



FRUITA
COLORADO

AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

TO: Fruita City Council and Mayor

FROM: Marc Mancuso, Parks and Recreation Director

DATE: December 5, 2023

AGENDA TEXT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – A request to approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Fruita and Desert Rivers Collaborative and authorize the City Manager to execute the MOU

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this agenda item is to authorize the City Manager to reenter into a MOU with Desert Rivers Collaborative. The mission of the Desert Rivers Collaborative (“DRC” or “Collaborative”) is to protect, restore, and maintain native river corridor habitat in Mesa and Delta Counties through the development of community partnerships. The DRC’s geographic focus area is the Colorado River from the eastern boundary of Mesa County, CO west to the Utah border and the Gunnison River from the city of Delta, CO to the river’s confluence with the Colorado River in Grand Junction, CO.

The DRC was established in 2012 to serve as a coordinated platform to conduct riparian restoration and address invasive non-native plant species impacts. Stakeholders include state and federal agencies, municipal governments, private landowners, interested residents, and non-profit organizations. All parties recognize that the challenge of restoring areas impacted by non-native plant species can be more easily met through a coordinated, comprehensive effort that draws upon local and regional skills and expertise.

Riparian habitat along the Colorado and Gunnison rivers, like along many other western rivers, has been degraded by several factors, including colonization by invasive plant species. Principal invasive plant species of concern to the DRC are tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), and other herbaceous species. Along many stretches of the rivers, native plant communities have become displaced, are poorly developed, or are at-risk due to non-native plant establishment. Invasive non-native plant infestations often diminish fish and wildlife habitat, decrease water resources, impede recreational use, negatively impact agricultural production, and increase wildfire hazards. Although native trees in riparian areas can use more or less the same amount of water, they do not grow as densely as tamarisk and Russian olive. Further, these non-native trees spread beyond the riparian floodplain into zones typically dominated by xeric vegetation.

The objectives of the DRC are to:

- Encourage and support collaborative riparian restoration efforts for the benefit of overall river health, improved local communities, and enhanced opportunities for recreation, education, and economic benefit.

- Provide a platform for partners to better leverage resources and improve ecological conditions at a landscape scale
- Share information, lessons learned, and resources, to the extent that partners are comfortable, to improve restoration outcomes

FISCAL IMPACT

City of Fruita can provide support as a Collaborative partner with the application for grant funding from state and Federal sources to the extent possible.

APPLICABILITY TO CITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This process is applicable to the City's goals of Quality of Place and Lifestyle. The Desert Rivers Collaborative is putting value in maintaining the natural resources and landscapes along the Colorado River corridor in Mesa County. The riparian restoration and management of invasive non-native plant species continue to improve and enhance recreational offerings.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COUNCIL

The options for Council are the following:

1. Approve the MOU with Desert Rivers Collaborative, directing the City Manager to sign the MOU. The MOU shall take effect on the date of final signature and shall be in force and effect for a period of five (5) years from the last date signed. This MOU may be modified in writing by mutual agreement and signature of all parties. Any parties may join at any time by signing this MOU.
2. Deny the proposed MOU with Desert Rivers Collaborative.
3. Advise Staff to gather more information.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of staff that the Council, by motion:

- **APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE CITY OF FRUITA AND DESERT RIVERS COLLABORATIVE AND AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANANAGER TO EXECUTE THE MOU**