

Southwestern willow flycatcher habitat enhancement efforts in the Colorado River Basin

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Since 2007, expansion of the tamarisk leaf beetle (*Diorhabda* spp.) across the Colorado Plateau has been documented through landscape-scale mapping efforts initiated by the Tamarisk Coalition, in collaboration with the US Department of Agriculture's Palisade Insectary. The Coalition widely disseminates monitoring data through web and print based outlets and through outreach events. Monitoring capacity continues to grow through partner collaboration and training. Monitoring data provide timely information on direct and indirect impacts to the riparian ecosystem and allow land managers to implement adaptive management principles. Presently, there is growing concern that the tamarisk leaf beetle will adversely impact progress made towards recovery of the southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL). Poor reproductive success has been observed in areas defoliated by the beetle. Focus is currently on the Virgin River given the beetle's established presence in SWFL nesting areas; however, based on current beetle distribution trends, other rivers with nesting SWFL populations will likely be affected by in coming years.

There is an urgent need to design and implement successful plans to improve the abundance, quality, and distribution of native riparian vegetation for nesting SWFLs at risk from the tamarisk leaf beetle. The Coalition, with private foundation support, has spearheaded efforts to coordinate habitat improvement design and implementation along selected rivers in the Colorado River Basin. This talk will detail the formulation and execution of this design process and emphasize the importance of monitoring in informing policy and management decision making.