

## Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project

### Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, September 11, 2024 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

In Person: Carpenter Ranch

1. Idaho trip report-out (Emily S)
  - a. Emily Spencer reported that trip went really well. We collected almost 89,950 insects in a matter of hours with 14 people at just one site: Squirrel Rd
  - b. Those insects were released on 7/10 and 7/11 in northwest Colorado
  - c. 168 project hours total for the Idaho trip (not including travel)
    - i. Emily S has volunteer forms for the trip itself, but she needs to round up the hours people spent back here releasing and at meetings, etc. Emily B says she has been tracking that and will get those numbers to Emily S.
  - d. The Rankin Motel was very accommodating. We sort of took over their lawn, but they were very happy to have us and invited us back next year
  - e. Right after 4<sup>th</sup> of July will be the trip for 2025. Between 10 and 15 people seems to be a good number because of the number of rooms available at the Rankin and because it's a manageable size with the amount of equipment. Emily Spencer proposed holding the dates of July 8-12 for next year's trip.
  - f. Emily S has been working on supplies and equipment for next year. So far, she got a few more electric aspirators and some splitters (on Ben's recommendation), so it might go even faster next year and/or we might be able to get more bugs.
  - g. Ben put an article together for the newspapers that many YRLSP members contributed to. He feels that it's important to keep our project in the public eye. All agreed. Emily B got a few emails after the article was published of a few interested landowners.
2. Review biocontrol release numbers/sites for 2024 (Emily S and Tamara)
  - a. For the Inundative Biological Control Strategy grant, one of the deliverables was releasing between 50,000-100,000 insects each year, and we're at 114,000 insects for 2024. About 107,420 leafy spurge insects were released in Colorado, and then an additional few thousand leafy spurge insects were released in northeast Utah within Dinosaur NM, plus some Russian knapweed insects.
    - i. 89,950 leafy spurge beetles were collected from Idaho, and 72,550 of those were released in the Yampa watershed. (10,100 returned to the Front Range with John K, and 7,300 were released in the Utah portion of Dinosaur NM (below the Yampa/Green confluence)
  - b. Shane Talvacchio at the State Wildlife Area purchased 2,820 bugs from Idaho, including 420 Oberea (pretty big number for that species).

- c. Everything else came from the Colorado Department of Agriculture, thanks to John Kaltenbach. We got several different shipments from there to support the Show Me Float and the Youth Outreach Event. CDA sent Tamara a few thousand to put on J Quarter Circle. Ben went out with Tamara to distribute those, plus Emily S took some to take down to the confluence of the Green River. Getting bugs from different places means improving genetic diversity of our bug populations in the Yampa watershed.
    - i. John Kaltenbach says the bakery bags used to work really well in the old coolers, but don't work as well anymore, so he'll change that up for the future. John put about 3,000 bugs out at the Lowry Ranch, which is one of his main collection sites. He also released at Cherry Creek State Park, which has a lot of leafy spurge. He also did his own inundative release at Cherry Creek SP with beetles he collected on his own.
    - ii. John's boss asked him if he would write an article for the Western Weed Coordinating Committee's newsletter on the Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project, including the Idaho trip and the rest of the work that's been done so far over the years. All approved, and Tamara directed John to the interactive map that Pete put on the website, as pretty much everything the YRLSP has done over the years is reflected on the interactive map. Ben asked to see the article once John is done with it.
    - iii. John Husband asked John K about the lack of sorting in Idaho. John K says that not sorting is okay when you're not going that far, especially not over state lines, and that it's a model that we might be able to follow once we have a self-sustaining local nursery. Tamara says this is something she already has talked to Emily S about and will be designing some fast, initial passive sorting for the bottom of the Aphthona accelerators that put bugs in large takeout containers so we can be efficient and not have to do the whole aspirating process.
3. Results of 2024 beetle monitoring (Tamara)
- a. Tamara updated the monitoring record/plan
    - i. She hasn't heard from Chris Rhyne, so she isn't sure about the Tepee Draw or Fortification Creek sites
    - ii. She got to 13 sites this year, which is about twice the minimum goal for the year
    - iii. We had massive bug activity in late July and early August. She isn't sure if that means that this year the bugs were all late, or that the season was just longer than we initially thought it was. We definitely weren't finding bugs early in the season, but it was cold and wet then anyway. Again,

monitoring in the morning is pointless because the bugs aren't active when it's cooler.

b. Potential future nursery sites

i. Tamara reported that we did get back to Spurge Island on the State Wildlife Area, which is the spot we've had our eye on for a nursery site because there's so much spurge there and because we've been putting so many bugs there for years now. Tamara is starting to lose confidence that that site is a good future nursery area. There are clearly bugs there, and they're clearly impacting the spurge, but Tamara has yet to have an event where she has collected a lot of bugs in a reasonable amount of netting. It's still worth continuing to use biocontrol there, and to keep looking there over a wide period of time, so she's starting to think that she should just be going out every week for a few months to a handful of sites to get a better handle on the bugs' life cycle over the summer. Spurge Island is the part of the State Wildlife Area that gets hayed last, so the water stays on there later, so it's soggy and wet and therefore hard to get there. The moisture may also be impacting bug activity.

ii. That prompted Tamara to come back and look downstream on the State Wildlife Area at one of the sites where they put bugs early on, west of Dorsey. The area doesn't get hayed. It's pretty disturbed and has been sprayed heavily. But Tamara went out on August 1<sup>st</sup>, and she was catching tons of bugs, enough to collect and move somewhere else. The area that has a lot of spurge also has a lot of ants. Shortly after that, she went out with Shane Talvacchio and they discussed logistics of using that area as a potential nursery site. There are some logistical concerns Tamara has about using that site as a nursery, like there's a lot of downed wood, which could be a safety hazard, but Shane is willing to work with us to get some shuttle support (UTVs). So that could be a potential nursery site. It's drier than other areas around, so maybe the bugs are doing better there because of that.

c. Field tour with Jim Haskins

i. Jim Haskins expressed interest in getting bugs on some land that he and his son and daughter-in-law manage just north of Hayden. The land is pretty upland, not riparian. He's a retired wildlife manager. Tamara got a hold of him to do a site visit to see if he had bugs on August 9<sup>th</sup>, and she was catching massive quantities of bugs in small patches of spurge. Every patch of spurge had bugs in it. In the center of the patch, there were lots of spurge and ants, but stunted spurge around the perimeter without

ants. (The ants defend the spurge from invaders). Before the YRLSP, there were some parcels of land in the area that had old bug releases, but Tamara couldn't get permission to visit those sites back then. But it's obvious that Jim has an active biocontrol program right now. Pete and Tamara will come back next spring to map the spurge patches. Kim Ragotzkie says that if you get about 50 bugs per 10 sweeps, that's an area that has enough of a population to collect from, and Tamara was finding about 25 bugs per sweep on August 9<sup>th</sup>, which is late in the season. Tamara thinks that maybe those are potential small-scale take and spread sites. Jim and his family are interested in possibly collaborating with us in that regard. Jim and his wife are also interested in participating in the Idaho collection trip. Turns out that there were some legacy releases near there in 2014-2016 and also the County did some roadside releases near there in 2020 and 2021. That means that there's been active biocontrol successfully maintaining itself in that area for at least a decade. So Tamara thinks doing a small-scale collection event on the State Wildlife Area and the Haskins place next year would be good, but she feels like she still needs to figure out when peak bug collection time is. John K reports that it's usually mid-late June on the Front Range, but it's most certainly later for us in the Yampa.

- d. Roddy brought up that he and Ben Sr. noticed some beetles when they were monitoring before they released biocontrol agents at East Cross Mountain. They were very small and black. John K identified these as Glyptina. We discussed getting a better photo of them for the ID sheet.
4. Youth outreach event report-out
- a. Tiffany, Jonathan, and John K reported that the kids seemed very engaged
  - b. John K did the actual releases
  - c. Tiffany did a little spiel of what noxious weeds are, and Chris Rhyne talked about integrated management. CPW was there for frog monitoring show and tell also.
  - d. Those who attended will share photos with the group.
5. Show Me Float report-out (Ben and John H)
- a. We had about 15 people for this year's float. We did a few stops where we did releases: we put 5,000 beetles on Duzik's and Camiletti's land. We had released on Camiletti land before, but we only found Oberea (not Aphthona), though it was early in the season. There was a lot of good discussion on the float trip. John H says he wishes we could have gotten more landowner participation, but maybe they've seen enough of this. Darrel Camiletti was interested to be on the trip but

he couldn't make it. We had 2 Routt County Commissioners with us, and Tony Bohrer from Moffat County canceled at the last minute.

- b. Tamara: for next year's Show Me Float, she was contacted by Dan Tekiela, who's on the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (National Forest Service regional lead for invasive species), which is hosted by CDA, and they want to come out on the Show Me Float next year. Dan said that usually this group goes on one field trip a year, and usually the field trips are to really small projects, so Dan thought the group would benefit from seeing the YRLSP, which covers a whole watershed. We've never been able to get the Ag Commissioner on a Show Me Float, but this group is under her purview.
  - i. Discussion on date for 2025: the issue is that you want high enough flows to raft, but then sometimes there aren't bugs yet that early in the season. If we want to get CDA Commissioner Kate Greenberg, Emily Spencer says that she does a trip through Lodore every year, usually during the week of June 19<sup>th</sup>, so it might work well to schedule the SMF on either end of that trip. Emily S says she usually starts planning that trip with Commissioner Greenberg in Oct-Nov, so she'll keep the group apprised of what dates they settle on. Patti York from the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee suggested June 4, 5, 11, or 12 for the Show Me Float, and we picked Thurs, June 12<sup>th</sup> for the tentative date for 2025.
  - ii. We'll focus on this group of people for next year's SMF, which are about 15, so we won't send out a big invitation – maybe just invite a few County Commissioners from each county to round out the group

#### 6. Website updates (Pete)

- a. Pete reported that he did some updates before the Idaho newspaper article went out
  - i. *Euphorbia esula* has been changed to *E. virgata*. Pete changed this on the brochure on the website. There are several places on the website where he's put a note on taxonomy explaining the change. Sidenote: Pete feels that it would be good to update the brochure at some point in the future to make it more visually attractive.
  - ii. The Grants page has been updated to reflect info on biocontrol in 2024 and the Idaho trip.
  - iii. Pete did a substantial rewrite of the Biocontrol pages. He added sections on collection, what the inundative strategy means, and added some photos from the Idaho trip this year. There used to be release numbers on that page from each year, but that's now on a separate page because it

was starting to take up a lot of space. Tiffany will get info to Pete on Routt County's releases this year to be included on this page.

- iv. Pete will update the Interactive Map in November or December. The files on the GIS data page will be updated at that time as well.
- v. The Show Me Float page has been updated with photos from 2024
- vi. Pete will get to updating the Youth Outreach page soon with photos and a paragraph for 2024

#### 7. Presentations to County Boards of Commissioners

- a. Tiffany asked Routt County Commissioners in the spring and they said fall would be a better time for a presentation. Ben and Emily B will put together a presentation for Oct 28<sup>th</sup> and will get documents to Tiffany by Oct 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - i. Tiffany put \$2,000 in her proposed budget for 2025 for the YRLSP again, but it won't be approved until December. Emily B will send an invoice to Routt County in January to get those funds and will cc Jonathan. (Tiffany will likely be out on maternity leave).
- b. John H hasn't done an update with the Moffat County Commissioners either, but he's happy to schedule that. Tamara says to talk to Jesse Schroeder first. Jesse has been updating the Commissioners, so he may have already worked leafy spurge into his update. John H will do that.
  - i. Tamara asked Emily B if she submitted the form she sent her to request funds from Moffat County. Emily was not sure but said she would check on that right away. Moffat also doesn't actually approve budgets until December.

#### 8. Monitoring/managing leafy spurge on SMV Stetson Ranch update (Tiffany)

- a. SMV has taken quite a bit of Tiffany's time this year because of a the communication breakdown. Chris Wittemyer wants bug releases in 2025. Jonathan and Tiffany did a site visit this spring and the stem counts were not reduced. Tiffany expressed the importance of having management actions in writing and not just verbal communication to Chris. He did eventually put together a written plan but it didn't have application rates, so she's still waiting on that. There's a very steep spot where they want to put bugs.
- b. Tiffany and Jonathan have also done site visits to SMV's neighbor, Martin Craighead, because some of the spurge has migrated onto his property into the upland. Martin is very proactive with his weed management. That area (Wittemyer's and Craighead's) will be aerielly spray, so that will be good for leafy spurge control.
- c. Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust has an easement on the Wittemyer property and does assessments and ensures that leafy spurge is being treated

there, so there shouldn't be much breakdown of management when the property changes hands to Discovery Land Company. There doesn't seem to be a conservation easement on the Craighead's property though. Emily B says Friends of the Yampa will be engaging heavily in the Discovery proposal process and will make sure to discuss the importance of leafy spurge management when FOTY meets with Discovery.

9. New weed enforcement ordinance in Routt County (Tiffany)

- a. Tiffany reported that the ordinance passed on second reading and has been published in the paper. It goes into effect on 9/28. They originally thought they could only apply this to List A species and List B species designated for eradication. But county attorney is willing to go to court and enforce on it for folks who refuse to do anything with leafy spurge. The goal is always voluntary compliance and just to use this new enforcement ordinance to further entice individuals to comply.

10. Grant administration reminders (Emily B)

- a. Emily B will send out mileage reimbursement form and in-kind hours tracking forms this week for August. Once she gets those number back, Emily B will send the final hours count to Emily S, so she can do the fiscal year reporting.
- b. Emily B put out a reminder to all that everyone can get reimbursed for mileage for anything YRLSP-related, including driving to Carpenter Ranch today

11. Partner updates

- a. Tamara: She got a request from Shane Talvacchio to go visit Yampa Ghost Ranch (just below Milner landfill area) to check out their leafy spurge. She and Pete went out and it turned out not to be leafy spurge – yay!
- b. Tiffany: She has been asked to put together a landowners meeting for West Routt. Her goal is to educate landowners on alternatives to using Tordon (not using just one chemical for the life of an infestation). She wants to partner with Todd Hagenbuch at the Extension office for this meeting. It might be early next spring or maybe even next fall. The State Land Board is who requested this meeting initially after hearing frustration from their permittees. Tamara volunteered herself and Pete to highlight some info on the website at the meeting. Tiffany is open to other ideas and suggestions. Tamara mentioned that Jim Haskins would be good to have at the meeting. Tiffany will keep us in the loop as plans develop.

12. Next meeting: Wed, Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 10:00 – 12:00 at Carpenter Ranch or virtual

- a. We'll review 2024 goals and set 2025 goals