Post-Fire Watershed Assessment: The Waldo Canyon Fire, Colorado



Wildland Hydrology

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Kyle Wright

Acknowledgments

This project was contracted and encouraged through the dedication of Carol Ekarius of the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) and the numerous partners. The listed participants also contributed various portions of their time to complete this project.

Partners:

- Pike National Forest
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- The Navigators/Glen Eyrie
- City of Colorado Springs
- Colorado Springs Utilities
- El Paso County
- Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority
- Coalition for the Upper South Platte

Participants:

- Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP):
 - Carol Ekarius, Jara Johnson, Jonathan Bruno, Carrie Adair
- US Forest Service
 - Kyle Wright, Brian Banks, Dana Butler, Leah Lessard, Molly Purnell, Ed Biery, Melinda McGann
- Colorado Springs Utilities
 - David Longrie, Kim Gortz
- Matrix Design Group
 - Graham Thompson, Lucas Babbitt
- Wildland Hydrology
 - Robert "Bones" Kasun, Lee Chavez

Waldo Canyon Fire (2012)

Burned:

- 18,247Acres
- **346 Homes**



Image Source: KKTV 11 News

Goal

Enhance hydrologic recovery to promote sustainable watershed function

Objectives

- Reduce risk to life and property
- Protect existing infrastructure
- Reduce sediment supply from:
 - Hillslopes
 - Roads and trails
 - Channel sources
- Dampen flood peak flows

The following questions are addressed with this restoration master plan:

- 1. What are the post-fire impacts and potential adverse consequences?
- 2. What can be done to offset these impacts/consequences?
- 3. How effective would this be?
- 4. Where do we start?
- 5. How much will it cost?
- 6. When can we start?

1. What are the post-fire adverse impacts? ...Debris flows



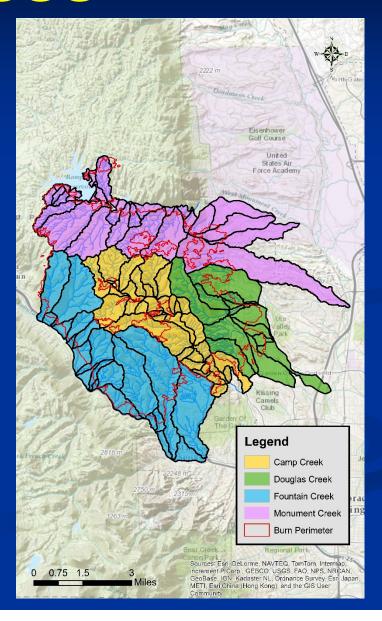
To answer these questions it was necessary to conduct a watershed assessment (WARSSS) to evaluate:

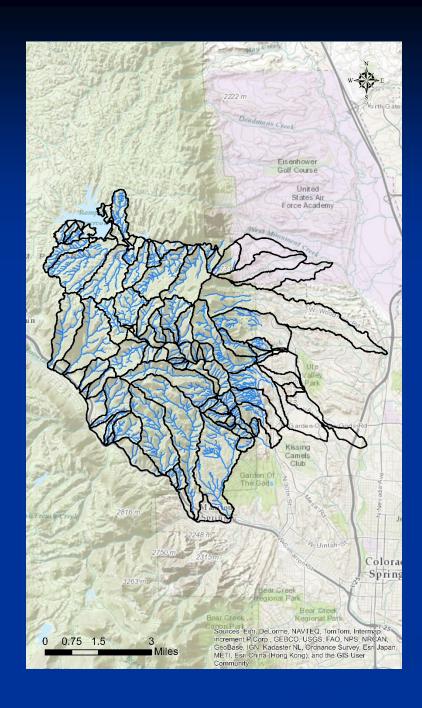
- Hydrology change
- Hillslope erosional processes/sediment supply
- Sediment from roads and trails
- Stream channel processes

WARSSS

Portions of four major watersheds exist within the fire perimeter:

- Camp Creek
- Douglas Creek
- Fountain Creek
- Monument Creek





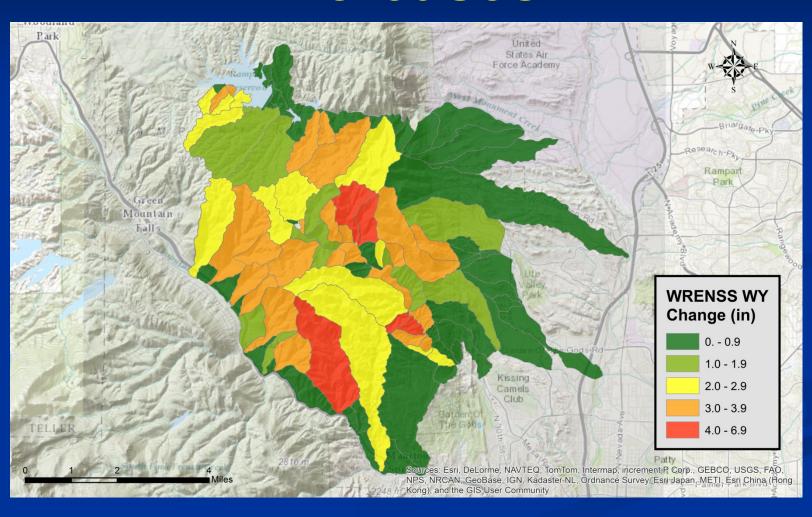
Major watersheds delineated into 89 Subwatersheds

≈237 miles of stream channel

Change in Hydrologic Response Flood Response to moderate storms

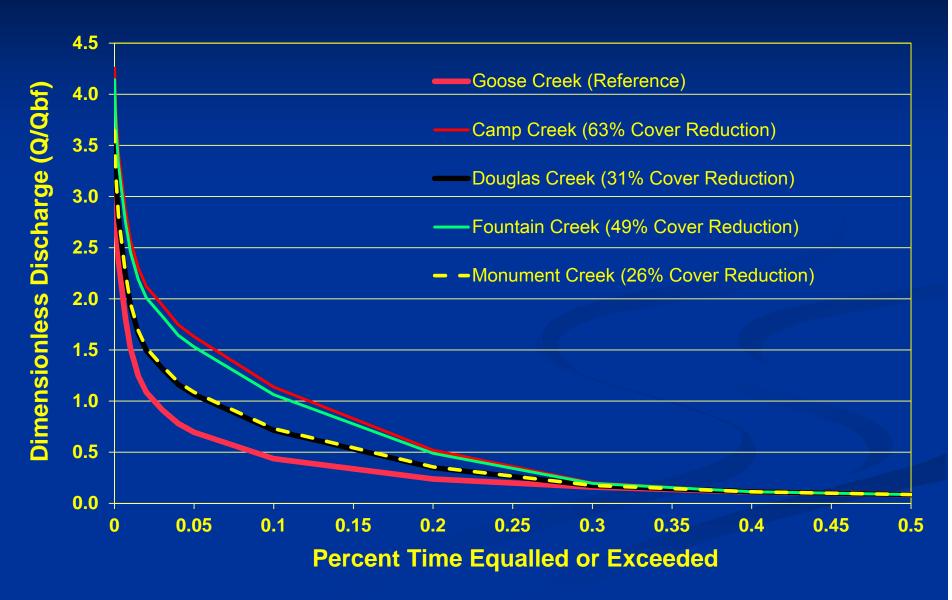


Average Annual Water Yield Increases

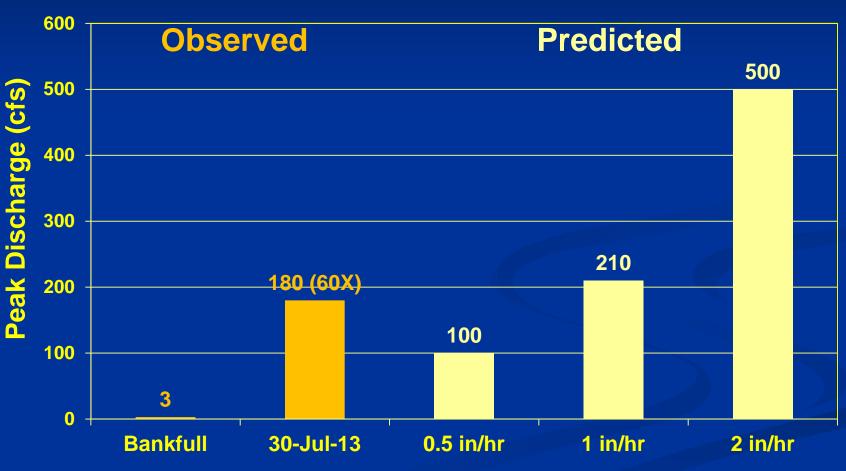


Hydrology: Streamflow Increases

Dimensionless Flow Duration Curves



Change in Hydrologic Response Flood Peaks: Northfield Gulch



USGS, Bob Jarrett, 1996-2011 Burned Area Flood Data For 0.5 sq. mi., Rainfall threshold ≈ 0.25 in in 30 minutes

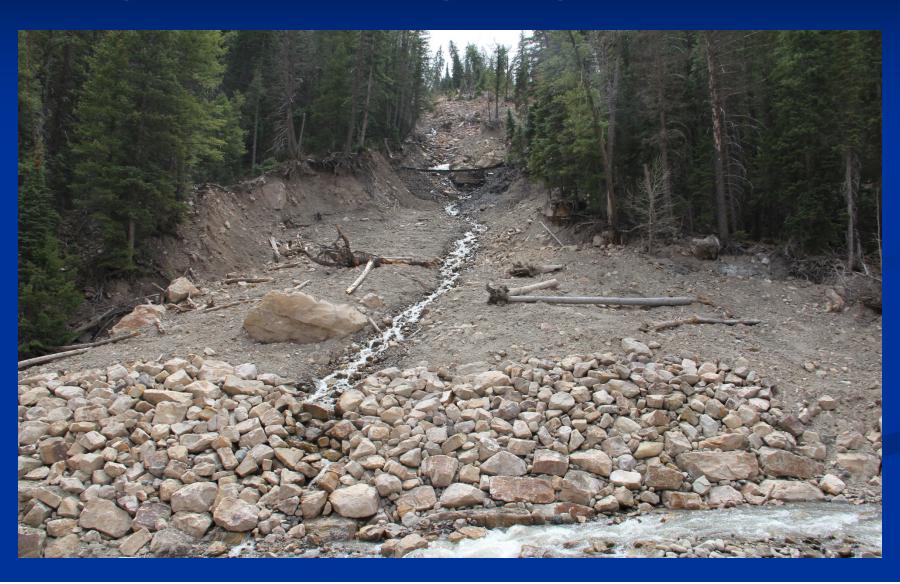
Hydrology: Streamflow Changes

Effects of increased flows

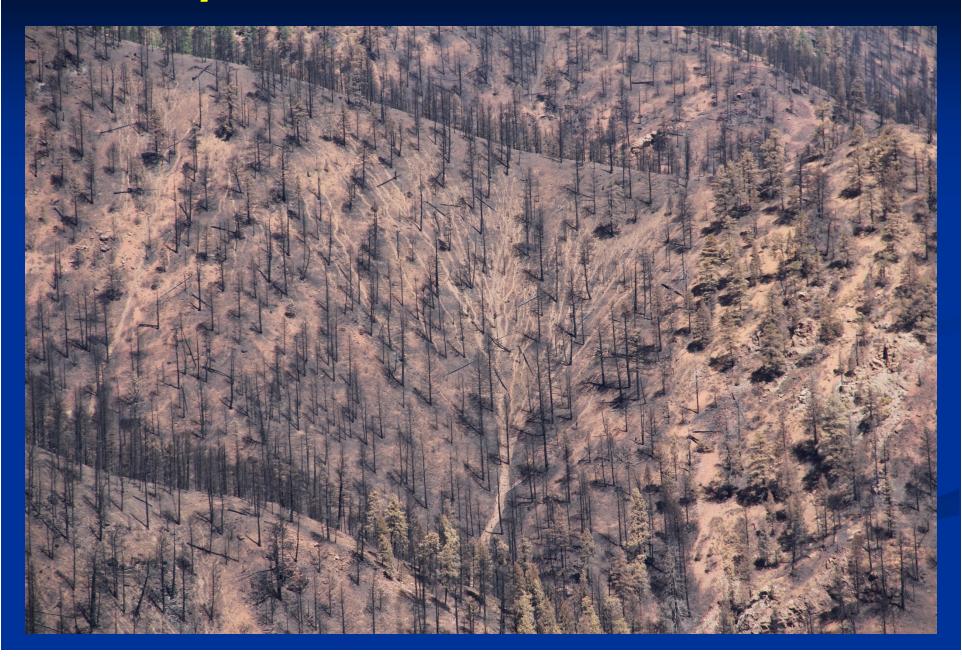




Debris Avalanche-Trib. To Coal Basin Cr.. Colorado

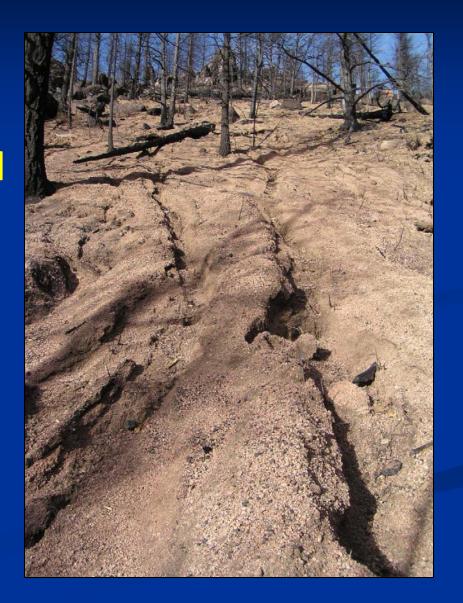


Hillslope Processes: Surface Erosion



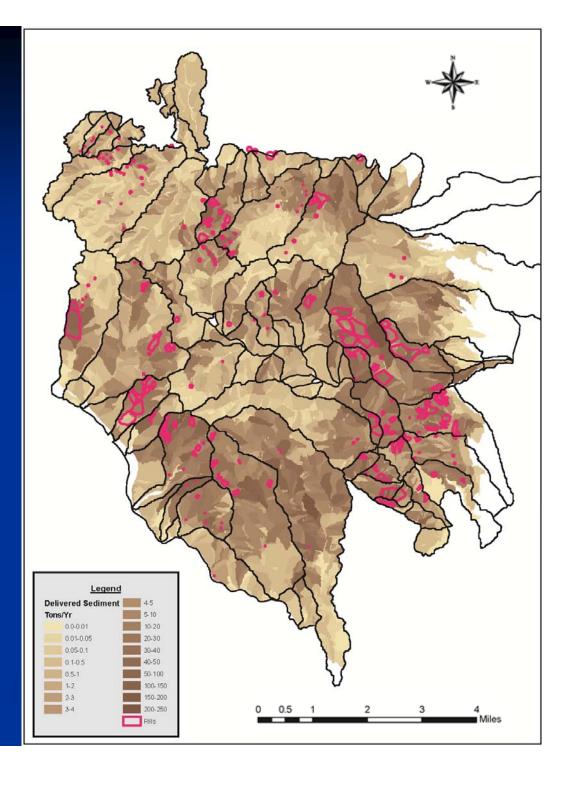
Hillslope Surface Erosion

- Account for 18,085
 tons/yr of sediment
 (35% of total introduced sediment)
 - > Rills
 - > Lack of Ground Cover

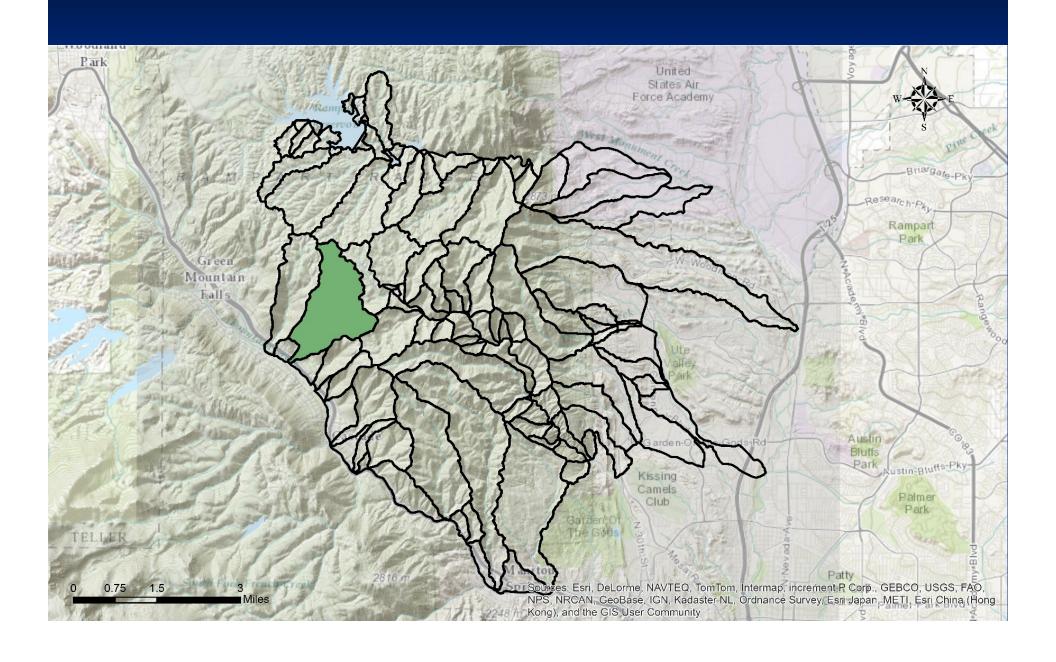


Distribution of Delivered Sediment from Hillslopes and Rill Location

- Fountain Creek 7,303 tons/yr
 40%
- 2. Camp Creek 4,193 tons/yr24%
- 3. Douglas Creek 4,057 tons/yr22%
- 4. West Monument 2,532 tons/yr14%

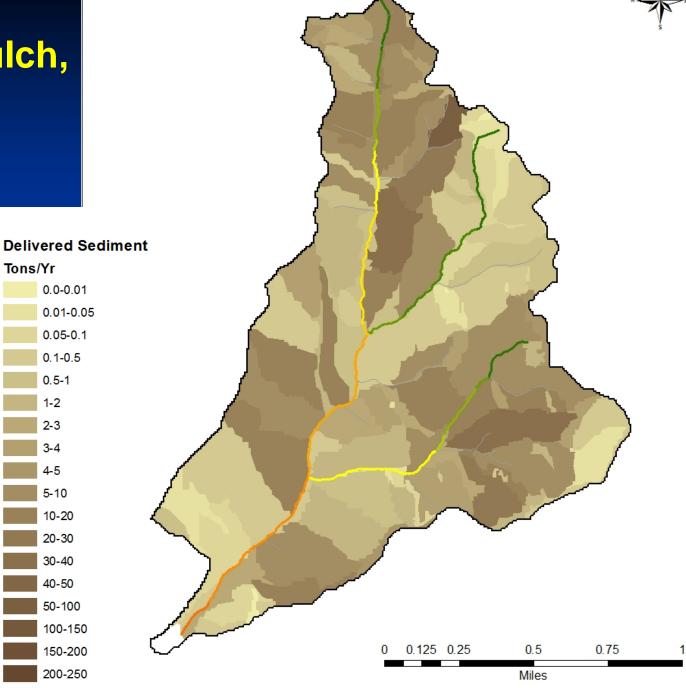


Focus on Wellington Gulch, FC-010



Wellington Gulch, FC-010,

625 tons/yr (18%) Total Delivered Sediment from Hillslopes



Predicted Debris Flows in Wellington Gulch

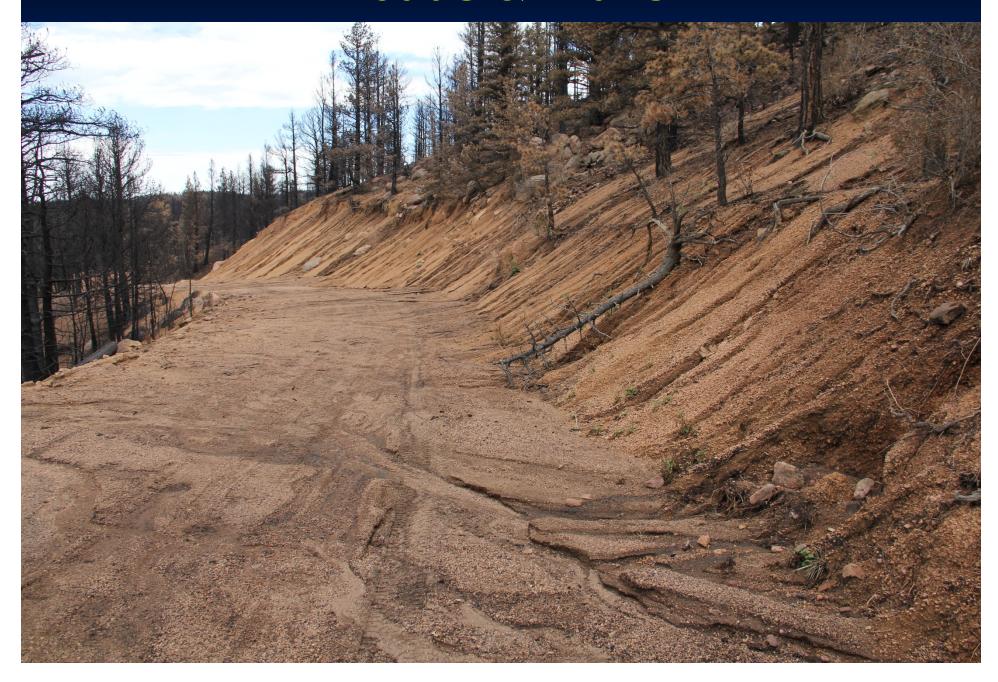
Volume of Debris Flow in Wellington Gulch (tons)



Probability of Debris Flow in Wellington Gulch (%)



Roads & Trails



Roads & Trails

- Account for 2,035
 tons/yr of Sediment (4%
 of Total Introduced
 Sediment)
 - > Gravel Roads
 - > Dirt Roads
 - > Paved Roads
 - > Trails



Roads & Trails

- 1. Camp Creek
 - 751 tons/yr
 - 37% of Total
- 2. Fountain Creek
 - 619 tons/yr
 - 30% of Total
- 3. West Monument
 - 429 tons/yr
 - 21% of Total
- 4. Douglas Creek
 - 236 tons/yr
 - 12% of Total

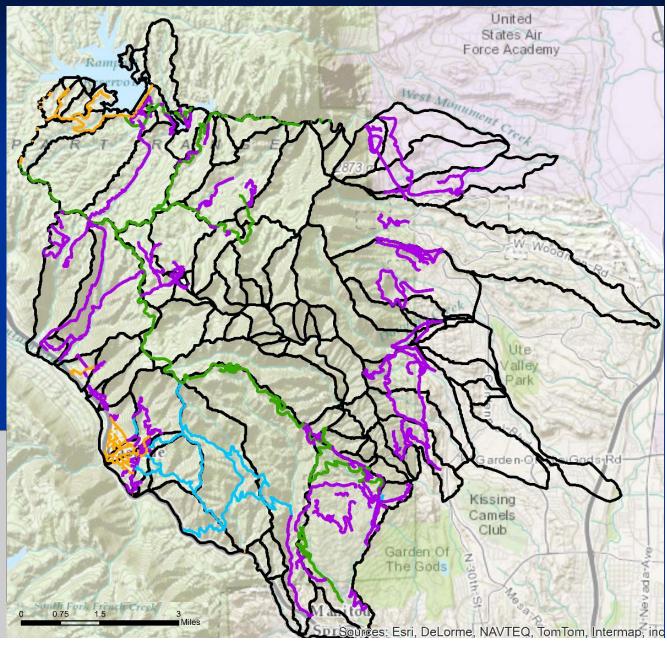


Dirt

Gravel

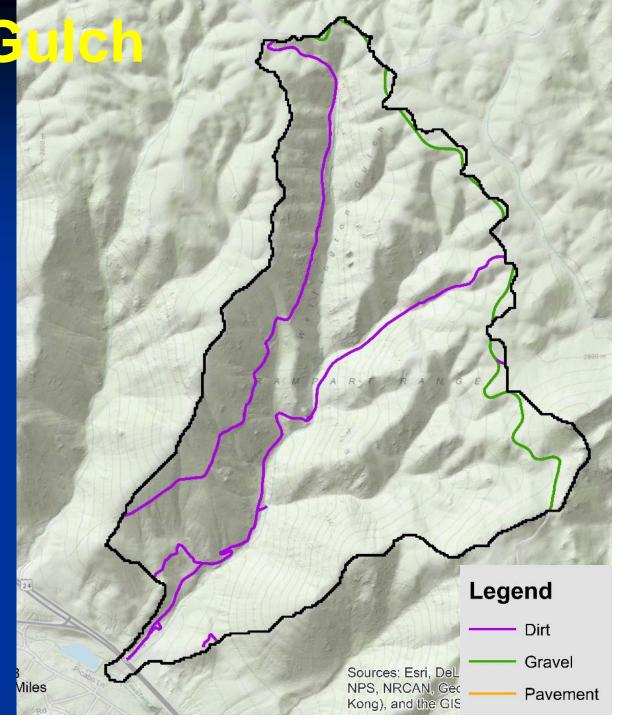
Pavement

Trail



Wellington G Roads

- 395 ton/yr (12%) of Total Introduced Sediment
 - 64% of Total Roads in the Fountain Creek Watershed





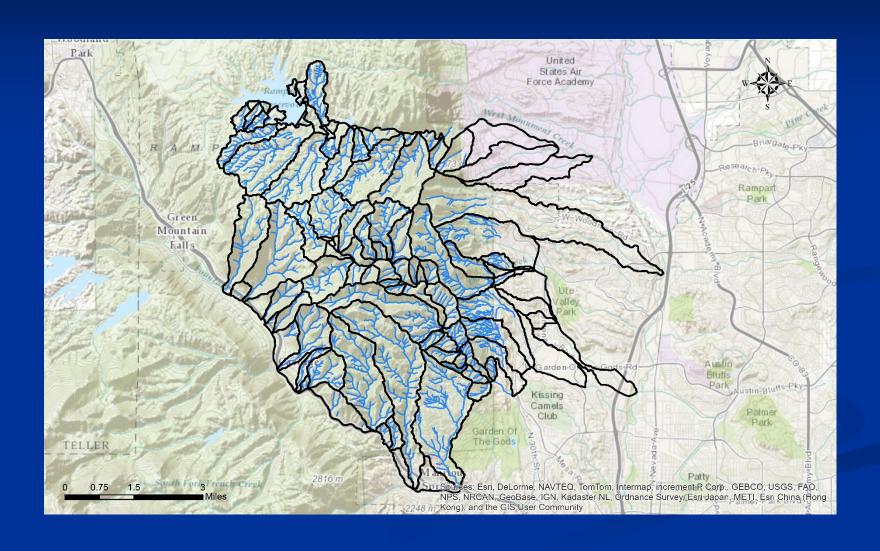
Channel Processes: Detailed Channel Stability Assessment

Representative (Impaired)
Reaches - represent all stream
types and stability conditions
existing in the watersheds

Representative (Impaired) – Stream Type Reach



Evaluated Streams



Channel Source Sediment Streambank Erosion (BANCS Model)

 Accounts for 31,480 tons/yr of sediment from 237 miles of stream (61% of total

introduced sediment)

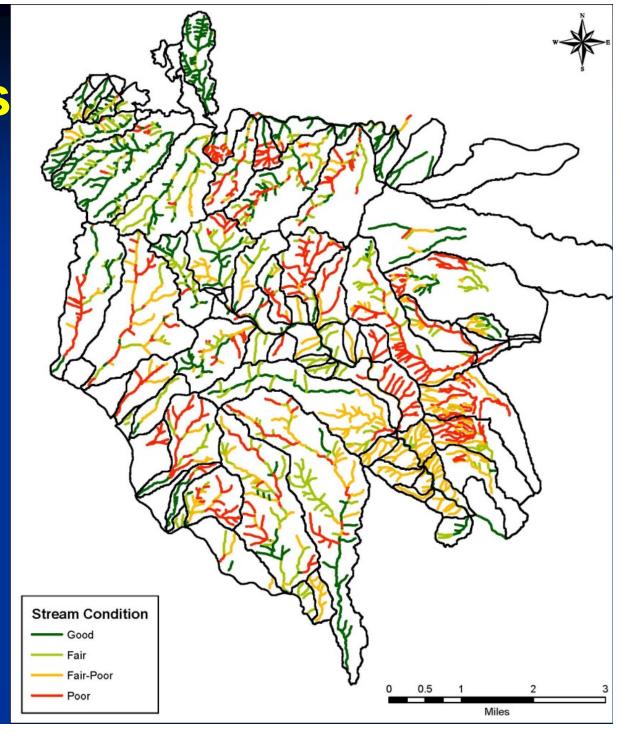




Stream Bank Erosion Rates

1. Fountain Creek

- 11,318 tons/yr
- · 36%
- 2. West Monument
 - 7,183 tons/yr
 - · 23%
- 3. Camp Creek
 - 6,750 tons/yr
 - · 22%
- 4. Douglas Creek
 - 6,107 tons/yr
 - 19%

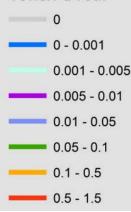


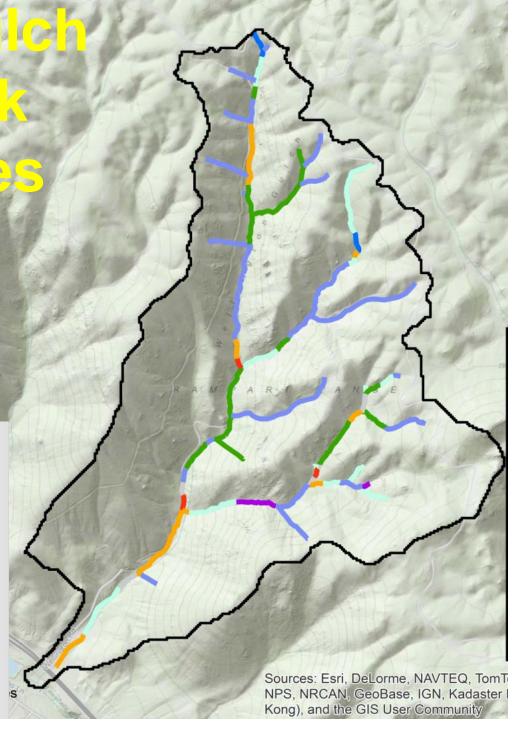
Wellington Guk Stream Bank Erosion Rates

2,399 tons/yr (70%)
 Total Introduced
 Sediment In Wellington
 Gulch

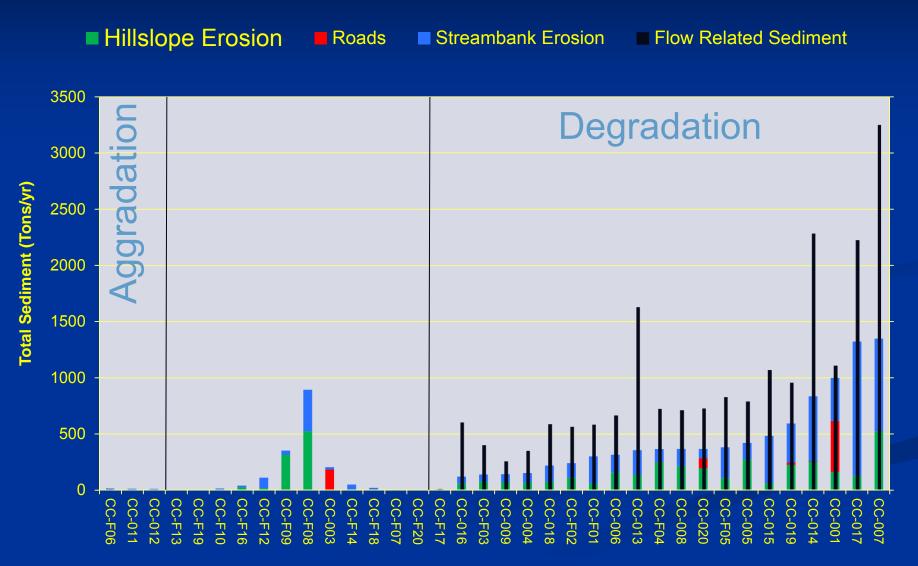
Legend

StreamTypesSorted_011013_Cli4
Tons/Ft/Year



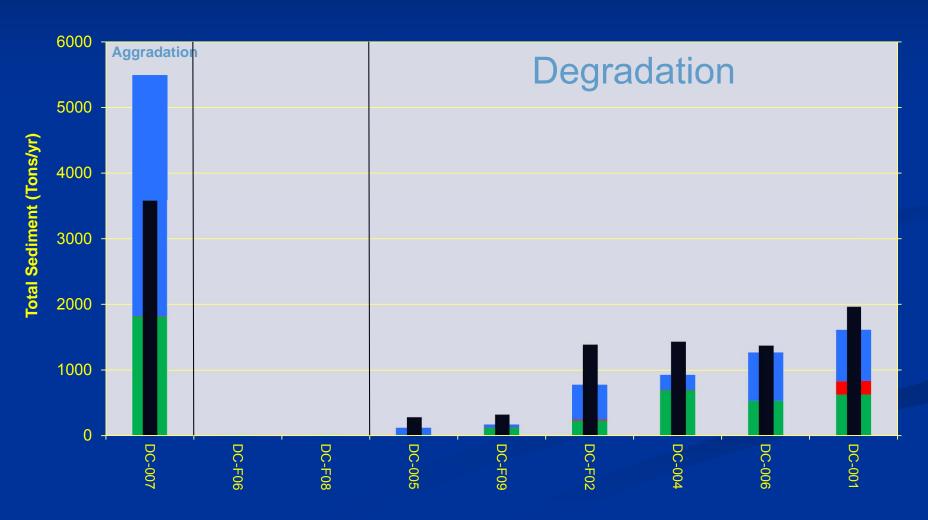


Sediment Summary: Camp Creek



Sediment Summary: Douglas Creek





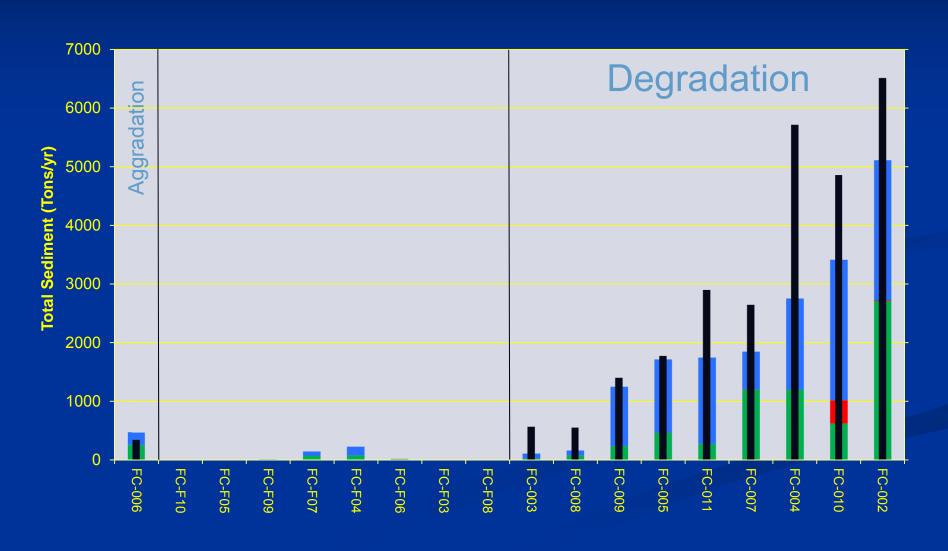
Sediment Summary: Fountain Creek

■ Hillslope Erosion

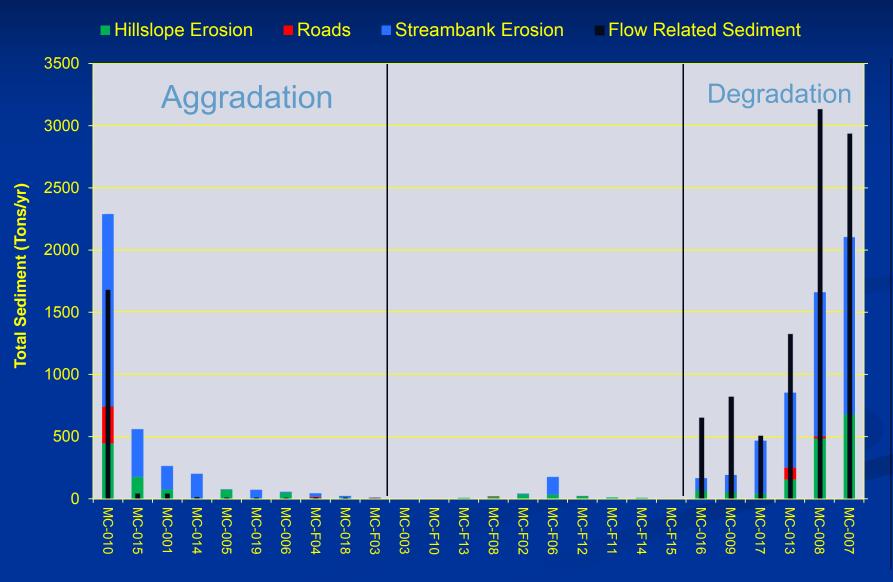
Roads

■ Streambank Erosion

Flow Related Sediment

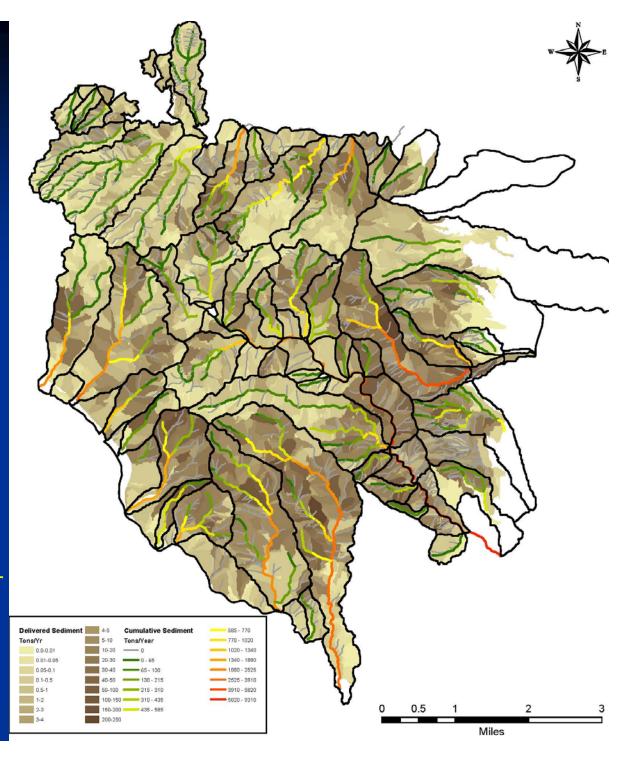


Sediment Summary: West Monument Creek



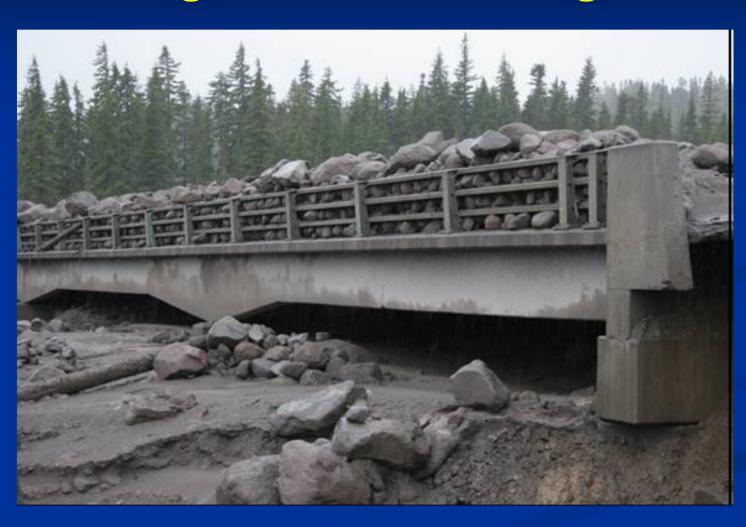
Cumulative Sediment Sources

- Fountain Creek 19,241 tons/yr
 - (37% of Total)
- 2. Camp Creek 11,694 tons/yr
 - (23% of Total)
- 3. Douglas Creek 10,401 tons/yr
 - (20% of Total)
- 4. West Monument 10,143 tons/yr
 - (20% of Total)



What are the consequences of increased sediment supply? Won't the floods "flush" the sediment?

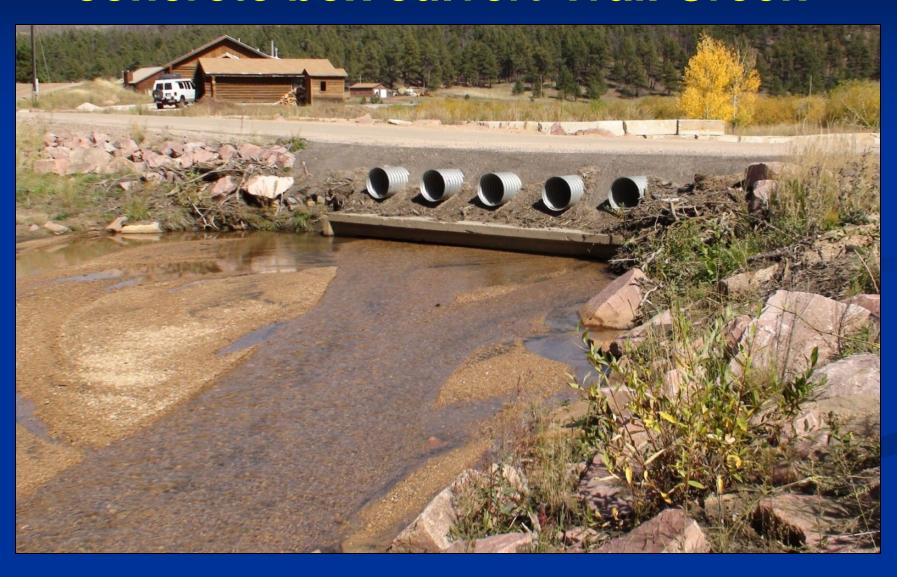
Flood debris/aggradation under and over bridge-White River, Oregon



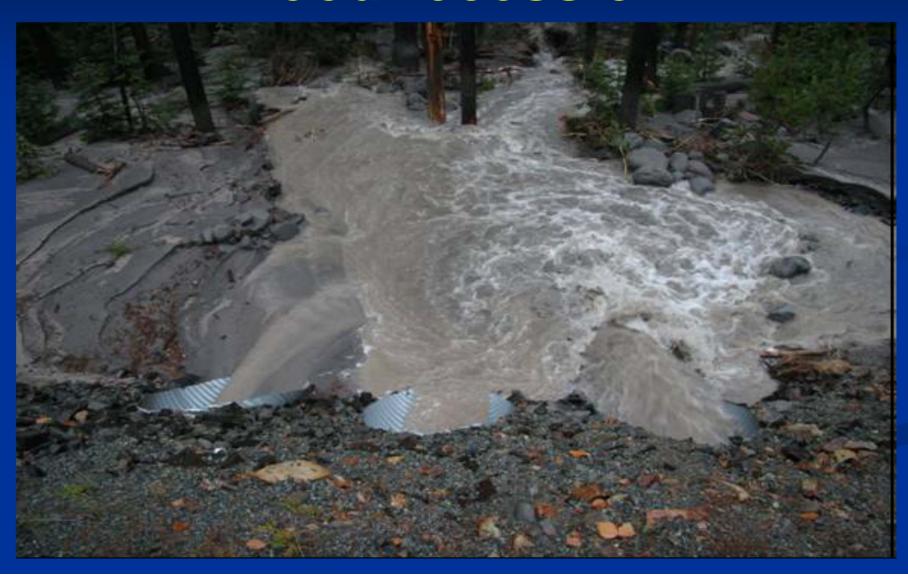
Aggradation of Coal Basin Creek under bridge, causing loss of flood capacity



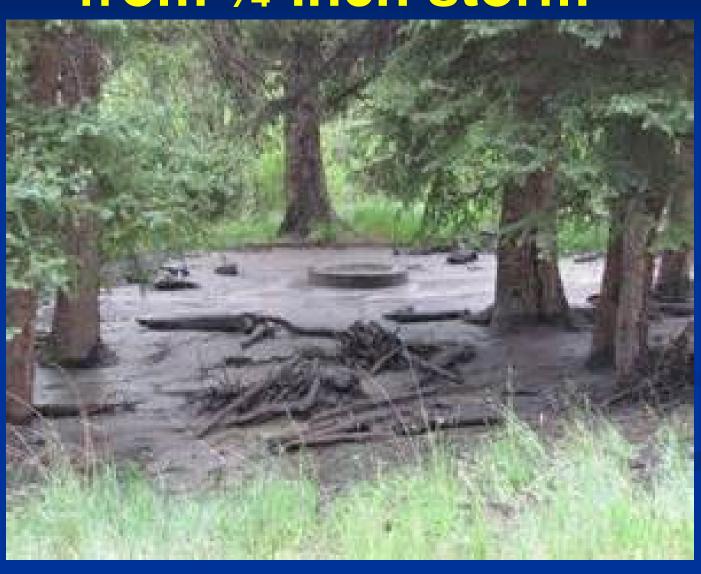
5.8 ft. of sediment deposition in concrete box culvert-Trail Creek



Aggradation of channel on flood recession



Excess sediment deposition from 1/4 inch storm



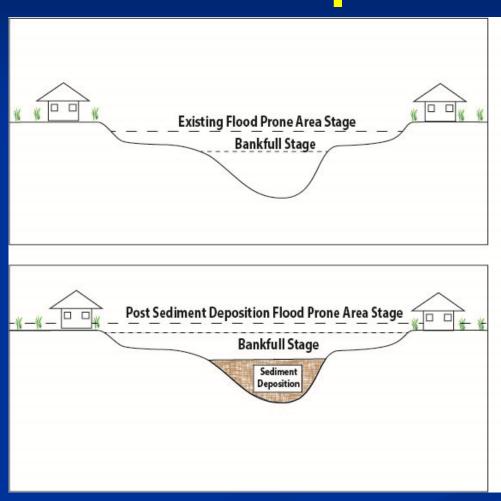
Channel aggradation during flood adding to existing flood risks



Channel Process Impacts/Consequences

- Increased flood stage due to excess sediment
- Loss of riparian vegetation and flow resistance
- Land loss / property damage due to streambank erosion and lateral adjustment
- Long term instability and loss of function

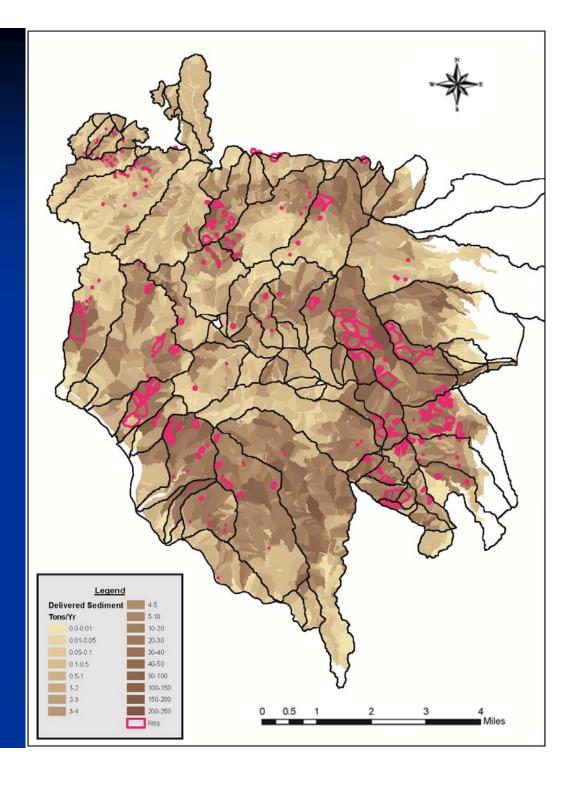
Flood stage change due to sediment deposition



The following questions are addressed with this restoration master plan:

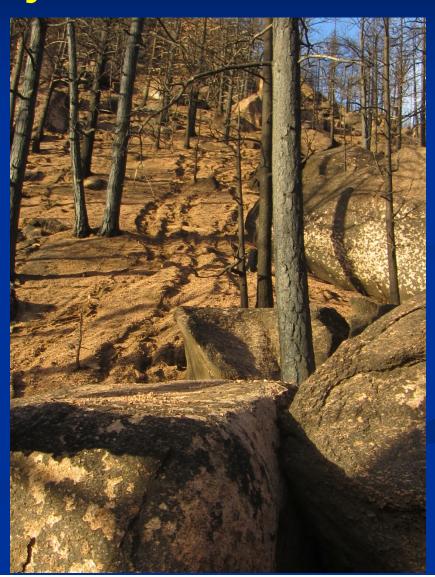
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- 6. When can we start?

Distribution of Delivered Sediment from Hillslopes and Rill Location



Design Solutions: Hillslope Objectives

- Increase time of concentration (increase infiltration)
- Reduce surface erosion processes:
 - Raindrop impact
 - Particle detachment
 - Overland flow
- Reduce sediment delivery



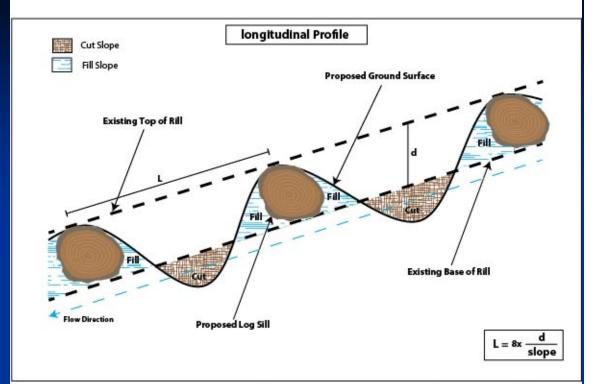
Design Solutions:

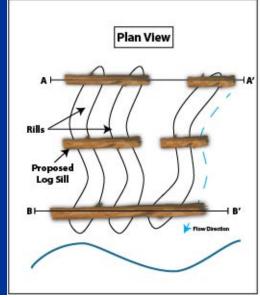
Hillslope-Increase ground cover add surface roughness, seed and mulch and discontinuously plug rills

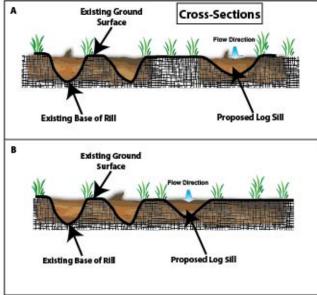


Design Solutions: Hillslope

Log Sills for Rills

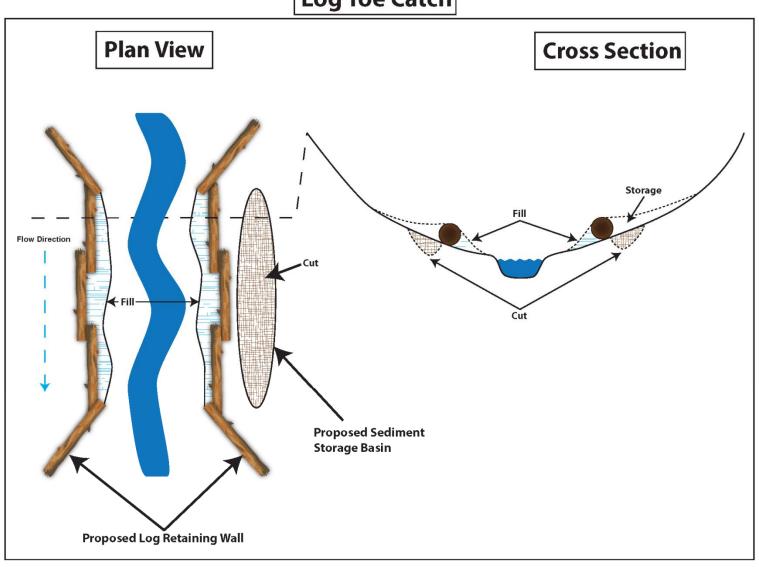






Design Solutions: Hillslope

Log Toe Catch



Design Solutions: Hillslope Erosion

Hillslope Issue	Mitigation Techniques	Hand or Mechanical	Surface Roghness	Surface Protection	Flow Dispersion	Grade Control
	Sills	Н			✓	✓
Rills	Plugs	Н	✓		✓	✓
	Discontinuity	Н			✓	
Ground	Mulch	H or M	✓	✓	✓	
	Seeding	H or M	✓	✓	✓	
Cover	Tree Plugs	Н	✓	✓	✓	
Direct	Toe Catch	H or M			✓	✓
Routing	Bankfull Bench	M			✓	✓

Design Objectives: Roads

- Reduce sediment delivery from roads
- Reduce
 streamflow
 increases due
 to roads

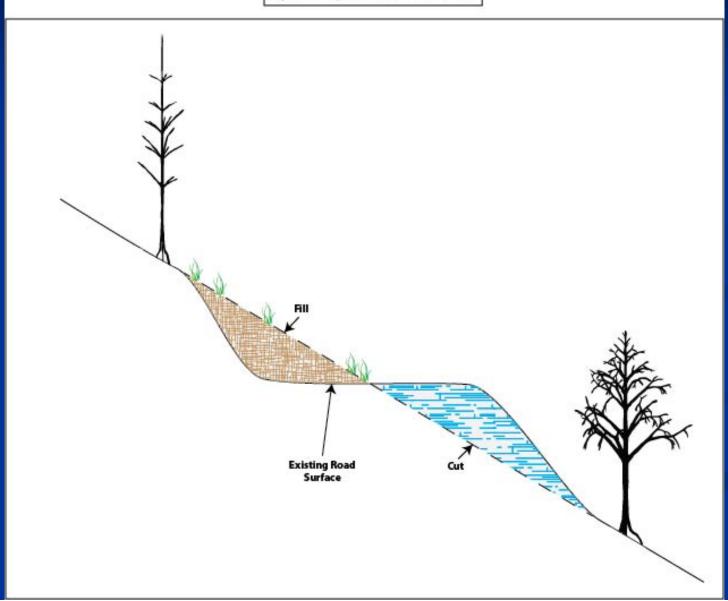


Design Solutions: Roads

- Drain roads frequently
- Dissipate flow below culverts
- Stabilize conveyance channels below road drainages
- Address unauthorized road usage
- Relocate high risk roads
- Stabilize decommissioned roads

Design Solutions: Roads

Hydrologic Road Closures



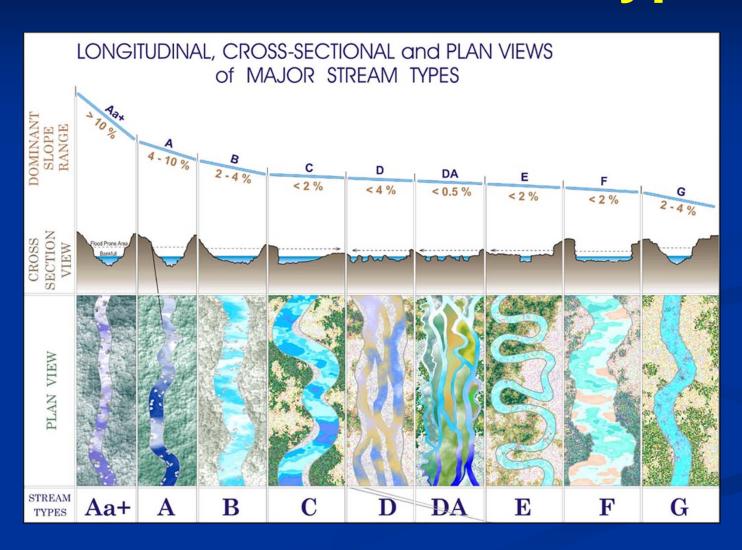
Channel Restoration Process Objectives:

- Increase natural sediment storage
- Reduce streambank erosion
- Reduce channel incision
- Dampen flood peaks
- Re-establish riparian function
- Re-establish channel connectivity
- Establish a natural stable channel

Channel Restoration Process

- Determine the natural, stable stream type appropriate for the valley type/landform
- Develop design scenarios based on existing stream type, condition and valley parameters
- Utilize native materials for stabilization
- Disperse flow energy by re-connecting incised channels to floodplains/alluvial fans
- Provide sediment storage where appropriate

Broad Level Stream Types



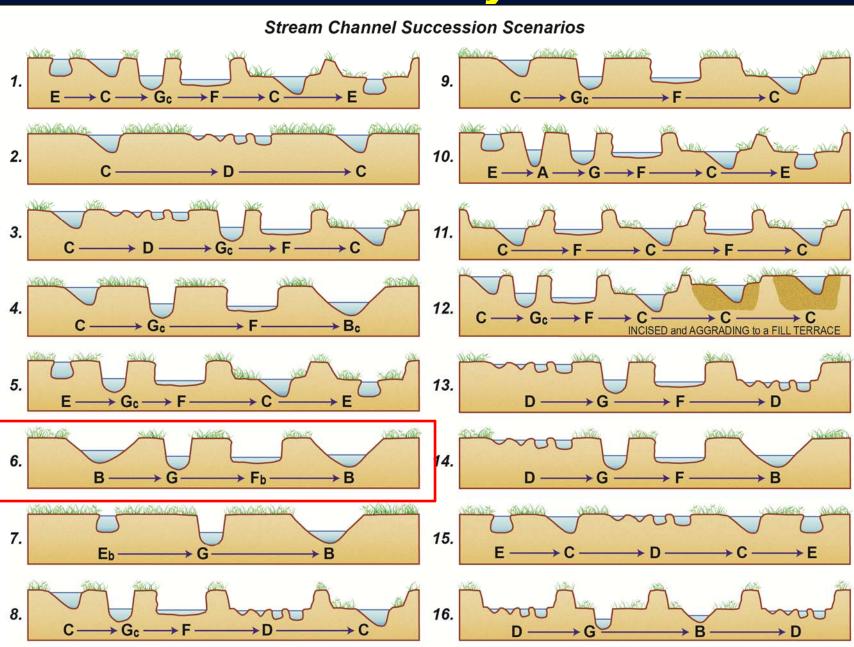
Channel Processes: Detailed Channel Stability Assessment

 Reference (Stable) Reaches - Used for departure analysis of impaired reaches and in natural channel design process

Reference Reach – B4 Stream Type- West Monument Creek



Central Tendency of Rivers:









Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

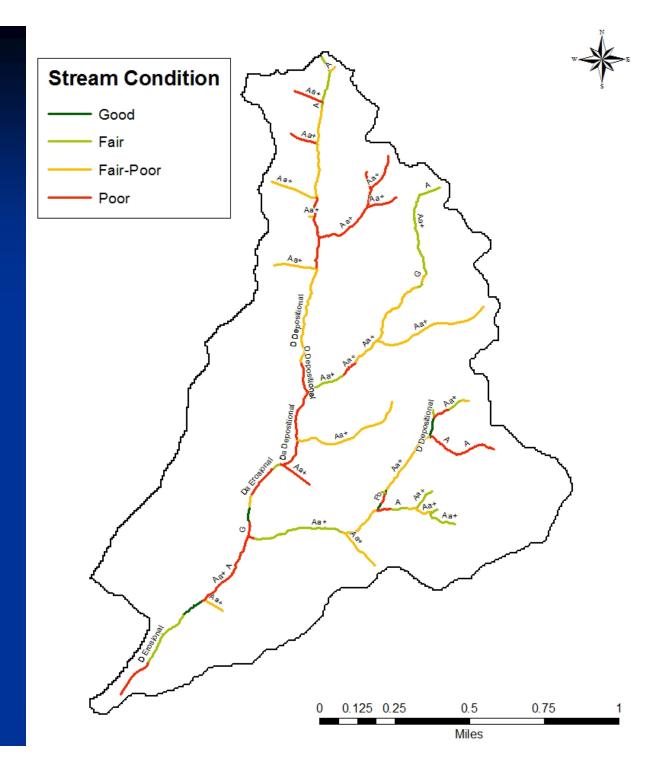
Developed Eight Typical Design Scenarios:
Representative of the conditions present in watershed

Typical Design Scenarios						
Existing, Impaired Stream Type		Existing Condition	Proposed, Stable Stream Type	Valley Type (VT)		
1.	D4	Poor	C4	VIII		
2.	F4	Poor	B4c	II, III, VIIIa,b		
3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c		
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII		
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b		
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b		

Design Scenario Components:

- General Description & Morphological Data
- Bankfull Discharge, Area & Velocity
- Plan View Alignment
- Cross-Section Dimensions
- Longitudinal Profile
- Structures & Riparian Vegetation
- Cut & Fill Computations
- Streambank Erosion
- Flow-Related Sediment & Competence

Stream Type and Condition for Wellington Gulch



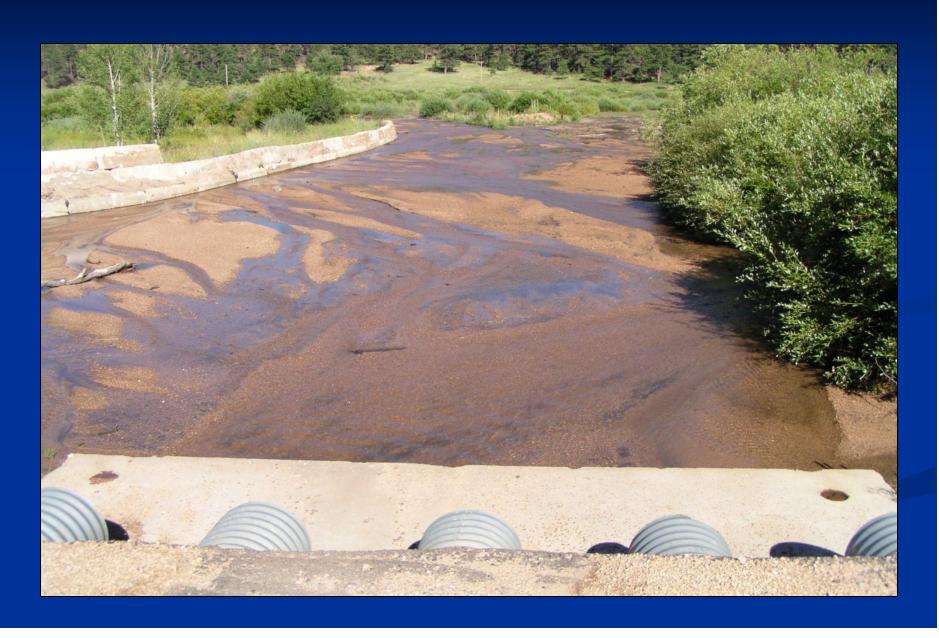
Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

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3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c		
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII		
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b		
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b		

Design Scenario 1: D4 To C4



Design Scenario 1: D4 To C4



Design Solutions: Channel Processes

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4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c	
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII	
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b	
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b	

Design Scenario 2: F4 To B4c



Design Scenario 2: F4 To B4c



Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

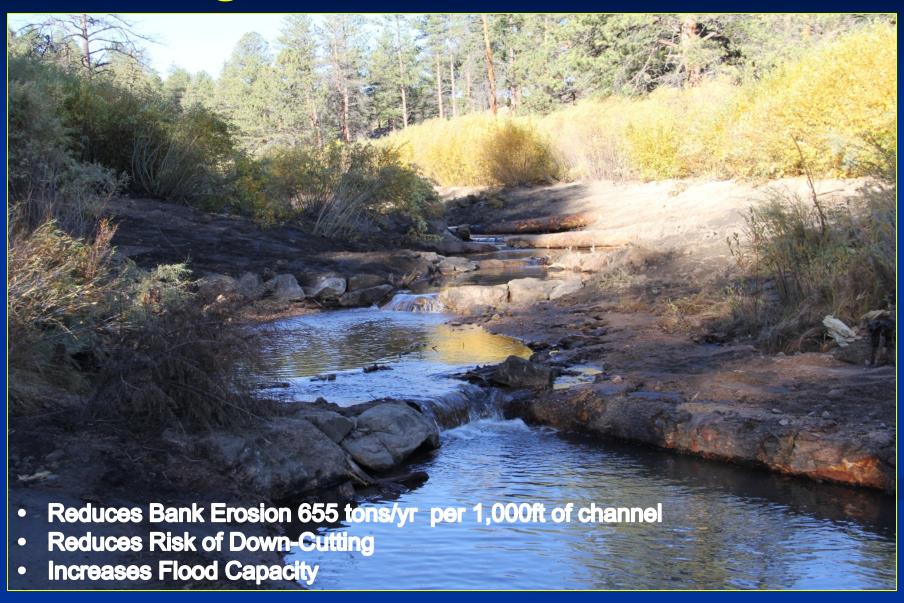
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3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c	
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII	
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b	
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b	

Design Scenario 3: G4 To B4



Design Scenario 3: G4 To B4



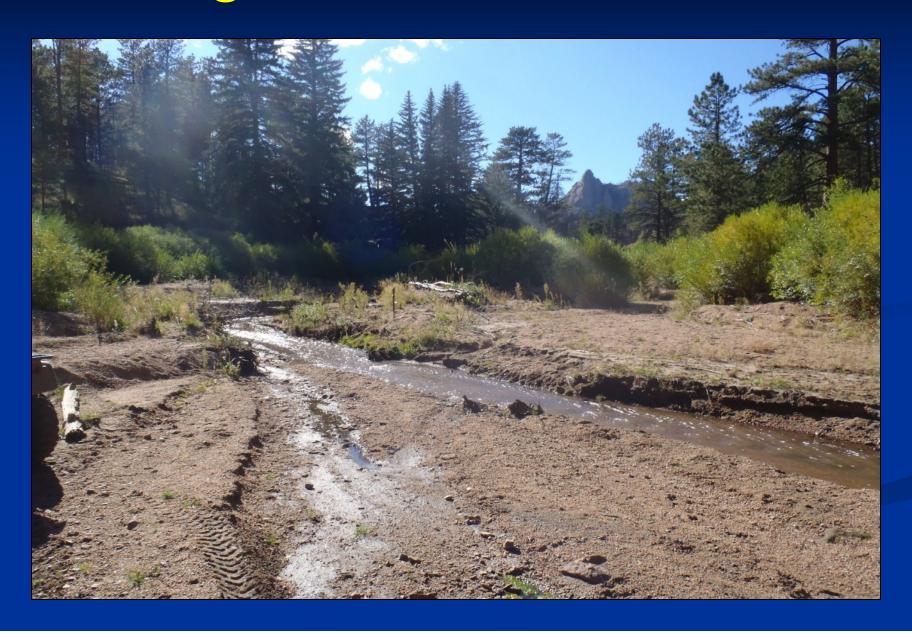
Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

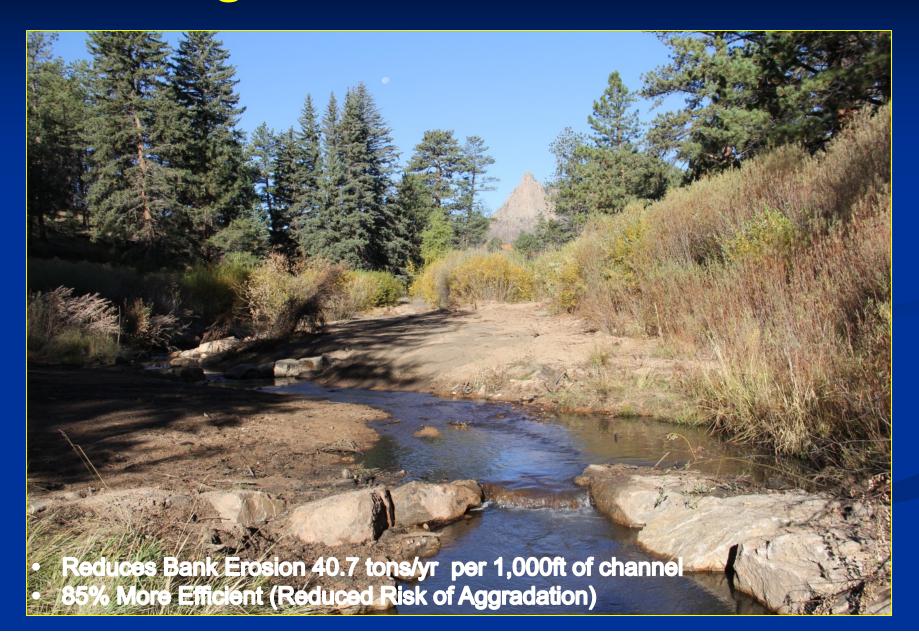
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5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII	
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8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b	

Design Scenario 4: C4 To C4



Design Scenario 4: C4 To C4



Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

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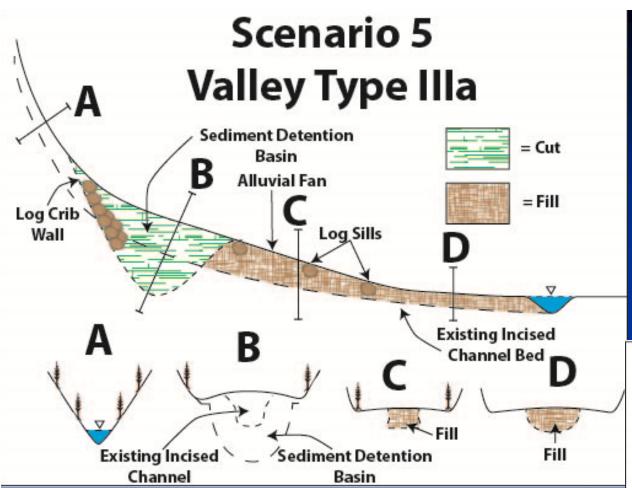
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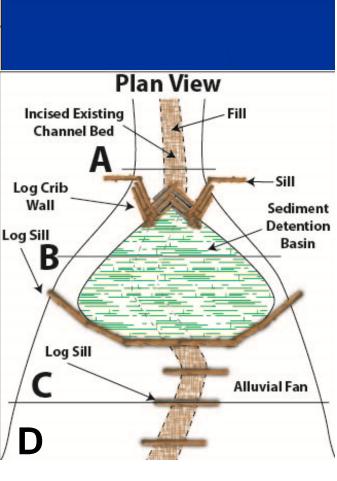


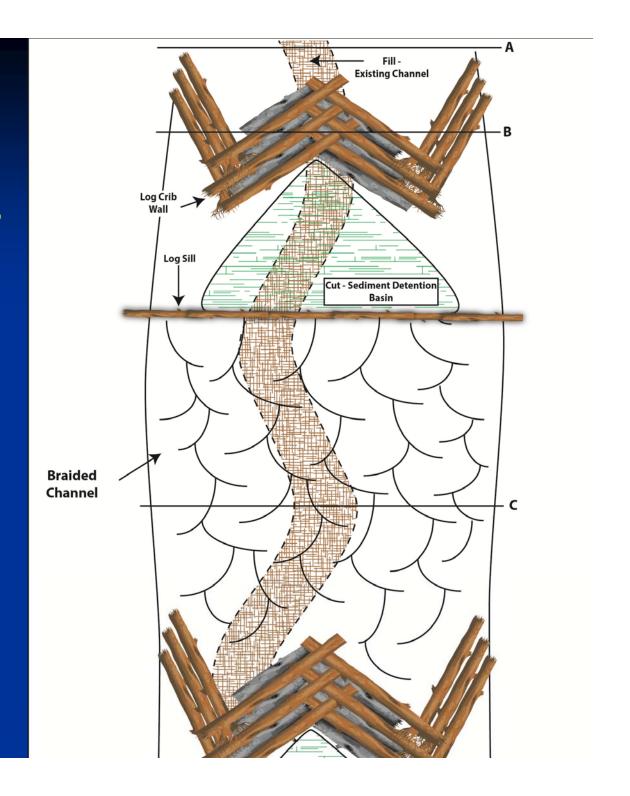




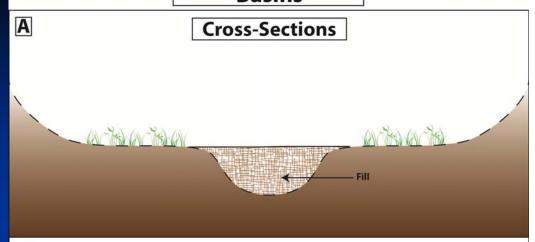


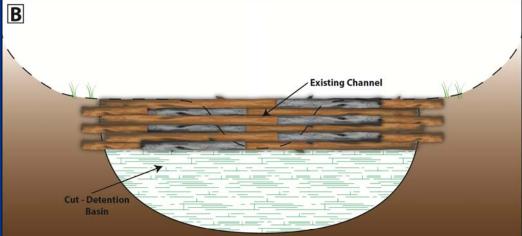


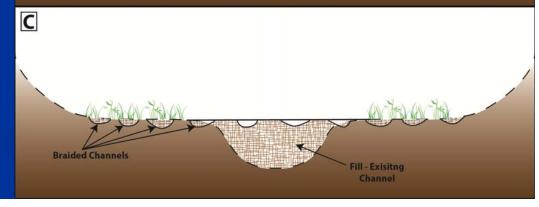




In-Line Detention Basins











Sediment detention basin-Trail Creek watershed



Alluvial fan reconnection with gully fill to disperse flows, induce infiltration and log placement to prevent rill development



Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

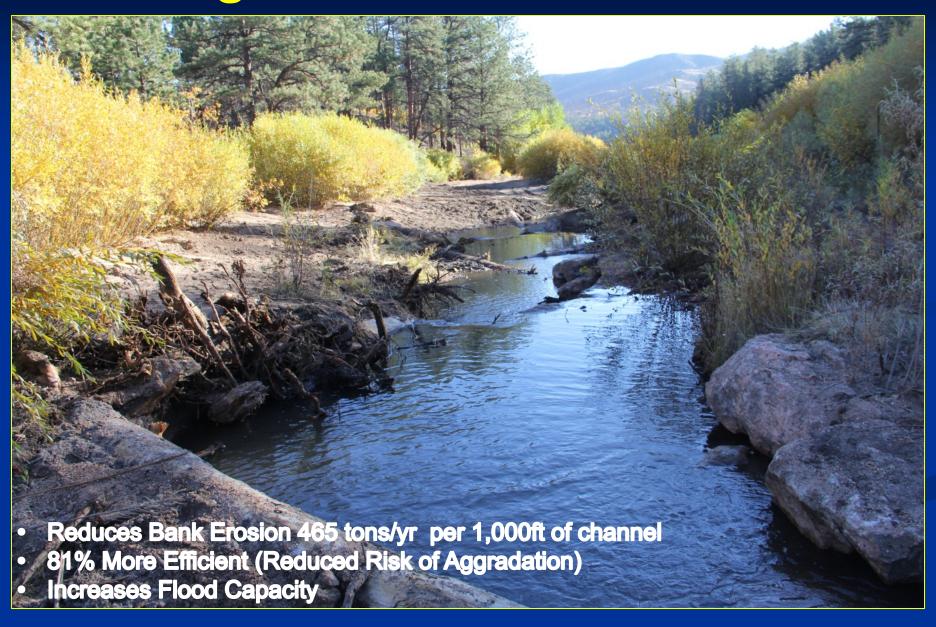
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2.	F4	Poor	B4c	II, III, VIIIa,b	
3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c	
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII	
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b	
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b	

Design Scenario 6: F4b To B4



Design Scenario 6: F4b To B4



Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

Developed *Eight Typical Design Scenarios*:
Representative of the conditions present in watershed

Typical Design Scenarios						
Exi	Existing, Impaired Stream Type Condition Type Proposed, Stable Stream Type Valley Type (VT)					
1.	D4	Poor	C4	VIII		
2.	F4	Poor	B4c	II, III, VIIIa,b		
3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c		
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII		
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b		
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b		
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b		

Design Scenario 7: A poor To A good



Design Scenario 7: A poor To A good



Mechanical

Design Solutions: Channel Processes

Developed Eight Typical Design Scenarios:
Representative of the conditions present in watershed

	Typical Design Scenarios				
Exi	sting, Impaired Stream Type	Existing Condition	Proposed, Stable Stream Type	Valley Type (VT)	
1.	D4	Poor	C4	VIII	
2.	F4	Poor	B4c	II, III, VIIIa,b	
3.	G4	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
4.	C4	Poor	C4	VIIIa,b,c	
5.	A4, Aa+, Fb F4 and G4	Poor	D4 / D4a	II, III, VIII	
6.	F4b	Poor	B4	II, III, VIIIa,b	
7.	A4 or A4a+	Poor	A4 or A4a+	II, III, VIIIa,b	
8.	A4 or Aa+	Poor	B4a	II, IIIa,b, VIIIa,b	

Design Scenario 8: A To Ba

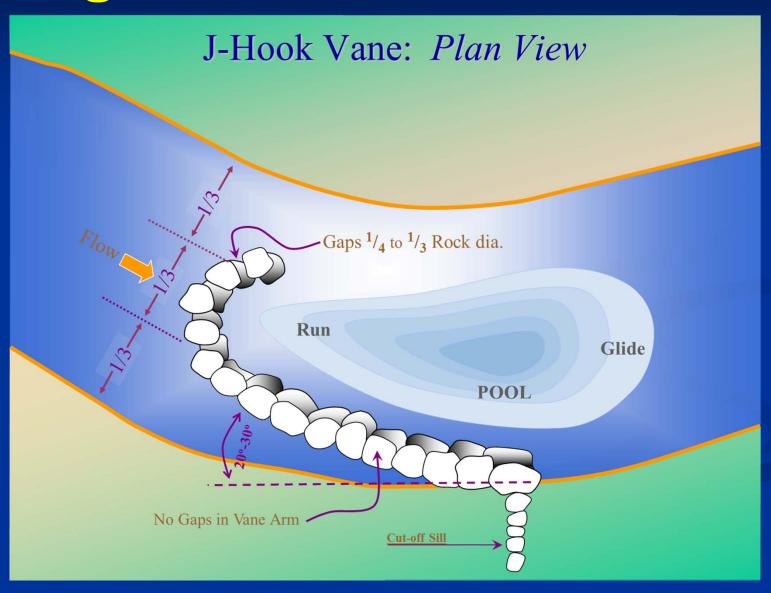


Design Scenario 8: A4 to B4a

- Reduces Bank Erosion 34 tons/yr per 1,000ft of channel
- Prevents Headcuts
- Dissipates Flow Energy



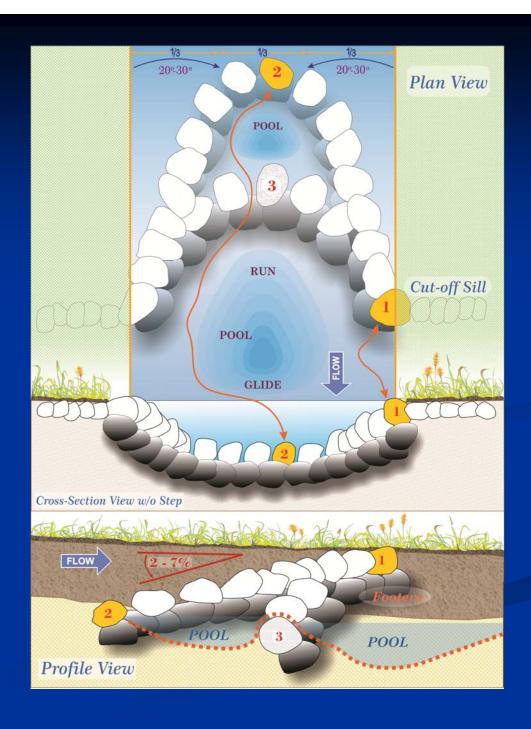
Design Solutions: Structures



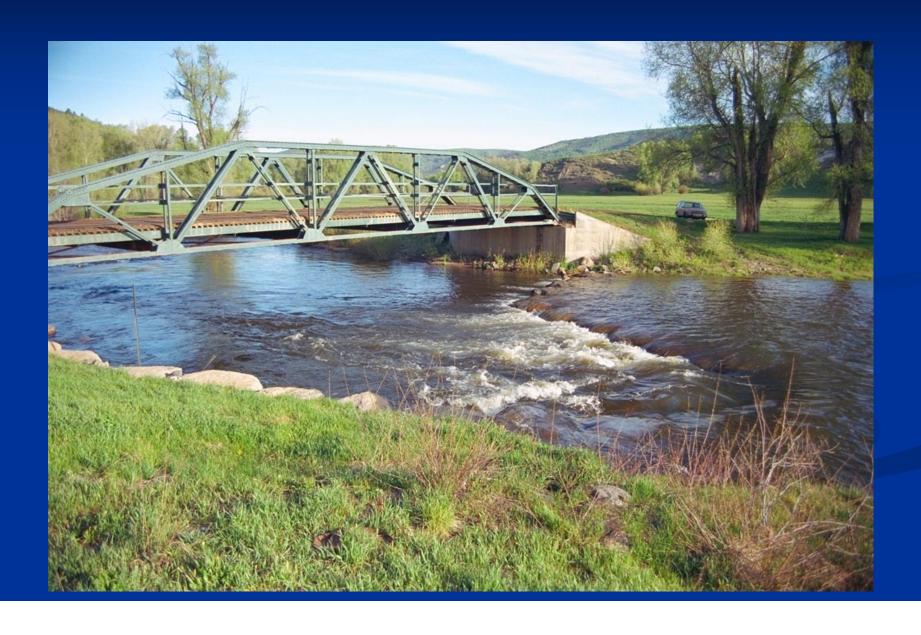
Design Solutions: Structures



Design Solutions: Structures

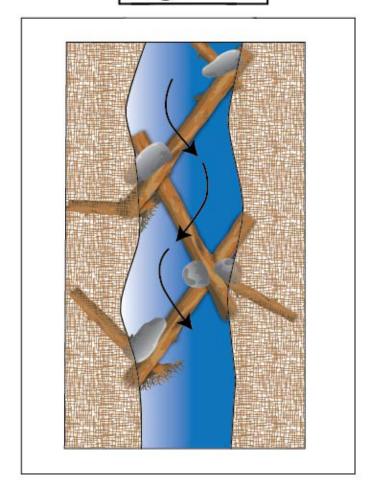


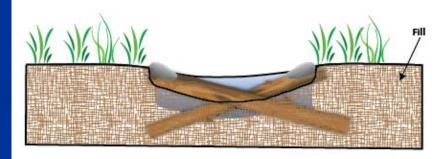
Design Solutions: Structures



Design Solutions: Structures

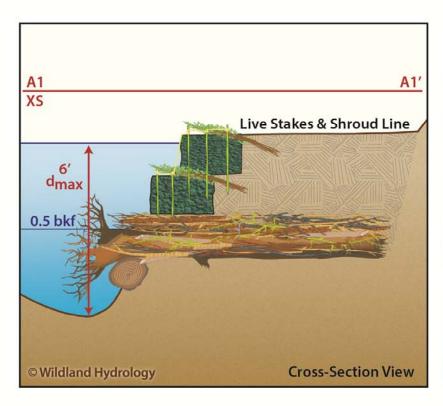
Log Rollers

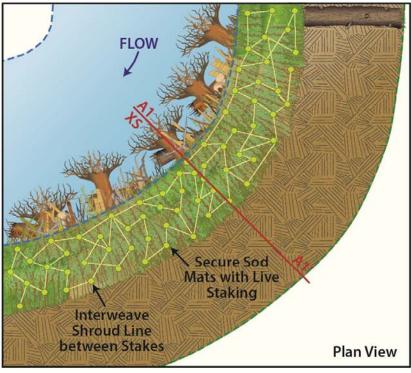




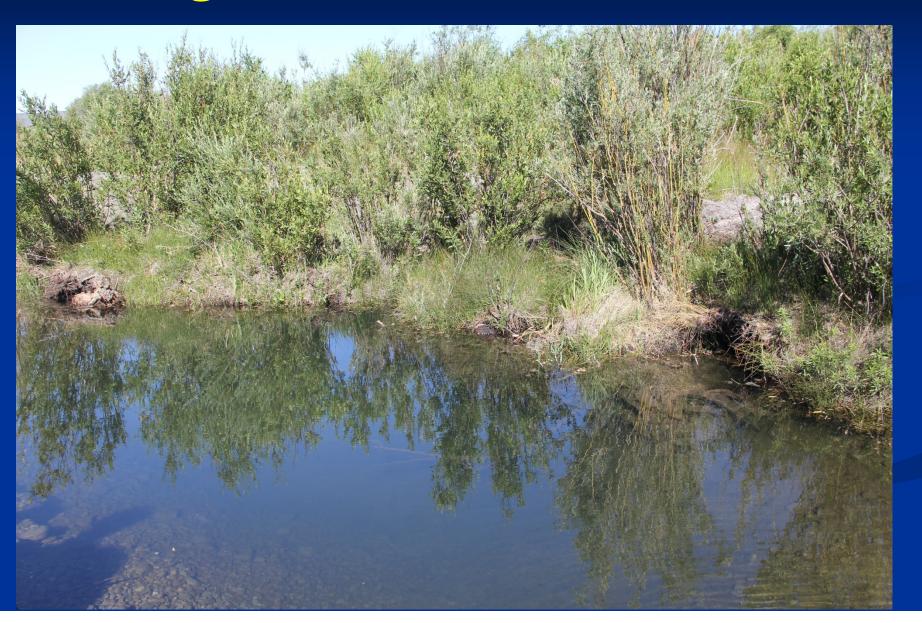


Design Solutions: Structures





Design Solutions: Structures



Design Solutions: Channel Erosion – Mechanical

Structures	Bank Stabilization	Sediment Deposition	Flow Attenuation	Grade Control	Energy Distribution and Dissipation
J-Hook / Cross Vane	✓			✓	✓
Log / Rock Rollers	✓			\checkmark	✓
Toe Wood	✓				✓
Debris Basin *		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cross-Channel Sills *				✓	✓
Converging Rock Clusters				\checkmark	✓

* use only in ephemeral stream systems

Design Solutions: Channel Erosion – Mechanical

Structures	Scenario								
	D4 to C4	F4 to B4	G4 to B4	C4 to C4	F4, G4 or A4 to D4	F4b to B4	A4 to A4		
J-Hook / Cross Vane	√	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Log / Rock Rollers		✓	✓			\checkmark	✓		
Toe Wood	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Debris Basin *					✓				
Cross-Channel Sills *					✓				
Converging Rock Clusters	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
* use only in ephemeral stream systems									

Design Solutions: Channel Erosion – Hand Crews

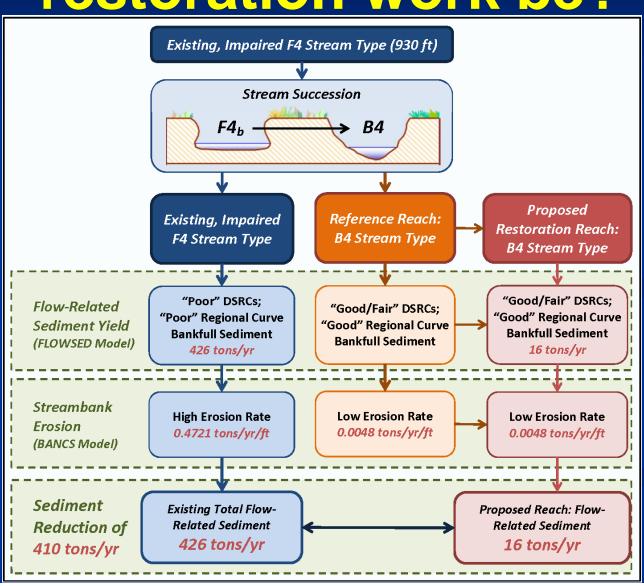
Structures	Bank Stabilization	Sediment Deposition	Flow Attenuation	Grade Control
Cross Channel Sills		✓	√	✓
Gully Plug		√	√	✓
Log Rollers	√			✓
Dissipators		√	✓	√

Conceptual Design Results

The following questions are addressed with this restoration master plan:

- 1. What are the post-fire impacts and potential adverse consequences?
- 2. What can be done to offset these impacts/consequences?
- 3. How effective would this be?
- 4. Where do we start?
- 5. How much will it cost?
- 6. When can we start?

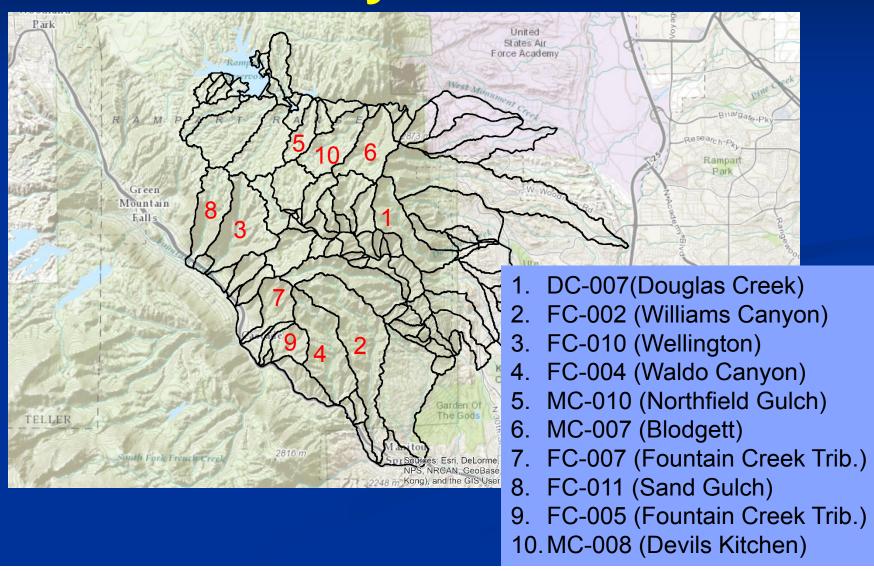
3. How effective can the restoration work be?



The following questions are addressed with this restoration master plan:

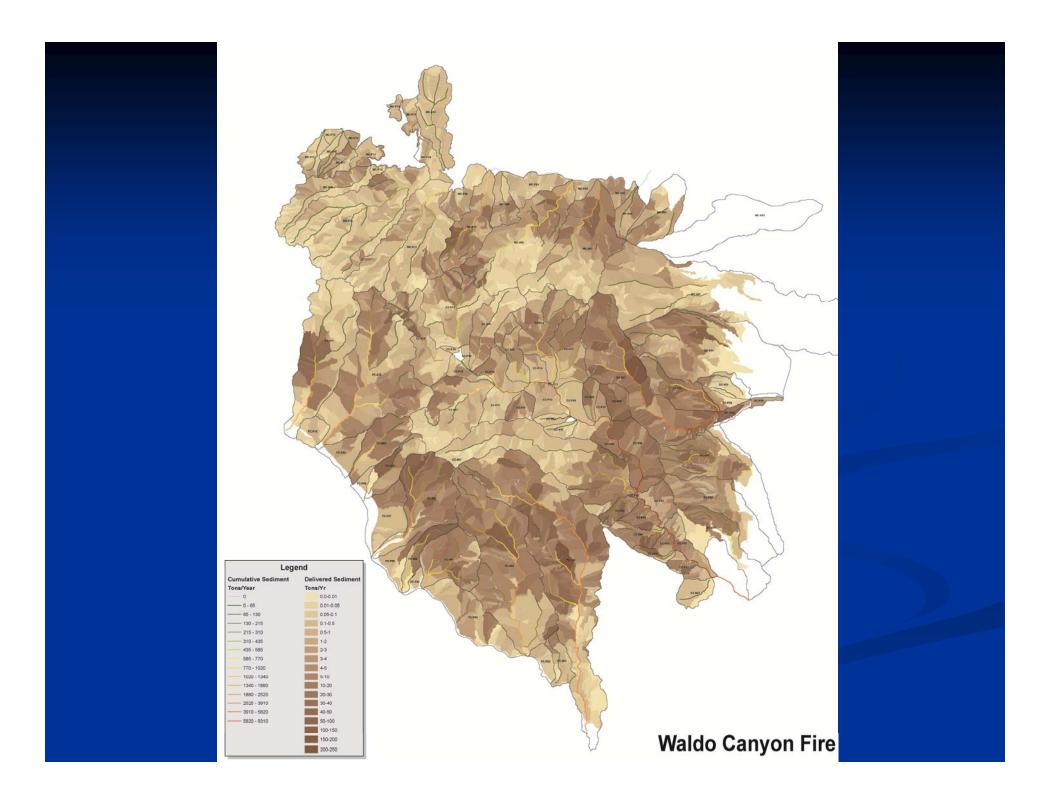
- 1. What are the post-fire impacts and potential adverse consequences?
- 2. What can be done to offset these impacts/consequences?
- 3. How effective would this be?
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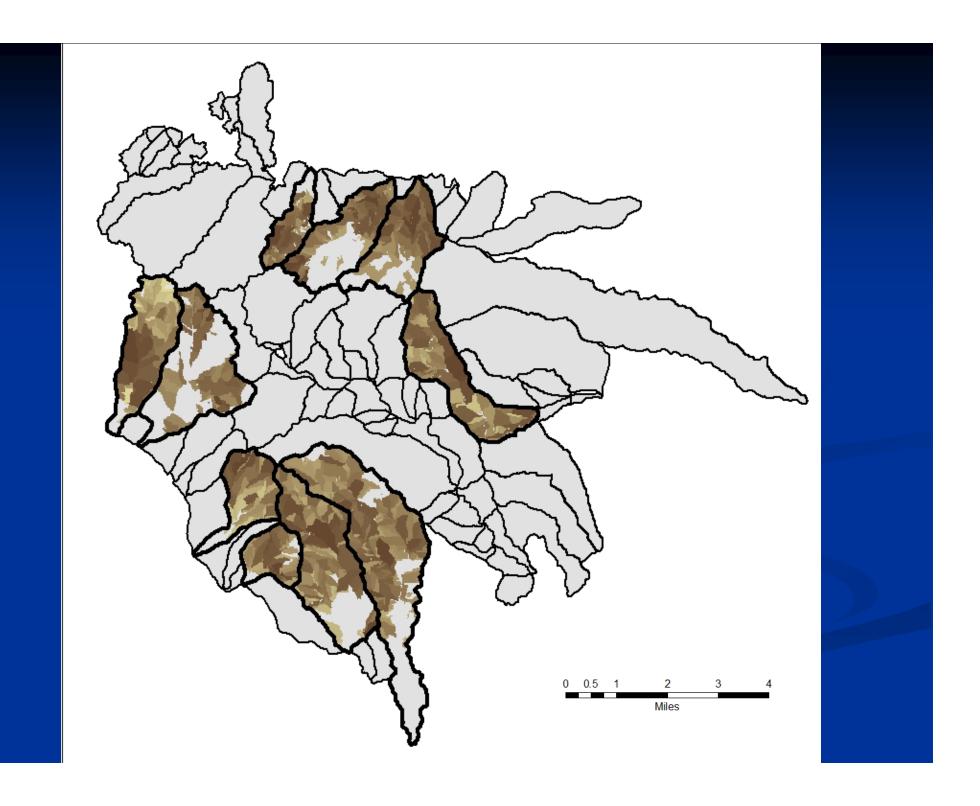
Top Sediment Producing Sub-Watersheds by Erosion Totals



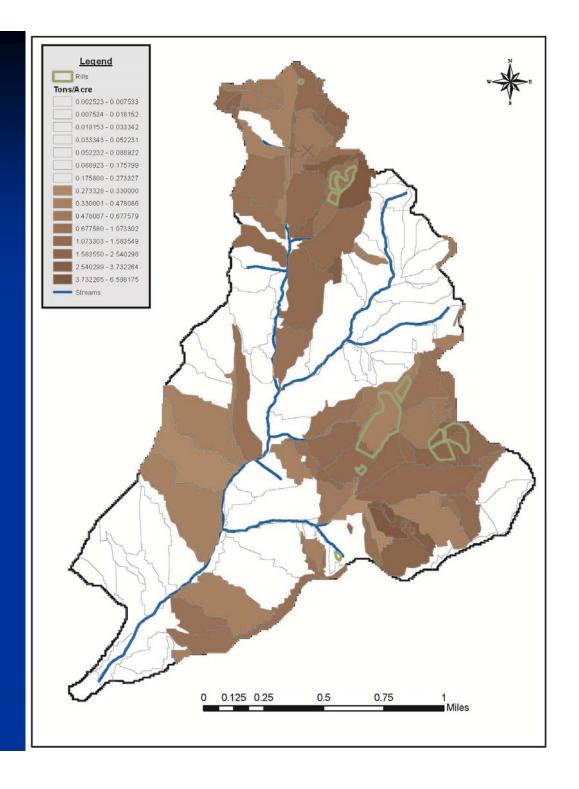
Sediment Summary

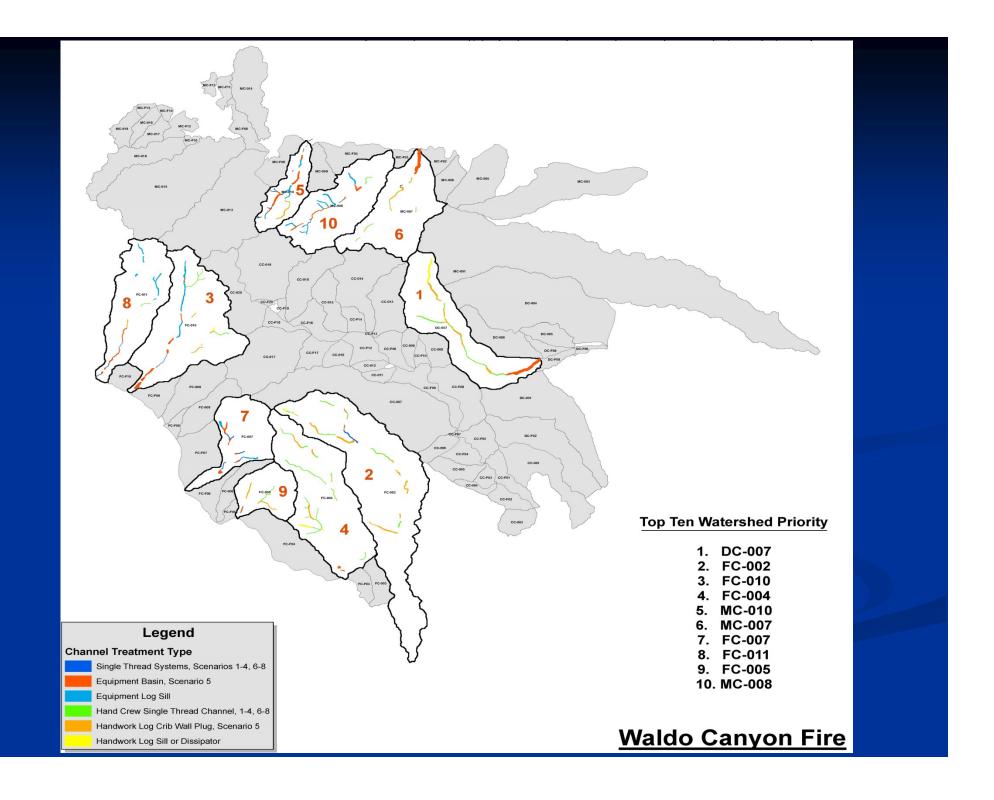
Top Sediment Producing Watersheds	Watershed	Average Annual Precip. (in)	Bankfull Discharge (CFS)	Water Yield Change (in)	Total Bank Erosion (tons/yr)	Sediment From Roads (Tons/yr)	Flow Related Sediment (Tons/yr)
1	DC-007	20.4	1.5	3.31	3673	6.7	53
2	FC-002	19.4	9.0	2.98	2388	13.7	1253
3	FC-010	21.9	6.7	3.38	2399	395	819
4	FC-004	20.1	6.8	4.04	1550	0.7	1056
5	MC-010	22.3	2.9	3.30	1548	296	168
6	FC-011	21.6	5.2	2.52	1467	0.0	370
7	MC-007	21.3	5.1	2.64	1426	0.0	378
8	MC-008	22.0	5.0	3.08	1157	17.0	422
9	CC-017	22.1	3.7	3.18	1192	0.0	255
10	FC-005	20.5	3.1	3.22	1246	0.6	182





High Priority
Treatment Areas to
Reduce Sediment
from Surface
Erosion for
Wellington Gulch





Wellington Treatment Potential

Single Thread Systems Senarios 1-4, 6-8

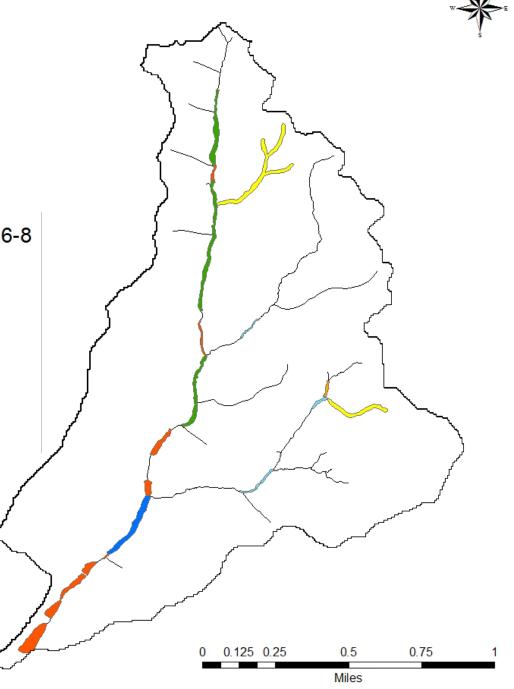
Equipment Basin

Equipment Log Sill

Hand Crew Single Thread Channel

Handwork Log Crib Wall

Handwork Log Sill or Dissipator



Conceptual Design: Channel

	Channel Processes - Top Ten Sediment Producing Watersheds Watersheds							
Watershed	Total Channel Treated		Total Channel Treated	Reduced Bank Erosion	Sediment Stored or Stabilized			
	(ft)	(ft)	(%)	(tons/yr)	(tons)			
DC-007	55,095	17,347	31%	2,417	30,370			
FC-002	83,067	17,436	21%	9,942	23,160			
FC-010	39,188	17,226	44%	1,968	27,624			
FC-004	62,453	18,494	30%	1,388	11,054			
MC-010	17,099	10,054	59%	1,284	44,133			
MC-007	24,178	7,079	29%	1,447	13,380			
FC-007	29,409	6,641	23%	1,033	16,429			
FC-011	26,994	10,557	39%	1,123	20,196			
FC-005	22,548	5,602	25%	783	9,267			
MC-008	39,979	13,624	34%	366	30,051			
Total	400,008	124,060	33%	21,751	225,664			

Conceptual Design: Hillslope

	Hillslope Processes - Top Ten						
	Sediment Producing Watersheds						
Watershed	Total Acres	Priority Area (acres)	Priority Area (%)	Delivered Sediment from Priority Area (%)	Delivered Sediment Reduction (%)		
DC-007	823	430	52%	81%	61%		
FC-002	1,684	865	51%	92%	69%		
FC-010	1,100	528	48%	92%	69%		
FC-004	1,124	568	50%	86%	65%		
MC-010	308	171	55%	92%	69%		
MC-007	729	384	52%	98%	74%		
FC-007	475	228	48%	84%	63%		
FC-011	718	464	64%	99%	74%		
FC-005	336	191	56%	89%	67%		
MC-008	710	382	53%	99%	74%		
Total	8,006	4,211	53%	91%	69%		

The following questions are addressed with this restoration master plan:

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- 6. When can we start?

Approximate Average Unit Costs

- Single-thread channel restoration:
 - \$ 25-\$44/ lineal foot.
- Sediment detention basins:
 - \$ 1.70-\$10.00/ ton of sediment storage
- Aerial seeding/mulching: \$ 2,500/acre
- Hand crew surface erosion treatments:
- \$ 1,000- 6,000/acre depending on level of difficulty, access, extent of work required.

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- 1. What are the post-fire impacts and potential adverse consequences?
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- 6. When can we start?

We already started!

- Northfield Gulch sediment detention basins (Colorado Springs Utilities)
- North and South Douglas Creek sediment detention basins, and priority 3 work (G4-B4 stream type). (On Flying W Ranch funded by NRCS with EQUIP. \$ and Emergency Watershed Protection \$ (EWP).

Summary

This restoration will help reduce some of the flood risk for normal precipitation occurrences but will not significantly alter the impacts from potential catastrophic events as the hydrologic recovery will extend for many decades. Homes located on existing 100 year floodplains and alluvial fans will continue to be in harms way. Future development on floodprone areas should be discouraged as the potential flood risk will still be present.

