

## Tamarisk Coalition Newsletter

### July 2004

This newsletter is the start of our efforts to highlight each time a specific project that concentrates on partnerships being developed within states to tackle the tamarisk problem. The Rio Grande River at Big Bend, Texas is the tamarisk project for this edition of the Tamarisk Coalition Newsletter. If you have a project that you would like to share, let us know. Other news and activities of interest are presented below; unfortunately, the first one is not good news.

The Tamarisk Coalition and our friends at BLM and NPS have lost a family member this past week in the untimely death of Pete Larson. Pete, a seasonal employee of the BLM for five years and the NPS for 10 years, was killed in an ATV accident on August 2, 2004, near the South Shale Ridge, 20 miles north of Grand Junction. He was conducting land health assessments for the BLM when the accident occurred. Pete also taught science for 29 years at Grand Junction High School and his natural curiosity and wide-ranging interests allowed him to connect with students of every type. His love of the land led him to continue his service to others after his retirement. He developed his passion for fighting tamarisk while working at the Colorado National Monument. He was instrumental in creating the Tamarisk Coalition and served on our Board of Directors and was the organization's first president. His inspiration, presence, and laughter will be greatly missed.

**Legislation:** The bills before Congress, HR 2707 and S1516, have both passed their respective bodies and are slated to be reconciled when Congress gets back from their August recess. Both bills, which can be viewed at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov), provide approximately \$100,000,000 over 5 years to western states at 75% federal/25% local match. We continue to work with Congress to make sure that a final bill is passed and signed by the President this year.

**Bio-control Activities:** Currently, APHIS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are in discussion on the conditions for issuing permits for these releases. The Coalition will provide information through this Newsletter when a decision is made.

**Team Tamarisk:** On March 31, 2004 in Albuquerque, NM, over 300 federal, state, local, and tribal representatives from all levels of government, the public and private sectors came together for three days to discuss the challenges of managing tamarisk and developing sustainable habitats in their place. The conference included representatives from 19 states, with the focus on the Southwestern states where tamarisk is a major problem.

The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture, the National Invasive Species Council, the Tamarisk Coalition, and 13 other organizations and was called *Team Tamarisk: Cooperating for Results*. The outcome of the two-day workshop was a set of 12 guiding principals that can help to establish a framework for forging close working partnerships among states and federal agencies. See <http://www.invasivespecies.gov/teamtam/> for information on the agenda, attendees, speakers, grant information, Tamarix Cooperative Mapping Initiative, volunteerism, and abstracts on posters presented at the conference.

## Funding the Tamarisk Coalition

As with all non-profits, funding is an ongoing issue. We are working on grants and private donations, and your assistance and suggestions are greatly appreciated. The Tamarisk Coalition's work has mushroomed this year to a point where we need to expand our staff and we need YOUR help to accomplish it. Please send in your membership dues if you haven't already. See [www.tamariskcoalition.org](http://www.tamariskcoalition.org) . You're continued support is essential for the **Tamarisk Coalition** *so we can help you on your tamarisk control efforts and the long-term reestablishment of native vegetation along the West's rivers and streams.*

Happy trails,

*Tim Carlson*

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**NEWS from the Rio Grande Institute**  
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There is significant progress to report from the Rio Grande border in Texas, where prospects for creating a binational "Team Tamarisk" are excellent. Grants have been awarded that will allow progress on two fronts. First, two pilot control and revegetation projects will get underway immediately. Second, planning for a concerted effort is proceeding on several fronts, all aimed at creating an inclusive, goal-oriented, regionally focused "Team Tamarisk" to meet the challenge of salt cedar control on a watershed-wide basis issued by the secretaries of Agriculture and Interior at an important March 2004 conference held in Albuquerque. At that meeting the call went out for attendees to go home and organize teams across jurisdictions and disciplines to deal with salt cedar control issues on a watershed basis. That is underway on the Rio Grande.

The area of focus encompasses approximately 600 miles of the international stretch of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo, from El Paso/Juarez to the termination of the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River at the Terrell/Val Verde county line. The project area is located entirely within the Chihuahuan Desert, including Hudspeth, Culberson, Presidio, Jeff Davis, Brewster, and Terrell counties in Texas, and the states of Chihuahua and Coahuila in Mexico. Most of this section of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo is known as the "Forgotten River" where the river almost dissipates among the vast stretches of tamarisk. Public lands adjacent to the river in Texas include Big Bend National Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, and the Ocotillo Unit of the Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area. In Mexico, the federal protected areas of San Carlos and Santa Elena are adjacent to the river.

The two pilot control and native habitat restoration projects are being funded and supported through a number of organizations. Recently, the Meadows Foundation granted the Rio Grande Institute \$83,000 to support two pilot projects directed by a binational coalition of resource managers from Mexican federally protected areas and U.S. state and national parks along the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. These new funds from the Meadows Foundation complement grants received from the World Wildlife Fund, the Trull Foundation, and the Friends of Big Bend National Park. The two projects will employ manual application of Garlan® herbicide, followed by re-introduction of native plants, in Boquillas and Colorado canyons in the Big Bend area.

Planning for a concerted effort of tamarisk control along the Rio Grande watershed is proceeding on several fronts. Funding by the Corps of Engineers for a resource assessment of the critically infested "Forgotten River" stretch has been secured through the efforts of Environmental Defense and the Chairman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Kathleen White, and with the support of the Far West Texas Regional Water Planning Group. Congressman Henry Bonilla, who represents a district including most of the Rio Grande border, was an original co-sponsor of the "Salt-Cedar and Russian Olive Control Assessment and Demonstration Act" that has been passed by the House.

Second, with funding from the Meadows Foundation and World Wildlife Fund, landowners and resource managers on both sides of the Rio Grande are participating in workshops to assess the dual roles of chemical and biological control methods in a watershed-wide strategy. Dr. Jack DeLoach of the USDA Agricultural Research Laboratory in Temple, Texas, led the first of these workshops at Sul Ross State University in June 2004. As a part of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute's annual symposium in October 2004, Tyrus Fain with the Rio Grande Institute will chair a panel whose members will share their views on appropriate control techniques and strategies that could be appropriate for the Rio Grande.

This progress is an outgrowth of a binational collaboration begun in 2000 by the Chihuahuan Desert Program of the World Wildlife Fund; to date, the collaboration has encompassed 27 governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations from both the United States and Mexico. Through a series of planning sessions, the work has been focusing attention on the unique problems facing the area where the Rio Grande forms an international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. The Rio Grande Institute, based in Marathon, Texas, has been selected to provide on-the-ground support and coordination services for those wishing to participate.

The Rio Grande Institute and the World Wildlife Fund are working with organizations such as the Chihuahuan Desert Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. to make these small successes the initial steps toward formation of a "Team Tamarisk" that can meet the challenge issued at the March 2004 conference in Albuquerque.

For more information on these developments, see [www.RioGrande.org](http://www.RioGrande.org). President of the Rio Grande Institute, Tyrus Fain, can be reached at [info@RioGrande.org](mailto:info@RioGrande.org). Mark Briggs, lead consultant on the projects in Big Bend, can be reached at [mkbriqqs@msn.com](mailto:mkbriqqs@msn.com).

### **Participants**

*The following is a list of those organizations and agencies that have participated in salt cedar control planning sessions from 2000 through 2004.*

1. *The Trull Foundation, Texas*
2. *World Wildlife Fund, Washington D.C. and Las Cruces, New Mexico*
3. *Profauna C.A., Coahuila*
4. *Friends of Big Bend National Park, Texas*
5. *Texas State Historical Association*
6. *Rotary International - International Peace Park Committee*
7. *Cemex, Coahuila*
8. *Rio Grande Institute, Texas*

9. *The Nature Conservancy of Texas*
10. *U.S. Geological Survey, Mid Continent Ecological Service Center, Colorado*
11. *U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Texas*
12. *International Boundary and Water Commission/Comisión Internacional de Límites y Agua (IBWC/CILA)*
13. *Instituto Coahuilense de Ecología-Coahuila*
14. *Binational Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Ecosystem Work Group (BREW)*
15. *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas*
16. *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, El Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias*
17. *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales- Delegación del Estado de Chihuahua*
18. *Museo Maderas del Carmen, AC, Coahuila*
19. *Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Texas (CDRI)*
20. *Chihuahuan Desert Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc.*
21. *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*
22. *Big Bend Tourism Council, Texas*
23. *The Tamarisk Coalition, Grand Junction, Colorado*
24. *Forgotten River Action Committee, Texas*
25. *Binational Regional Environmental Working Group (BREW)*
26. *Environmental Defense, Texas*
27. *Big Bend Trails Alliance, Texas*