural resources degree programs, under the assumption that these students already have significant support from their institutions. However, the tools developed by the Initiative may very well be helpful to these students.

Target Employers – The Initiative grew from a common understanding that a significant number of state and federal government agency staff would be retirement eligible in the coming years and that these agencies have stringent hiring requirements. Therefore, the focus for breaking down barriers and enhancing career opportunities in these agencies remains a focus of the Initiative. However, the tools developed may very well be useful for connecting young people to careers in private industry and with municipalities.

Target Job Types – At the original Summit, attendees asked, “What do you mean by the term *natural resources careers*?” Our answer is “anything that has to do with the outdoors – including all of the job types that support public lands such as communications, accounting, human resources, information technology, and more. This Initiative is not solely focused on “park rangers” or “environmental educators”. We know that, as with other industries, it takes a wide variety of skills and experience to achieve an organizational mission. With this inclusive approach to defining *natural resources*, we hope to attract any individuals who can contribute their talents for the benefit of the outdoors. We will use the term *natural resources* as a shorthand term, but feel free to translate that term to mean things like *outdoor recreation, conservation, stewardship, environmental education, etc.*

Target Partners – The goal of the original Summit was to convene three primary sectors:

1. Higher education
2. State and Federal land management agencies
3. Non-profit partners