

Mancos River Resilience and Restoration Working Group



Introduction: In the spring of 2015, a working group formed with a shared interest to understand the current status of the Mancos River and work collaboratively to identify opportunities to for restoration and building resilience in the watershed.

With a few meetings in April, May, July, and September of 2015, the group has identified an initial interest in (1) assessing current and future conditions of the Mancos River, and (2) identify stakeholder priorities, opportunities and concerns for future projects. On October 1, 2015 the group convened to review the state of the baseline information and knowledge of trends in the Mancos Watershed. In June of 2016, the Mancos Conservation District received funding to support the development of a "report card" on the state of the Mancos River.

Mancos River Resilience Working Group Next Steps at the end of 2015

The group sought funding to pursue the following goals:

1. Draft "State of the Mancos River" to summarize the October 1 data sharing event and complete an assessment of the current conditions for existing data which would develop a list of needed data and information to supplement baseline data
2. Update the list of projects from the Mancos Watershed Plan that have been completed (Phases I-II and Phase III as planned)
3. Plan for Phase IV that would include future priorities for information (changes in community, vegetation, forests, and water supplies).

Colorado Water Supply Reserve Account Grant Mancos River Watershed Resilience Assessment

2016 Goals: To complete the effort begun by the Mancos Conservation District, Mountain Studies Institute, and Mancos River Watershed Group partnered in 2015 to compile existing data in order to assess the resilience of the Mancos River in meeting multiple uses and values in the face of changing climate conditions.

Purpose of Task 1: Develop a Mancos River Resilience Report publication for stakeholder and public use. This Assessment, in report card format, will outline current conditions and existing data on the Mancos River and identify areas of needed data and information. The purpose of this collaborative Mancos River Resilience Assessment is two-fold: 1) to compile the wealth of Mancos River data that currently exists within various entities and forms into one usable reference, and 2) assess the overall functional condition of the Mancos River through the lens of climate resiliency to inform future management strategies in light of a changing climate.

Method/Procedure

- Host a full-day science workshop to
 - Complete data sharing begun in the October 1 meeting
 - Agree on Mancos River Resilience metrics
- Develop a Mancos River Resilience Report
 - Complete an assessment of the current conditions based on existing data
 - Develop a list of further information needed to assess resilience metrics
 - Design, edit and publish a “Mancos River Resilience Report”
- Host a 2-hour stakeholder meeting in Mancos to share draft Mancos River Resilience Report
- Report to the public and invite feedback (1 hour presentation, with discussion)
- Be available for 3rd meeting if necessary for completion of grant goals

Deliverables

- One science workshop with notes summarizing results shared online;
- Mancos River Resilience Report publication (official title TBD) shared online,
- 1 public community meeting hosted by Mancos River Watershed Group and Mancos Conservation District
- Report on activities should the board request it.

Timeline: All work will be completed on or before August 30, 2017.

Role of the MRR Steering Committee:

1. Collaborate towards the gathering of existing data and data gaps assessment
2. Provide direction for the Mancos River Assessment
3. Contribute to the Assessment/report card
4. Assist with stakeholder engagement in the development and delivery of the report

Brief Overview of Several Previous Assessments:

The Mancos Conservation District and partners have supported the completion of several different studies and plans to assess the condition of the Mancos River Watershed and to identify management priorities. These include: the Mancos River Basin In-Stream Flow Report: Preliminary Evaluation of Flow Restoration Options (Beatie and Smith 2011), Mancos Watershed Plan (Mancos Valley Watershed Group 2011), Mancos River Watershed Diversions (Lanci 2009), and the Functional Assessment of the Mancos River Watershed: Mancos Valley and Adjacent Areas (Stacey 2007). Many other studies and data have been collected since these reports. The Mancos River Resilience Group has started a Dropbox to collect the existing data and information into one location. The following describes a few of the founding pieces of this effort.

The Mancos River Basin In-Stream Flow Report: Preliminary Evaluation of Flow Restoration Options (Beatie and Smith 2011) conducted preliminary water rights and hydrologic analyses of the Mancos River, outlined some potential tools for protecting or restoring flows and recommended some next steps. The four recommendations were 1) examine potential for new instream flow appropriations, 2) examine potential for instream flow acquisitions, 3) continue efficiencies projects, and 4) consider other projects (eradication of non-native phreatophytes, stream channel modifications, etc.) as appropriate.

The Mancos Watershed Plan (Mancos Valley Watershed Group 2011) is based on the EPA's nine minimum elements and includes methods to develop an educational/informational component, to finance the work required and monitoring methods to assess the effectiveness of the programs implemented. The plan identified eight priority management measures to be implemented: restore reaches impacted by historical levees; installing new structures at 12 priority diversions along with riparian restoration and improvement of hydrogeomorphology; acquire water for in-stream flows; reduce salinity loads; reduce selenium; close, improve and maintain roads on National Forest lands; reduce sediment loads from burn areas; and rehabilitate habitat in Mancos Canyon. Several of the diversions that were identified as priorities in this plan have been completed.

The Mancos River Watershed Diversions (Lanci 2009) report mapped, photographed and described diversion structures throughout the watershed. All three of the diversions to be addressed in this project were mapped and described in this report.

The Functional Assessment of the Mancos River Watershed: Mancos Valley and Adjacent Areas (Stacey 2007) conducted field assessments of 17 reaches through-out the Mancos Watershed. At each reach, 38 parameters were rated using the Rapid Stream Riparian Assessment Protocol to characterize the reach's Water Quality, Hydrogeomorphology, Fish/Aquatic Habitat, Riparian Vegetation, and Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat. These ratings were then combined to provide an overall score of the functional condition of that reach. Several of these points were resurveyed in 2013-2014.