



Dr. Binkley discussing forest resiliency

UP-Date Fall 2008

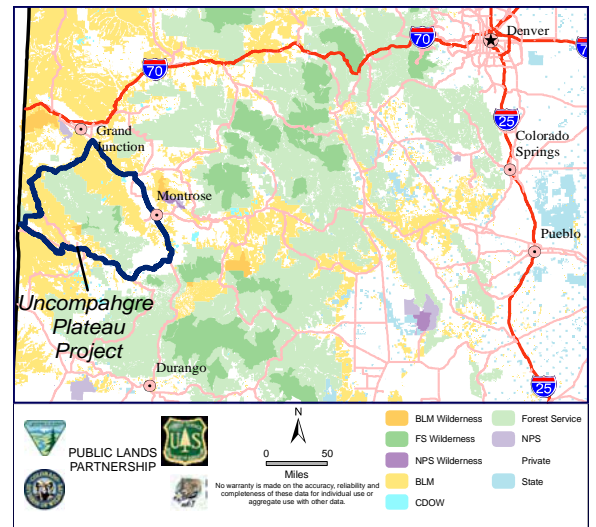
The UP Project centers around communication and community involvement, developing coordinated watershed restoration and rehabilitation projects across jurisdictional boundaries. By using a collaborative approach, we hope to balance economic, cultural, social and ecological values. The majority of our efforts are focused on the Uncompahgre Plateau—an area located in southwestern Colorado, comprising over 1.6 million acres of private, state and federal lands.

The UP Project's overarching goal is to improve the ecosystem health and natural functions of the landscape through active restoration and rehabilitation projects backed by best science, community input and adaptive management. By providing support, coordination, funding and facilitation, the UP Project seeks to enhance the resiliency, diversity and productivity of native ecosystems.

The UP Project partners include the Public Lands Partnership, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Western Area Power Administration and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association.

The UP Project began in 2001 with a local Landscape-Scale Planning and Implementation effort on the Uncompahgre Plateau. Since then, we have continued to build upon the strength and effectiveness of our partnership, expanding into a comprehensive and multi-faceted organization

focused on an array of program areas that enhance the health of the landscape. The main UP programs now include: Landscape-Scale Project Planning, Invasive Species Management, a Native Plant Program, On-The-Ground Treatments, and Education and Technology Transfer.



- In this issue:**
- Introduction—Page 1
 - UP Luchtime Lecture Series—Page 1
 - A Native Grass Find its Way Home—Page 2
 - Grass Adaptability Study Reaches Completion—Page 2
 - Forestry C.S.I.—Page 3
 - Invasive Species—Page 4



Silky lupine at BYU

UP Luchtime Lecture Series

We are offering a quarterly lunchtime, brown bag lecture series.

Lecture topics are centered on issues related to our public lands and are targeted at federal and state land management agency employees, city and county government representatives, members of local interest groups and individuals who are interested in the health, history and beauty of western Colorado. With these events, we hope to offer not only an opportunity for education but a chance to connect with a diverse group of people. Our lecture series is funded in part by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Keystone Initiative Grant.

The inaugural lecture was held on September 24th at the Montrose Public Lands Center. Amy Seglund, Southwest Regional Wildlife Conservation Coordinator for the CO Division of Wildlife, gave an excellent presentation on 'Local Threatened and Endangered Species'. We also heard from BLM Wildlife Biologist, Charlie Sharp, on how state and federal T&E species affect management efforts on BLM-managed lands. Our next lecture will be held in early December. We hope you will join us!

This quarterly publication is a summary of the UP Project's current efforts and events. It is a way to reach out to all of you to share how diverse interest groups, local citizens, academia, and government agencies are working together and coordinating their efforts for the greater good of the landscape. It is a means to educate and inform, as well as an invitation for input and participation. For a more in-depth look at the UP Project, visit our website at: www.UPProject.org.

A Native Grass Finds its Way Home

This fall, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association purchased 180 pounds of mountain brome from Kenny Hines, a farmer from Delta, to reseed areas along its power line on the Uncompahgre Plateau. Tri-State is clearing hazardous vegetation along the power line corridors to reduce the likelihood of wildfires. Disturbed areas, including staging areas, will be replanted with a native grass seed mix in late fall. Work on the power line is funded in part by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Keystone Initiative Grant.



Jim Free, UP Project; Mac Fellin, Tri State; Tim Garvey, USFS; and Kenny Hines, local grower touring the power line project.

With this purchase, a local source of an essential native grass is finding its way back home. The seed source was originally collected only one mile from the site in which it will be planted. The journey of this seed, however, was complex and required the collaboration of numerous federal and state agencies, local groups and committed individuals.

In 2002, when the UP Project began to implement large-scale projects it became clear that one important aspect of active restoration is to reestablish vegetation that is native to the area using sources that originated from the area, “local ecotypes”. Unfortunately, seed from local ecotypes of many key native species was either not available or the supply limited and extremely expensive. The UP Project initiated its Native Plant Program to fill this need.

Through the UP Native Plant Program,

forty different species of native grasses, forbs and shrubs were collected on the Uncompahgre Plateau. Many of these species had never been grown on a large scale so they were entered into numerous research studies to learn more about growth characteristics, cultivation and production methods. Once adequate information was collected and sufficient amounts of seed produced in increaser fields, the seed was made available to local growers.

With the help of a \$170,000 grant from the Western Sustainable Agriculture and Education (WSARE) Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Colorado State University – Rogers Mesa Research Facility, several local farmers were engaged to determine if native species from the Uncompahgre Plateau could be grown under cultivated conditions to supply state and federal agencies with seed.

Dr. Ron Godin, research scientist at Rogers Mesa and coordinator of the project, stated that, “The information gained from this project shows that native seed production can be a profitable addition to growers’ crop diversification”. By participating in the WSARE project, Kenny Hines received financial and technical support from Dr. Godin and his staff. Last spring he successfully grew and harvested enough mountain brome seed to sell to Tri-State.

Mountain brome was chosen because it is an excellent grass for revegetating disturbed areas. It is also an exceptional food source for wildlife and livestock. With the purchase of this local seed for its project, Tri-State is accom-



Dr. Godin and the UP Staff visit Kenny Hines’ mountain brome field last spring.

plishing more than reducing the risk of wildfires damaging or destroying the transmission line that delivers electricity and telephone service to the area. They are also enhancing the health of the ecosystem, improving wildlife habitat, decreasing the spread of noxious



Merchantable timber is extracted during the clearing and thinning of hazardous fuels

weeds, and supporting a local agricultural producer. “Tying multiple objectives and benefits into one effort is the concept for which the UP Project is most recognized”, stated Jim Free, Technical Coordinator for the UP Project.

Mac Fellin, Tri-State Line Maintenance Supervisor stated, “In my opinion this project is a shining example as to how the collaborative process works. To be able to purchase and utilize developed native seeds as part of the restoration phase on our transmission line fuels treatment project demonstrates that the UP Native Plant Program has come full circle.”

As this seed’s journey reaches its completion, the participants of the UP Project are enthusiastic about the future possibilities. “There are still many challenges ahead in growing and providing the native seed needed for large scale restoration efforts on the Colorado Plateau. With 15 forb and grass species currently available for commercial production and more coming on line in 2009, we hope that this example establishes a new approach and can be the beginning of a steady supply of local native seed for our area.”, Free stated.

In 2004 and 2005, seeds from 13 key perennial grasses were collected on the Uncompahgre Plateau for an adaptability study. The purpose of the study was to compare ecological adaptations of individual populations before releasing collections for commercial propagation and sales. In addition, seeds were obtained from adjacent areas in the Intermountain West and from cooperators and seed repository laboratories to compare their vigor, survival rates and seed production with local populations. In April 2006, transplants of 130 accessions of these 13 species were planted at four study sites: Nephi, UT; Dove Creek, CO; Sims Mesa, CO; and Transfer Road, CO.

After three years of data collection and seed harvest, the study is complete. The draft findings indicate that several populations collected on the Uncompahgre Plateau are strong candidates for commercial release.

Adaptability Study Reaches Completion



Adaptability Study at Nephi, UT

Forestry C.S.I. — Restoration and Resiliency



The Uncompahgre Mesas Forest Restoration and Demonstration Project collaborative group visited the Uncompahgre Plateau, CO twice this summer to gather "forensic" data in a variety of forest stands. Like the crime scene investigators on television, a team of volunteers

to determine ages and typical features that indicate pre 1880 evidence. Dr. Binkley stated, "The majority of the pre 1880 trees are no longer standing. Therefore, we have to look for stumps, logs and snags. The measurements taken will give us an idea of the vegetation type, spatial arrangement (clumping vs. open) and the age of trees."

graduates, CSU graduate students, Colorado State Forest Service volunteers, USFS employees, members of Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) and the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWR) worked together to look for clues such as charred and decomposing logs to assist in determining what historic forest composition and structure may have been pre 1880. This information will be used in developing treatment strategies in a landscape-scale restoration project.

The "Unc Mesas" group, which began meeting in Summer 2007, is interested in enhancing the resiliency, diversity and productivity of the native ecosystem in the 17,000-acre Uncompahgre Mesas area of the Uncompahgre Plateau, CO using best available science and collaboration.

Why 1880? This date signifies a time that pre-dates European settlement. Many forest community types in Colorado have been altered during the last 120 years by logging, grazing, proliferation of roads and vehicular traffic, fire exclusion and other activities. The changes to these forests have, in some cases, increased the potential for catastrophic fire and adversely affected many biological processes and aesthetic values.

Although the field data collected will not provide a complete history of the system, it will assist in forming an idea of what the forest would look like without intervention, and assist

our collaborative group in its goal to restore the ecosystem to a more natural condition, consistent with the historical ranges of variability (HRV) for the various vegetation community types, and to reduce the risk of unnatural crown fires both within stands and across the landscape.

Workshop participants were instructed by Dr. Dan Binkley, CFRI, on methods for gathering data including

Dr. Binkley will provide a report of the findings to the group later this fall. The data will be used by the group to assist the USFS in determining treatment strategies for the Unc. Me-



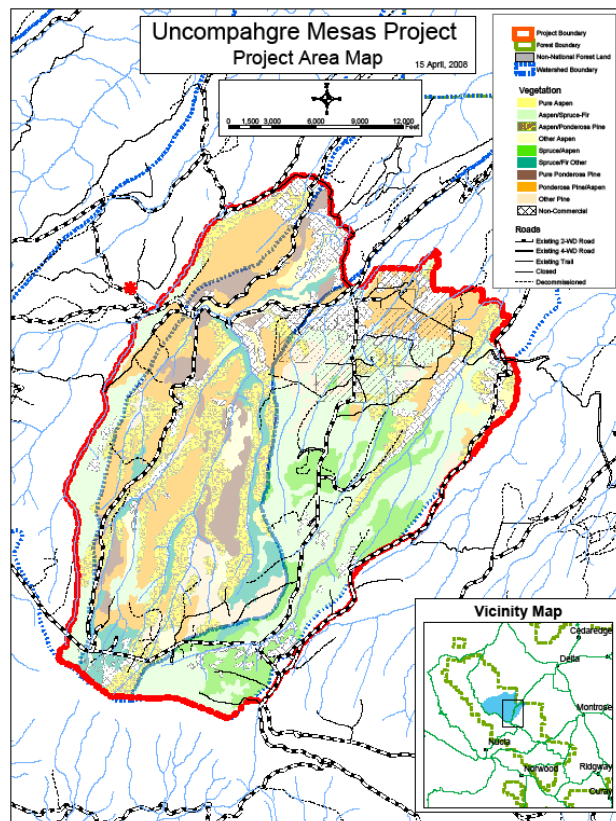
sas area this winter. Tammy Randal-Parker, USFS-Ourray District Ranger, stated, "This is a new way of doing things. By moving to a larger scale, we can save costs and time." This method can also provide accurate views of the condition of the landscape as a whole that may have been lost when working project-by-project.

During the June field trip, Dr. Bill Romme (CSU) stated, "We need to look at restoration on a landscape level. At a stand level, the forest may be within HRV while at a landscape level, we find homogeneity and a system that is out of balance. Restoration has a precise definition: to take a system that is degraded and put it on a trajectory to HRV."

How will we pay for this restoration work? Although it is generally agreed that ponderosa pine stands are in need of true restoration measures, its commercial value is low. It is costly to process ponderosa pine and it garners much less profit than other forest types. The group is therefore pursuing the feasibility of harvesting timber from

higher elevation forest types such as Douglas fir and using this income to perform restoration in lower elevation stands. Dr. Romme stated, "We can use commercial harvesting of timber at higher elevations and still be within HRV."

This project is funded in part by a Collaboration Support Program Grant and a Matching Grant from the National Forest Foundation.



Invasive Species Management Program

The Paradox Coordinated Weed Management Area (WMA) Plan is complete:

The Plan encompasses 116,000 acres around the towns of Paradox and Bedrock, CO. With the completion of this plan, the partners (Montrose County, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, CO State University Extension, private landowners and the UP Project) have successfully placed for over one half million acres of public and private lands in western Montrose County into WMAs.

The goal of the program is to engage the county, federal and state land managers and private landowners for the mapping, monitoring, control, and prevention of noxious weeds in this large area. The partners completed the adjacent 143,000-acre Horsefly CWMA Plan in 2006 and the 213,816-acre Tabeguache CWMA Plan in 2007. This project was initiated in 2005 with a Uravan Mill Natural Resources Damage Fund Grant that was awarded to Montrose County, BLM, U.S. Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy for natural conservation and reclamation through weed management. Additional funders of the Paradox CWMA Plan are the EnCana Corporation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Pulling Together Grant.

Coordinated Treatments within the WMAs:

The partners conducted treatments within the three WMAs following the collaboratively developed priorities outlined within the CWMA Plans. Montrose County treated all the major roads within the WMAs, the BLM and U.S. Forest Service targeted infestations of high priority species, and The Nature Conservancy continued tamarisk removal along the San Miguel River.

Purple Loosestrife Treatment in the Nucla Area:

A 350-acre infestation of purple loosestrife, a Colorado State List A species, was treated on private lands using back-packs, ATV's, OHV's, ARGO, and aerial spray applications. This project is a joint effort of Montrose County, the BLM and the UP Project. Additional funding was provided by a grant from

the BASF Corporation.

Tamarisk Treatment along the San Miguel River:

Tamarisk was treated via horseback within the Naturita, Hamilton and Dry Creek tributaries of the San Miguel River. This project is a joint effort of Montrose County, UP Project and BLM. Additional funding was provided by a grant from the BASF Corporation. In coordination with these treatments, the Nature Conservancy continued its work removing tamarisk along the San Miguel River.

Roubideau and Potter Canyons:

Russian knapweed infestations were treated via horseback along an 8-mile stretch of the remote Roubideau and Potter Canyons on the Uncompahgre Plateau. This 8-day treatment project is a collaborative effort made possible by funding from the Habitat Partnership Program, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation and the BLM. In coordination with this effort, Montrose County treated a 5-mile stretch of the canyon that is accessible by motorized vehicle.

25 Mesa Area:

Yellow toadflax infestations on private lands in the 25 Mesa area of the Uncompahgre Plateau were treated. The U.S. Forest Service treated infestations on adjacent public lands. This is a collaborative effort of Montrose County, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, UP Project and private landowners.



Ute Area:

Two treatments of spotted knapweed and one treatment of oxeye daisy infestations on private lands in the Ute area of the Uncompahgre Plateau were accomplished this summer. This is a coordinated effort with the NRCS and funded in part by the Montrose County Cost Share Program and an NRCS-EQIP grant. In a coordinated effort, the U.S. Forest Service treated infestations on adjacent public lands.

Inventories Completed:

Over 5,800 acres within the Ironhorse Analysis Area were inventoried for invasive species. These Wildland-Urban Interface areas are proposed for treatments for hazardous fuels reduction and forest health improvement. This effort was funded by a the U.S. Forest Service and a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation– Keystone Initiative Grant.

New Grant Awarded for the Gunnison Gorge:

The UP Project received a \$40,000 Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Association of Counties to restore and protect 23 miles of riparian buffer along the Gunnison River. The UP Project is one of only 10 projects across the country to receive funding in 2008 through this program.

The project will remove invasive plants and restore native species to enhance the riverside habitat. This project will also engage local residents in educational efforts about invasive species management and watershed health. Educational signs will be established at multiple trailheads to provide information to users of the trail system. Project partners include the UP Project, Bureau of Land Management, Delta County Weed Board, Chaco Sandals Company Volunteers, and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Friends groups.



For more information:
www.UPProject.org
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UP-Date is a publication of the UP Project. For more information about the UP Project and its components, educational opportunities, public meetings and presentations, field days, volunteer work, and other events, or if you want to become involved in any way, please contact us.

We seek an open and inclusive process in all of our activities. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to become involved in the UP Project!

