

Invasive Phreatophyte Removal Project Report Delta Conservation District

This will report on the project funded by two separate grants, one from the Colorado River Water Conservation District and one from the Gunnison Basin Roundtable. This report will cover work performed along the corridor of the North Fork of the Gunnison River from August 2012 through December 2013.

Initial work on the project began with a survey of the woody invasives in the 23 acres of the Paonia River Park in 2012 followed by the mechanical removal and herbicidal spraying of Russian olive and tamarisk in September 2012 by a crew from the Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC). Work then continued with mechanical removal and herbicidal spraying on 3 adjoining properties downriver of the River Park with the willing support of the private property owners in September for a week and then for two weeks spanning November and December with the WCCC crew. After securing permission of the landowners, initial work treated 35 acres (Van Dusen/Hall property) on the west bank of the river with predominately Russian olive infestation along the river and interiorly into a cottonwood grove. Following that work, the crew addressed heavily infested properties (Fender/Velez) on the east bank of the river employing both sawyers and a hydroaxe. This covered slightly more than 80 acres. With the winter weather preventing further effective removal activity, work was suspended until the spring of 2013.

Mechanical removal and herbicidal spraying by a double WCCC crew commenced again in March 2013, removing primarily Russian olive and some tamarisk infestation on the west bank of the river on property owned by the Town of Paonia adjacent the sewer treatment plant and an adjacent property along the river. This covered approximately 80 acres of land. Simultaneously a partial crew employed a chipper to breakdown the heavy cut trees from the previous fall on the east bank of the river on the Fender property. Then work was begun going north along the river on the west bank on property owned by the Redwood Arms Motel (Ogrodny) and adjoining property. WCCC crew availability ended in March and was again available in September 2013.

In September 2013, a concentrated 3 week effort with sawyers and herbicidal spraying was made to move north along the river on both banks toward the River Park property. Permission was secured from private landowners for removal and treatment of Russian olive and tamarisk on the respective properties. Private landowners' (Maynard/Justman/Thiliverus) properties, a small tract of public park property, Farnsworth gravel pit property and a small tract of Town of Paona property totaling 130+ acres on the east bank were cleared of Russian olive, with no tamarisk being found. On the west side of the river across from this land heavy Russian olive infestation and minor tamarisk infestation was removed from 8 properties (Ogrodny, gravel pit, Stahl, Aglietta, Head, Justman, Orlando and Wetzel). This brought the land on both sides of the river up to the Paonia Library as having been mechanical removal and herbicide treatment. Land owned by the Friends Church across from and adjoining the Paonia River Park property on the west bank was also cleared of Russian olive and treated with

herbicide. Work was also begun on Town of Paonia property just below the Paonia High School along the river.

A survey of Russian olive and tamarisk north of the Paonia River Park along both sides of the river was conducted in October 2013 in concert with a District employee. Except for an area of Russian olive on the east bank of the river opposite the Black Bridge Winery and Orchards, very little invasive species growth was noted for approximately 4 miles up river. Landowners are being contacted and scheduled for removal of these pockets of invasive species in the spring of 2014 under other funding grants.

In early December a small WCCC crew returned and mechanically removed with sawyers and herbicidally sprayed heavy Russian olive infestation along the west bank of the river on Town of Paonia property and an adjoining property south of the Paonia High School. Russian olive and a beginning stand of tamarisk were mechanically removed with sawyers and herbicidally sprayed along the east bank of the river on CDOT property across from the Town of Paonia property. Spot retreatment of Russian olive was also done on the Paonia River Park property above Minnesota Creek and on the Friends Church property.

In September 2013 retreatment with foliar spray was done on the properties cleared in 2012. Heavy regrowth of Russian olive was found on the Fender and Van Dusen/Hall properties and minor regrowth on the Town of Paonia sewer plant and Velez properties. The latter had some minor tamarisk growth that was also treated. It is anticipated that retreatment of all the properties will continue in September 2014 under additional grant funding, with replanting as needed. To date the plentiful narrow leaf cottonwood and willow growth along the river has obviated the need for extensive revegetation as these species have moved quickly into the treated areas.

In September 2013 the Conservation District cooperated with the NRCS and 2 private property owners south of the above described treated areas in a brush removal project partially funded through Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding to assist in the hydroaxe removal and herbicidal spraying of extremely heavily infested land along the river in Hotchkiss. The District used a small amount of the grant money to assist the two landowners who on their own initiative undertook the recovery of their land through investment of their own substantial funds and the small EQIP funding available. The District hopes to be able to continue to partner with other EQIP program participants to multiply reach of the invasive removal dollars.

To date over 600 acres of land along the corridor of the North Fork of the Gunnison River have had mechanical treatment and herbicidal spraying treatment of Russian olive and tamarisk.

Photos follow of areas showing before and after treatment images:











