

TOWN OF RIDGWAY

UWP looks for efficient solutions to Rollans Park restoration

One year after the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership began a replanting and restoration project at Rollans Park in Ridgway along the Uncompahgre River corridor, the hard work of many volunteers is now visible in established tree stands and increased vegetative cover along the river bank.

UWP Coordinator Agnieszka

Przeszlowska explained UWP's involvement in Rollans Park began last summer as a cottonwood planting and stream bank restoration project, funded by a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Town of Ridgway, with support from the county weed department.

Volunteers transplanted 22 six to seven foot tall Fremont cottonwood trees to Rollans Park in August 2012 from an overcrowded cottonwood planting in need of thinning in Ridgway State Park.

In October 2012, volunteers planted native grass seeds and installed biodegradable, aspen fiber blankets to limit erosion along the stream bank. Twenty-eight willow poles were also planted using a variety of techniques to determine which planting method was most effective.

Przeszlowska reported that in May 2013, UWP determined that 59 percent of the transplanted cottonwoods were alive and healthy, 32 percent had dead leaves but were sprouting from their base and nine percent were dead all together.

Of the 28 willow pole plantings, 50 percent survived the winter and the most effective planting

technique was determined to be the simplest approach, inserting a single willow cutting into the ground without any trimming.



A member of the Southwest Conservation Corps installs a fence around a cottonwood tree in Rollans Park.

Photo courtesy Agnieszka Przeszlowska

Late summer rains significantly improved all of the plantings and Przeszlowska estimated vegetative cover had increased 40 to 60 percent along the stream bank.

This summer, UWP agreed to sponsor the park through the Town of Ridgway's Adopt-A-Park program. UWP projects at Rollans Park this summer included fencing 19 additional "self recruiting" cottonwoods to protect the young trees from animal browsing, repair of picnic tables and other park amenities and weekly weed pulling events.

Przeszlowska said the weed pulling events were intended to limit the town's use of herbicides along the river corridor. Although a small number of dedicated, weed-pulling volunteers showed up regularly over the summer, Przeszlowska hoped that more residents who support a non-herbicide weed management approach would join in the weed pulls next summer.

In all of its projects, Przeszlowska said UWP seeks "effective but low cost" solutions, utilizing a number of volunteer groups for labor including Grand Junction-based Humanists Doing Good as well as local community volunteers. A 12-person crew from the Southwest Conservation Corps, a non-profit agency modeled after the depression era Civilian Conservation Corps, also assisted in the restoration work with grant support coordinated by County Weed Manager Ron Mabry.

This October, UWP plans to fence off a portion of the river corridor to allow further re-vegetation to occur, while leaving the human-created footpaths where river access is common unfenced.

Przeszlowska indicated UWP was open to doing smaller projects on other portions of the river corridor, including within the City of Ouray.