

Tamarisk Leaf Beetle Meeting

Hosted by the Save Our Bosque Task Force

10/19/2016

Introductions and Welcome by Doug Boykin

Presentations

Doug Boykin of New Mexico State Forestry and Chairman of the Save Our Bosque Task Force gave a short history of Tamarisk in our valley, how the work on Tamarisk has changed over the years, and where we are today.

Two presentations followed to provide basic information. Both presentations will be available on the Save Our Bosque Task Force website shortly.

Shannon Hatch of the Tamarisk Coalition gave an overview of the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle, locations the different species occurring in the United States, and observations and results of monitoring associated with the different species and the impacts to Tamarisk growth, decline, and fire behavior.

Vicky Ryan of the US Fish and Wildlife Service gave a summary of the Southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo occurrence in our area, their habitat requirements and observations of changes in habitat quality when the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle is present.

Following each presentation there was a Q & A:

Question: Elm versus Tamarisk leaf beetle?

Answer: The tamarisk leaf beetle is specific to tamarisk. The Elm beetle is different. People are concerned about Elm being effected by Tamarisk leaf beetles. Some have observed higher populations this past year of Elm beetles than in the past.

Question: Are there any plant communities that the flycatcher will nest in other than salt cedar?

Answer: Willows-Goodding's and coyote willow are the main nesting native tree species. Sometimes cottonwood. In other watersheds there are different native species such as box elder that they utilize. Cuckoo typically use larger territories or nesting areas of thick vegetation.

Question: What is the age class of the nesting areas the flycatchers prefer?

Answer: It varies. Next to the river flycatcher will use both old and new growth.

Question: What are your thoughts of removing tamarisk as far as ecology?

Answer: There are things project designers could ask - If the salt cedar is taken out will the site work for restoration of flycatcher habitat? Should the salt cedar be taken out before the beetle arrives?

Question: If the beetle is established what is the position of removing the remaining salt cedar and replanting natives?

Answer: Depends on location. If the area is occupied it may be more beneficial to leave the salt cedar, as far as habitat, due to the beetles tendency to move on once defoliated. If it is removed, there should be a good replanting plan to provide habitat.

Question: Where are you seeing areas of higher mortality from beetle? Is there a higher mortality rate when the beetles and another environmental factor are combined on the area?

Answer: This is unknown at this time. They are seeing higher mortality if the tamarisk is areas that it is stressed already, like areas with low groundwater table, dry sites.

Overarching question: How to balance species needs since restoration potential varies, and since habitat requirements for either flycatchers or cuckoos differ. This will be a key aspect to our planning efforts.

Focusing in on Objectives and Goals for this Meeting

Need for Information Sharing and Coordinated Planning and Implementation – A Mapping Exercise

Volunteers to assist with the mapping product include:

Gina Dello Russo from SOBTF (lead), Vicky Ryan and Paul Tashjian from the FWS, Grace Haggerty (invited) from the ISC, Dustin Armstrong from the BOR, Yasmeen Najmi from MRGCD, Nick Smokovich from NMSF, Jeremy Zimmerman from BLM, Gail Rogers and Carlos Vega from Socorro County, and Malia Volke from NMDGF. An initial meeting on this work will be scheduled for early January.

Products: Mapping showing agency projects including location, landowner, collaboration, focus of projects, timeframe, funding sources, and other pertinent information.

Products: FWS has information on what and where the suitable habitats are in order to apply appropriate efforts and funding to those restoration projects. FWS and/or BOR can share shapefiles on where suitable habitat for flycatchers and cuckoos is within our reach.

Coordination: NM Bureau of Geology has offered to house a Geodatabase for our river reach.

Suggestion: A Masters Student from UNM could be brought in to produce the map/coordinate the compiling of data.

Suggestion: The largest piece of the database would be who's where and when.

Note: The Bureau of Reclamation will be tasked with developing a "Lower Reach Plan" that, once the new Biological Opinion for the Endangered Species in our area is finalized, would need to be completed in 18 months.

Note: FWS has information of past and current species occurrence that can be added to geodatabase.

Note: As part of the Restore Our Rivers Initiative that the Tamarisk Coalition is leading and the SOBTF is participating in, the Task Force will be updating the Conceptual Restoration Plan.

Question: Could planning efforts be combined to assist all working in the area?

Note: Tamarisk Coalition through Utah State University already has templates available; similar to the data we are considering compiling. Suggestion made to contact Ben Bloodworth to get this to work with.

Suggestion: The Corps of Engineers Rio Grande Environmental Management Program has one focus of long-term adaptive management. Suggestion: May be able to convince them to consider this as a pilot project under that program. Suggestion: May be able to store the data within the COE to incorporate all restoration.

Long Term Fire Effects with Tamarisk and Its Leaf Beetle

Volunteers to assist with this product include:

Dominic Otero from NMSF (lead), Mark Mercer, Jerry Wheeler, and Carlos Vega from Socorro County, Eric Krueger from FWS, Jonathon Smith from BLM and John Romero from MRGCD

Products: A white paper highlighting current information on how the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle will affect the fire effects of bosque wildfires. Include a summary of the state of the science, data gaps, any research or monitoring to assist in determining the changes to fire severity and occurrence intervals in our valley.

Suggestion: Have this white paper available for the public meeting in February.

How Do We Build Our Stock of Plant Materials for Restoration?

Volunteers to assist with these products include:

Gwen Kolb and Angel Montoya from FWS, Fred Hollis from Socorro County, Nyleen Stowe from Socorro SWCD, John Allen from the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, Kevin Coble from FWS, and Travis Day from Sierra SWCD.

Products: Strategies that define how we can develop and secure native plant material sources for future restoration projects. Volunteers will organize to define what other products like timelines, resources required, and crucial benchmarks will aid implementation of strategies.

Outreach: To potential growers, American Native Nation, agricultural interests and other partners, funders for this work.

Matrix of Who Is Doing What, Where

We started to develop a matrix of who was doing what and where with each agency or entity presenting what he or she were working on in the reach. This will be further developed as we continue to meet and Gina will draft a template of this and send it on for review and refinement. The initial draft will be based on what each entity provided today. We will try to have this ready for the public meeting in February. *(Will have first draft before next planning meeting in December)*

Monitoring the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle

Outreach topic: provide maps showing current monitoring and where each species of beetle is located in the state. Provide information on the different entities involved in this monitoring, basic information on each species and identification technique. There is a GIS insect monitoring database.

Wrap Up Statements

How Can We Continue Working Together?

Yearly Planning Meeting hosted by the Task Force in March/April of each year.

Preparation for the Public Meeting

Topics will include at a minimum:

- Basic Tamarisk Leaf Beetle life history
- The leaf beetle and potential fire effects
- An update on Fire predictions for 2017 Fire Season
- Agricultural Water availability predictions for 2017 Farming Season
- Basic changes to wildlife habitat with beetle occurrence
- Round robin of restoration efforts underway
- Other suggestions include Levee project updates, river park updates

Send Gina other suggested topics if you would like to present them

Send Gina information about assistance for private landowners from the different agencies/ entities to compile for the public meeting.

It was suggested that we also offer a Site Tour following the public meeting?

A follow up meeting to this one is scheduled for December 7 at 1 pm, location to be announced. This will focus on the presentations and materials for the February public meeting. Anyone interested in the topics being presented is invited. We had said we would meet in early January and can do that as well if needed.

General announcement: Escondida Burn Rehabilitation meeting is scheduled for November 4, 10AM at the Bureau of Reclamation office in Socorro.