



Indian Creek Stream Restoration Project

Manti-La Sal National Forest, Bears Ears National Monument

October 2nd-6th, 2023

Dear Volunteers and Partners,

Hello and thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Manti-La Sal National Forest, Monticello Ranger District! We are excited to have your help on this project in one of the most iconic landscapes of the Western U.S. We will be spending a week on Indian Creek, Bears Ears National Monument and hope you can join us Tuesday 10/3/23-Friday 10/6/23. Feel free to come for all or part of our implementation week, just please be punctual in the morning so we can all be on the same page at the beginning of the day.

We will be hiking about 4-5 miles every day and will be doing manual labor including: moving building supplies, using power tools, and using hand tools. This is phase 1 of a multi-phased project, primarily focused on staging materials and building a few in stream, post assisted log structures (PALS) later in the week. There may be some opportunities too for demonstrations on some of the long-term monitoring approaches we are taking to monitor the success of the project. We will be building in stream structures which means we will be getting wet. Indian Creek is shallow and wet-wadable, but if you are sensitive to colder water, you might want waders. Temperatures and weather in this region are variable and can change quickly. We will not be close to vehicles so be prepared to take care of yourself. This document will describe in detail the project, camping, logistics, and safety considerations. Please read this document thoroughly to be prepared for an exciting week in a special place.

Project Introduction

Indian Creek watershed is greater than 200,000 acres in size and is in Southeastern Utah in San Juan County. The watershed begins below Twin Peaks in the Abajo Mountains, a small mountain range west of Monticello, passes through the northern extent of Bears Ears National Monument, and meets the Colorado River in Canyonlands National Park. The watershed is managed by the USFS, BLM, and NPS, and TNC at Dugout Ranch. The watershed provides water for the city of Blanding, as well as cattle ranching and agricultural uses downstream, and provides important habitat for wildlife in an otherwise semiarid landscape.

The overarching objective of this project is to manage riparian conditions along the upper Indian Creek watershed in a natural state, and where the river has experienced degradation due primarily to the legacy and ongoing effects of cattle grazing (conduct restoration) or is likely to experience degradation due to future land uses and climate change (conduct mitigation).

Objective 1: Increase stream channel complexity in incised channels.

Objective 2: Enhance sediment storage, via stabilization or aggradation.

Objective 3: Increase a) floodplain and b) valley bottom habitat for riparian vegetation, in particular willow shrubs that are important wildlife habitat.

Achieving these objectives will be done by building a series of post assisted log structures (PALS). PALS will be constructed from 4" diameter x 7' length untreated wood posts with a sharpened end and large diameter coarse woody debris found at the site. A hydraulic post pounder and gas-powered auger will be used to install posts where viable. Combinations of different PALS designs (e.g., bank attached, mid



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channel, channel spanning debris jam) will be used along the target stretch to achieve different goals. Overall, many PALS built in a somewhat messy manner can be more effective than fewer over-engineered PALS, which will guide our implementation.

Two preliminary PALS have been built demonstrating that the approach is possible. The rocky stream bed and infeasibility of using tracked vehicle poses a serious difficulty. We may need to do some extremely arduous manual digging for post installation.



Figure 1: Pictures of preliminary PALS: left, standard channel spanning; right, BDA-like PALS made with material from the stream banks.

Schedule

We will meet at Newspaper Rock Historical Site at 0900 on Tuesday, 10/3/2023

Newspaper Rock: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Zbar3qjrnUBsZawJ8>

There is limited parking at the trailhead for Indian Creek which is a ¼ mile walk from Newspaper rock. Some vehicles will park at Newspaper rock. Please carpool from camp, if possible, to minimize congestion at Newspaper Rock.



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We will meet at Newspaper Rock at 0900 daily for the morning briefing and tailgate safety session before hiking up to the project area.

You are welcome to work with us if you can throughout the day, but the crew will be at the project site until 1530-1600 daily before hiking back.

We will be hiking a little over 2 miles one way up the Indian Creek trail. The hike is a shallow gradient with one shallow stream crossing. This section of trail is considered easy to moderate.



Figure 2: Overview of parking, trail, staging area, and project area.



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Camping

We have reserved the Superbowl Campground Group Site from 10/2-10/6. Feel free to show up to camp Monday evening.

This campground is located here: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/2VwnvnoLEhdSvACPA>

Overnight lows could be in the low 40s and it could rain. Please pack camping gear accordingly and come prepared to feed yourself. We will do 1 group meal that will be vegan.

Personal Protective Equipment

We will have some extras but please bring your own.

You will need the following:

- Gloves
- Ear protection
- Eye protection
- Sun protection
- Waders or prepare to wet wade
- Closed toe shoes for wet wading
- Lunch
- Water
- Rain gear
- Spare dry clothing

Safety

We will conduct a safety briefing at the start of the project and with any new volunteers that show up. You are participating in this project at your own risk. We will touch on all of this in our safety briefing, but you should be aware of the following safety concerns:

Horses

There will be horses on the project site. We ask all volunteers to **please not to pet them** or enter their space. There will be a lot going on and we cannot risk the safety of our 4-legged colleagues. Always ask the horse operator for the appropriate way to navigate around the horses and pay attention during the horse briefing in the morning.

Power Tools

We will be operating gas powered augers and post pounders. They are loud and have risk of impact injury. Do not operate if you feel uncomfortable or if a MLSNF team member has not properly trained you on the use of that equipment.

Chainsaws and Felling



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Qualified crew members will be cutting dead and downed logs with a chainsaw. Stay 100 feet+ from the cutting area, where ear protection, and communicate with the sawyer before entering the cutting area. Do not get anywhere near a running chainsaw.

Hiking

We will be hiking in a remote area. Please feed yourself and hydrate yourself as needed. Do not take risks, know your limits, and communicate your needs to project leaders.

Weather

We will be away from vehicles in an area that could rain and or flash flood. Project leaders will communicate any flash flood concerns if they arise. If it starts to rain hard get out of the creek and to higher ground. Please bring rain gear and be prepared to hike out in the rain if it is severe enough for us to call of operations for the day.

We will have emergency water and first aid materials onsite. We will also have forest service radios and will communicate an evacuation plan at the time of the safety briefing.

Where your PPE, drink water, eat, and communicate with your people and project leaders. Let's stay safe!

Media

There will be some photographic content being captured during the project. We will bring this up again in person but we have our leadership's approval to record some of the work being done. If this is a problem for you and you do not want images of you captured, please reach out to Michael Damman (michael.damman@usda.gov) And again, in person so we can find a solution. You might just end up in a monthly Forest Service newsletter!

Summary

It will be hard work but in great company in the most iconic Utah landscape. Come prepared to be safe and take care of yourself. The Manti-La Sal NF could not be more grateful for all your participation and hard work. Thank you all for your interest, we can't wait to see you.

Respectfully,

Manti-La Sal National Forest Watersheds Team

Caring for the land and serving people

