

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
June 23, 2020, 12:30 PM to 4:30 PM
Virtual Meeting
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE:

Participants: Rob Addington, Samantha Albert, Eugene Backhaus, Brian Banks, Nate Beckman, Angela Boag, Christina Burri, Kristin Cannon, Ron Cousineau, Patt Dorsey, Cindy Dozier, Allen Gallamore, Dan Gibbs, Steven Hattenbach, Vaughn Jones, Tim Kylo, Damon Lange, Jason Lawhon, Mike Lester, Paige Lewis, Matt Lindler, Oscar Martinez, Susan Matthews, Tim Mauck, Frank McCormick, Jamie Nogle, Emily Olsen, Molly Pitts, Mike Preston, Kelle Reynolds, Lauren Ris, Marcus Selig, Mark Shea, Andrew Slack, Travis Smith, Tom Spezze, Jodi Stemler, Jeremy Taylor, Matt Thorpe, Diana Trujillo, Nathan Van Schaik, Garrett Watson, Chris West, Tammy Whittington, Cindy Williams, Scott Woods, Peter Wyrsh, Ben Yellin

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Cindy Williams	Share the special edition newspaper insert on forest health from the Upper Arkansas landscape with Patt Dorsey and the Social License Subcommittee.
Governance Subcommittee	Update the governance charter based on the feedback from the RMRI partners and send it back to the RMRI partners for their review.
Christina Burri	Forward invitations to Upper South Platte Partnership (USPP) meetings to Samantha Albert.
Heather Bergman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up with Angela Boag and Tim Mauck to determine what the timeline is for the Shared Stewardship effort to bring clarity around outcome-based measures. • Re-send the partner survey to RMRI partners.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Tammy Whittington, US Forest Service (USFS), and Tom Spezze, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), gave introductory remarks for the meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- Tammy Whittington and Tom Spezze welcomed everyone to the RMRI meeting and thanked them for being on the call.
- RMRI subcommittees and priority landscape partners continue to put in tremendous efforts to address cross-cutting issues and develop projects.
- The USFS Regional Office has had some changes in personnel. Nathan Van Schaik is officially working as the USFS communication specialist for RMRI. He previously worked at the Department of Defense in their public affairs department in Germany. Additionally, the USFS has recently selected Maureen Bookwalter to serve a temporary detail as the USFS RMRI lead for 120 days. She is filling the position that Jason Lawhon vacated when he moved to Southwest Colorado to serve as the USFS lead with RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW). She will be introduced to the full RMRI group during the July RMRI meeting.
- The USFS and NWTf partnership is of the utmost importance to the USFS. RMRI is a priority for the USFS and will continue to be a priority for the foreseeable future.
- As the NWTf goes through a restructuring and reorganization effort, RMRI is the model for how the NWTf seeks to approach their work moving forward.
- COVID-19 has impacted non-profits and those who rely on fundraising for revenues. The NWTf has had to cancel its summer fundraising events.

- RMRI funding comes from the USFS, NWTF, and generous sponsors, like the Gates Family Foundation. The USFS and NWTF agreed to contribute funding for meeting facilitation, but the funding available in the budget for facilitation is diminishing. Peak Facilitation will continue to provide facilitation services for the full RMRI group meetings, but RMRI will need to scale back formal facilitation for subcommittee meetings. As formal facilitation services are scaled back, it would be helpful for RMRI partners to consider ways they could contribute (e.g., meeting facilitation, documentation, etc.) to continue to move RMRI forward.

RMRI-SW UPDATE

Jason Lawhon, USFS, provided an update for RMRI-SW. His comments are summarized below.

- Kara Chadwick, the San Juan National Forest Supervisor, took a detail in the Washington Office, and Steve Hattenbach, the Cibola National Forest Supervisor, is on a detail to fill the role that Kara Chadwick vacated.
- RMRI-SW partners have officially formed the RMRI-SW Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the USFS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), NWTF, and representatives for the four RMRI values (water, communities, wildlife, and recreation).
- The Steering Committee has been meeting and has approved the RMRI-SW governance charter.
- RMR-SW partners are in the process of organizing the RMRI Advisory Network. The members of the Advisory Network will represent the timber industry, environmental organizations, local collaboratives, Wildfire Adapted Partnership, tribes, fire emergency services, and local communities. There will also be other representatives for water, recreation, and wildlife on the Advisory Network. The first convening of the Advisory Network will be at the beginning of July.
- RMRI-SW is developing a process to prioritize treatments and projects on their landscape. The RMRI landscape covers around 800,00 acres, and RMRI-SW needs to determine their shared priorities to begin to strategically implement projects.
- The partners decided that applying the potential operational delineations (PODs) concept on the landscape would help them identify smaller geographic areas to prioritize. PODs are a planning tool that identifies fire containment units on the landscape. PODs allow for proactive forest management by pre-determining the response and strategy to manage a fire in the case of planned or unplanned fire events. They are also an effective tool for prescribed burn planning because POD boundaries are defined by natural and manmade control lines (e.g., roads, changes in tree species, etc.). Assessments for different values and risk analyses are conducted for and applied to each POD.
- There are already around 90 PODs that are oriented around wildfire and fire management in the RMRI-SW project boundary. It would be a long process to analyze all these PODs, so the RMRI-SW partners are working to identify a subset of the PODs to make the initial analysis more manageable. Each Steering Committee member is talking to their constituents and RMRI-SW partners to identify the PODs of highest priority. In addition to the input from RMRI-SW partners and constituents, the Steering Committee will also identify the feasibility of treating each POD based on criteria, such as access, operability, available funding, number of National Environment Policy Act (NEPA)-cleared acres, etc. The PODs will be ranked based on the information gathered from constituents, partners, and the feasibility investigation.

- The Steering Committee will use the ranked PODs to help them lay out a treatment strategy and identify desired outcomes. The treatment strategy and outcomes will be brought to the RMRI-SW Advisory Network for their review and input.
- The process will result in defined priorities, outcomes, and metrics to track success.
- The goal is to complete the prioritization process by August with the caveat that it may take longer because RMRI-SW partners are trying to be as iterative as possible and responsive to the needs of RMRI-SW partners.
- RMRI-Colorado (RMRI-CO) partners can reach out to Jason Lawhon, Patt Dorsey, Mike Preston, Steve Hattenbach, or Aaron Kimple for more information.

UPPER ARKANSAS UPDATE

Cindy Williams, Envision Chaffee County, provided an update for the Upper Arkansas priority landscape. Her comments are summarized below.

- The Upper Arkansas partners in Chaffee County are organized under the Envision Forest Health Council. The Envision Forest Health Council includes top leaders from many organizations and is growing with the addition of a new representative from the Sangre de Cristo Electric Association. The Envision Forest Health Council is currently working with Lake County Commissioners and the USFS to set up a similar council to drive work in Lake County.
- Envision Chaffee County, the Envision Forest Health Council, and the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) completed a prioritization effort in Chaffee County. The prioritization effort determined that treating 30,000 acres of forests would result in a 50% to 80% reduction in wildfire risk.
- The Upper Arkansas partners submitted a grant to conduct a similar prioritization mapping process in Lake County. That process will begin in fall or early spring if the grant is received.
- The Envision Forest Health Council are planning a project, known as the Methodist Front project. The Methodist Front project will treat 500 acres on private, state, and city land and 2,750 acres on USFS land. There may be additional funding to treat an additional 2,000 acres as well. The Methodist Front project will connect to the Decker Fire burn scar as well as an 800-acre Bureau of Land Management (BLM) treatment project. In addition to reducing wildfire risk, the Methodist Front project will enhance habitat for elk and mule deer populations.
- Envision Chaffee County launched the Chaffee Chips program to create defensible space around homes on private property. The Chaffee Chips program will transport a chipper and trailers to four different priority areas to manage and haul away slash from defensible space treatments on over 300 lots. There has been a lot of community engagement around the Chaffee Chips program, and many private landowners are participating in the program.
- Colorado Firecamp is training level-1 sawyers. Those trainees are treating defensible space on private property for free and will take the slash to the county grinder.
- The Upper Arkansas partners worked with the Chaffee County Times and Mountain Mail to produce a special edition insert about forest health to include with print newspapers. The 16-page special edition insert had stories on fire mitigation efforts and went out to 16,000 people. The development of the insert was funded by Envision Chaffee County as well as the profits the newspapers made from selling advertisements. The insert was so successful that the newspapers want to do it again next year with additional content. Cindy Williams will share the special edition newspaper insert with Patt Dorsey and the Social License Subcommittee.
- The community of Chaffee County identified recreation impacts as the second largest threat to the community and county. Envision Chaffee County is planning multiple projects to

address recreation impacts and have begun to implement some early-win projects, such as dispersed campsite containment. They are also developing the Community Recreation and Resource Protection Plan to create a strategy to balance recreation with the economy, environment, and exceptional user experiences. Partners will first develop a plan for Chaffee County and then Lake County.

- RMRI partners can contact Cindy Williams, Jim Pitts, or Damon Lange for any additional information.

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Jason Lawhon, USFS, provided updates on the activities of the Governance Subcommittee. His comments are summarized below.

- The members of the Governance Subcommittee are Samantha Albert, Angela Boag, Christina Burri, Jason Lawhon, Emily Olsen, Tom Spezze, Nathan Van Schaik, and Scott Woods.
- The Governance Subcommittee's roles and responsibilities are to bring clarity to the governance structure of RMRI and determine how any new subcommittees will fit within the existing governance structure of RMRI.
- The Governance Subcommittee created a visual model of the RMRI governance structure. The visual model was updated to show how the different bodies of RMRI interact with each other. The different bodies of RMRI include the RMRI Leadership Team, the RMRI Stakeholder Group, the three priority landscapes, the substantive subcommittees (i.e., those that are focused on addressing cross-cutting issues), and the operational subcommittees (i.e., those that are focused on the overarching work that supports all substantive subcommittees and the three priority landscapes).
- The Governance Subcommittee has updated the governance charter since the last full RMRI meeting. Some of the updates include the finalization of the roles and responsibilities of the subcommittees, an addition of the word "wildlife" in the "forest and wildlife habitat" value of RMRI, and clarification that RMRI seeks to achieve agreement through consensus.
- The Governance Subcommittee added proposed roles and responsibilities for the priority landscapes to the governance charter. The proposed roles and responsibilities were adapted from the RMRI-SW governance charter. Many of the proposed roles and responsibilities for the priority landscape partners are oriented around working with RMRI-CO to align priority landscape outcomes with the goals and values of RMRI. Some of the other proposed roles and responsibilities for the priority landscape partners include establishing communication channels with RMRI-CO and coordinating media requests. Other responsibilities include identifying support needs and serving as a conduit between RMRI-CO and the local community.
- The local priority landscape partners are the decision-making body for local projects and funding. They will also determine the methods and metrics to measure the goals, outcomes, and objectives of projects, including outcome-based metrics.
- The Governance Subcommittee outlined in the governance charter the process to fill nominated seats on the RMRI Leadership Team. Priority area seats and appointed seats will be decided by the relevant agency and partner group (i.e., the Upper Arkansas partners will decide who will serve in their designated seat). The nominated seats, which represent broader interests, will have a different nominating process. When a nominated seat is vacated, the outgoing seat holder, Leadership Team, and RMRI partners may recommend someone to fill the seat. The RMRI Stakeholder Group will then come to an agreement on who should fill the vacant seat.
- The Governance Subcommittee added term limits for nominated seats on the RMRI Leadership Team. Priority areas seats and appointed seats will not have term limits. Those

who are serving in nominated seats will have a term limit of two consecutive, two-year terms. If no one else is interested in serving in a nominated seat at the end of a seat holder's term limit, a nominated seat representative can continue to serve. The purpose of adding term limits for nominated seats is to encourage new representation while also not forcing people to leave if no one else wants to serve.

- The Governance Subcommittee created a Theory of Change Diagram. The purpose of the Theory of Change Diagram is to lay out the process of how RMRI will move from their current status to where RMRI partners want to go (i.e., landscape-scale, transformational change).
- The Governance Subcommittee continues to discuss the idea of outputs versus outcomes. Outputs are the metrics that are traditionally used to measure forestry projects (e.g., acres treated, timber volume, etc.). Outcomes are measuring the goals that those outputs achieve (e.g., percent of watershed protected, percent of community protected, etc.). There are ongoing questions and discussions about if and how to create common metrics or reporting systems to measure outcomes in a more aligned way and how to provide guidance on the development of outcomes. These discussions about outcomes are occurring in RMRI and the statewide discussions around Shared Stewardship.
- The Governance Subcommittee continues to discuss how to clarify the commitments that RMRI-CO is making to the priority landscapes.
- Any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Governance Subcommittee should contact Jason Lawhon.

Group Discussion

Meeting participants discussed the Governance Subcommittee updates. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Upper South Platte partners will need to talk with the full USPP about the roles and responsibilities outlined in the governance charter. The USPP has existing reports that CFRI has created on the USPP's accomplishments and monitoring efforts. Those reports may serve as a way to track accomplishments. The USPP's capacity to engage in tracking additional accomplishments is going to be based on how much funding they receive from RMRI to do so. Local landscape partners will have to continue to track metrics that other funders and grantors require as well.
- The Upper Arkansas partners are in a similar situation as the Upper South Platte partners. CFRI is helping Upper Arkansas partners track and quantify the amount of risk reduction that is occurring as a result of their projects. The Upper Arkansas partners can share those accomplishments with RMRI, but they cannot engage in additional tracking and monitoring efforts unless there is funding to do so.
- Local landscape partners should track accomplishments in a way that works best for them. Local landscape and stakeholder groups are unique in their approach and strategies, so it is important to provide flexibility as it relates to accomplishment tracking. There may then be an opportunity for priority landscape partners to share those accomplishments along with the lessons they have learned with RMRI partners and other priority landscapes.
- RMRI should not add any new burdens to partners without funding, but there is a benefit to developing common outcome-based performance metrics to report on outcomes at a statewide level.
- The Shared Stewardship Strategy discussions are, in part, focused on developing and tracking statewide outcomes. The Shared Stewardship memorandum of understanding (MOU) partners need to consider how to measure statewide outcomes in an easy and consistent way. The Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is about to launch a

Shared Stewardship technical group that will begin to have discussions around metrics for shared outcomes.

- Because some of the conversations around outcome-based metrics are occurring at the statewide level, the Governance Subcommittee should consider the other landscapes that submitted RMRI proposals but were not selected as priority landscapes. The Governance Subcommittee has talked about the landscapes that submitted RMRI proposals but were not selected as priority landscapes in their discussions around commitments, particularly as it relates to statewide issues. The Governance Subcommittee has not formed any concrete recommendations on the topic at this time.
- The Shared Stewardship MOU partners are having discussions around outcome-based metrics at the statewide level, so there may not be a need for RMRI to take on that responsibility.
- Local landscape partners will need more clarity from the State on outcome-based measures before they bring this discussion back to their respective priority landscape partners. Heather Bergman will follow up with Angela Boag and Tim Mauck to determine what the timeline is for the Shared Stewardship effort to bring clarity around outcome-based measures.
- The outcomes-based measures that come from the Shared Stewardship initiative can be sent to RMRI partners when they are ready. In the meantime, RMRI should continue to move the RMRI charter forward and continue to internally discuss outcome-based measures for RMRI's four values (water, forest and wildlife habitat, community, and recreation). Additionally, priority landscapes should keep measuring and monitoring the metrics that their funding sources require.
- The Theory of Change Diagram should act as a living document that is reviewed regularly. There may be an opportunity to add more details to the Diagram as local landscape partners continue to implement work.
- There were three proposed additions to the box that highlights the RMRI value of communities in the Theory of Change Diagram:
 - An addition that emphasizes the importance of preparing communities mentally for wildfires. (This mental preparation ties into the concept of building social license for forest management.)
 - An addition that emphasizes the importance of saving community members' lives.
 - An addition that emphasizes the economic benefits of treating forests and developing a local wood industry.
- The Governance Subcommittee will update the charter based on the feedback from the RMRI partners and send it back to the RMRI partners for their review. Any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Governance Subcommittee should contact Heather Bergman.
- There is support among RMRI partners for the current trajectory and work of the Governance Subcommittee.

PARTNER SURVEY UPDATE

Patt Dorsey, NWTF, gave an update on the RMRI partner survey. Her comments are summarized below.

- Two emails with the partner survey were sent out to RMRI partners.
- The purpose of the partner survey is to identify ways for RMRI partners to contribute to RMRI according to their talents and interests. The survey is not meant to force anyone to make commitments.

- The goal of the survey is to match partners based on their skills with landscapes based on their needs. The partner survey is meant to be a living and fluid document.
- There is still time for partners to fill out the survey, especially if they can facilitate or document subcommittee meetings.
- The information that RMRI partners provide in the survey will be sorted into a table based on each partner's current role in RMRI and what their potential role could be.
- The RMRI Support Team would like to follow up with partners who do not fill out the survey.
- For some organizations, multiple staff members participate in RMRI. For those organizations, they can fill out the RMRI partner survey in whatever way makes the most sense for them – whether each staff member fills the survey out or one person fills it out on behalf of the organization.
- RMRI partners should reach out to Heather Bergman, Patt Dorsey, or Tammy Whittington with any questions on the partner survey. Heather Bergman will re-send the partner survey to RMRI partners.

SOCIAL LICENSE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Patt Dorsey, NWTF, provided an update on the activities of the Social License Subcommittee. Her comments are summarized below.

- The Social License Subcommittee members include Rob Addington, Paul Amundson, Patt Dorsey, Cindy Dozier, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Kelle Reynolds, Nathan Van Schaik, and Kirk Will.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Social License Subcommittee are to develop key messages, research barriers to building social license, create a depository of materials for local landscape partners to use and tailor to their communities, and conduct natural and social science research related to building social license.
- The Social License Subcommittee has developed key messages for prescribed fire, fire-adapted communities, and active forest management. They have sent the key messages to the priority landscape partners who provided feedback on them.
- The key themes of the prescribed fire messages are:
 - Fire is a natural element in Colorado. The benefits of prescribed fire have long term benefits to wildlife and forests.
 - Prescribed fire is an important tool to help reduce the intense smoke and harmful effects of wildfire.
 - Prescribed fire can help maintain the visual quality of forested landscapes.
 - When and where possible, managed wildland fires are another tool to increase the use of and benefit from fire on the landscape.
- The key themes of the fire-adapted community messages are:
 - Wildland fire is a societal problem.
 - We are currently doing important work, but it is not at the pace and scale necessary.
 - The need is urgent, and we need people to be part of the solution.
- The key theme of the active forest management messages is:
 - Forest managers need a complete toolbox to keep our forests healthy. Tools include a variety of forest treatments, such as mastication, lop & scatter, hand-thinning, commercial timber harvest, etc. Each tool has specific applications, benefits, and trade-offs.
- The Social License Subcommittee has identified a list of potential communication materials that they need to develop to distribute the key messages. The list of potential communication materials includes social media content, short videos, banners for industry

partners to hang on their equipment, handouts, pamphlets, brochures, newspaper articles, etc.

- The Social License Subcommittee sent the key messages and concepts to the Communications Subcommittee for them to refine further.
- If any RMRI partners want to see the entire list of key messages, they can contact Patt Dorsey for more information.
- Any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Social License Subcommittee should contact Patt Dorsey.

RMRI Partner Comments

There is support among RMRI partners for the current trajectory and work of the Social License Subcommittee.

COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Matt Lindler, NWTF, provided an update on the activities of the Communications Subcommittee. His comments are summarized below.

- The members of the Communications Subcommittee include Patt Dorsey, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Teddy Parker-Renga, Mike Preston, Kelle Reynolds, Catherine Schloegel, Tom Spezze, Jodi Stemler, and Nathan Van Schaik.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Communications Subcommittee are focused on developing a communications strategy, communication protocols, and creative materials for RMRI.
- The Communications Subcommittee is moving into a creative phase as they begin to work with the Social License Subcommittee to develop key messages and communication materials. The idea is that once the Subcommittees have created messages and communication materials, the local landscape partners can take those messages and communication materials and tailor them to their local community context.
- The Communications Subcommittee is working with the design, marketing, and image firm The Truth. The deliverables that The Truth will produce for RMRI include a variety of branding assets and an RMRI website. The vision for the website is to have project updates, information on priority landscape partners, and a hub of information and resources for partners to use to help promote their project areas and build social license. There may also be a page on the website for RMRI partners to list available jobs. As The Truth develops the brand assets and website, the Communications Subcommittee will bring draft versions to the RMRI partners. The deadline for the deliverables is tentatively set in September. This timeline provides The Truth enough time to produce a high-quality product.
- The Communications Subcommittee requests that RMRI partners provide photos and videos that the Subcommittee can use to build communication materials. If RMRI partners are implementing projects, they should take and share before, during, and after photos and videos of their work. Additionally, any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Communications Subcommittee should contact Matt Lindler.

RMRI Partner Comments

There is support among RMRI partners for the current trajectory and work of the Communications Subcommittee.

BIOMASS UTILIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association, and Mike Preston, Southwest Basin Roundtable, provided an update on the activities of the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee. Their comments are summarized below.

- The members of the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee include Nate Beckman, Angela Boag, Ben Cohen, Ken Curtis, Patt Dorsey, Cindy Dozier, Jamie Nogle, Molly Pitts, Mike Preston, Tim Reader, Kelle Reynolds, Ellen Roberts, Mark Shea, Kirby Self, Garrett Stephens, Nathan Van Schaik, and Laura Wolf.
- The Biomass Utilization Subcommittee has the role and responsibility of developing strategies and approaches that lead to improvements in biomass utilization on the ground. The Subcommittee has been gathering information to help them understand the regulatory and scientific frameworks around biomass utilization. They have discussed organizing a workshop on biomass utilization and have been identifying potential policy changes to increase biomass utilization.
- The Subcommittee is approaching biomass utilization from two tracks: one track focused on biomass power and another track focused on biomass products (wood pellets, biochar, etc.).
- Mike Preston has created a framework that identifies a strategy for addressing biomass power challenges. The framework includes the types of metrics the Subcommittee needs to evaluate to cultivate biomass power in Colorado (e.g., cost of a biomass power unit, the type of unit, the investment needed in the transmission and distribution interconnections, etc.).
- Finding a use for undesired biomass will help strengthen industry and reduce the cost of treatments. Increasing the use of biomass power will also create opportunities to protect the electrical grid from wildfires.
- Biomass power is a favorable end product for biomass utilization because it is cheaper to export biomass power through transmission lines than it is to export biomass products through shipping vehicles.
- The Biomass Utilization Subcommittee is interested in pursuing opportunities to cultivate biomass power in Southwest Colorado and the Front Range.
- The Biomass Utilization Subcommittee needs to contextualize biomass power within the carbon cycle. Biomass power may represent a way to release greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in a controlled manner when compared to the release of GHG emissions from wildfires or prescribed fire. Wood products also affect the carbon cycle by sequestering carbon.
- The Subcommittee is interested in promoting biomass power in the green power portfolio to supplement wind and solar energy. To do this, the Subcommittee will need to create policy incentives for the use of biomass power. Currently, solar and wind energy receive a 3:1 renewable energy tax credit, while biomass power receives a 1:1 renewable energy tax credit.
- There need to be institutional alignments through state planning and management processes to move biomass power and utilization efforts forward.
- The Subcommittee is organizing a panel to learn from those who have experience with biomass power efforts. Some of the invited panelists include the Gypsum biomass power plant, Blue Forest Conservation, USFS representatives in California, and a national biomass power trade association.
- On the biomass products track, some Subcommittee members are gathering preliminary information on the amount of available biomass supply in different regions across Colorado and the market demand for biomass products.
- Any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee should contact Molly Pitts.

RMRI Partner Comments

There is support among RMRI partners for the current trajectory and work of the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee.

WORKFORCE CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association, provided an update on the activities of the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee. Her comments are summarized below.

- The members of the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee include Cindy Dozier, Molly Pitts, Ellen Roberts, Tim Reader, Kelle Reynolds, and Nathan Van Schaik.
- The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee is developing strategies and approaches to increase workforce capacity in the wood industry, both in the forest and in the mills. They are also identifying and leveraging existing resources, researching how other areas are addressing workforce capacity, and developing a workshop on workforce capacity. There may be an opportunity in the future to identify potential policy changes to increase workforce capacity.
- Tim Reader organized a meeting between the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee and representatives from workforce centers in Alamosa, Cortez, and Monte Vista. Workforce centers provide a variety of free services to businesses related to recruiting and hiring workers. The Alamosa Workforce Center, in particular, gained experience with timber businesses when they helped staff the Blanca Forestry Products Mill. Workforce centers provide many helpful general and logistical services for hiring workers, but not all workforce centers are successful at hiring for forestry businesses.
- Northern Arizona University has received funding to establish a forestry workforce training center in Arizona. This training center may be a good place to send Colorado workers to enroll in a ten-week training program once it is established. There is likely not enough funding to establish an independent workforce training center in Colorado.
- Some members of the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee have been in contact with a representative from the Colorado Office of Just Transition. The goal of the Office of Just Transition is to place unemployed coal workers in new jobs. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee will continue to remain in contact with the Office of Just Transition to identify if there are opportunities to place displaced coal workers in forestry and mill operations.
- The next step for the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee is to organize a meeting with state agencies (e.g., Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, DNR, etc.) and higher education institutions to educate them about opportunities in the forest industry.
- Any RMRI partner who is interested in joining the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee should contact Molly Pitts.

RMRI Partner Comments

There is support among RMRI partners for the current trajectory and work of the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.

FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Jason Lawhon, USFS, provided an update on the activities of the Funding Subcommittee. His comments are summarized below.

- The members of the Funding Subcommittee include Angela Boag, Christina Burri, Patt Dorsey, Jason Lawhon, Tom Spezze, Nathan Van Schaik, Cindy Williams, Scott Woods, and Peter Wyrsh.

- Some of the roles and responsibilities of the Funding Subcommittee are to serve as a matchmaker to connect priority landscape partners with funding opportunities, update and maintain a grants database, develop "big picture" funding efforts, such as conservation finance mechanisms, and identify opportunities to solve funding challenges in creative ways. The Funding Subcommittee also has the role and responsibility of developing a private strategy for fundraising, but RMRI partners in government positions cannot participate in that role.
- One way for the Funding Subcommittee to serve as a matchmaker is to connect partners who are interested in applying to a grant program with those who have experience with that specific grant program.
- Since the last full RMRI meeting on May 1, the Funding Subcommittee hosted a conservation finance webinar.
- Angela Boag and Scott Woods are developing a grants database that organizes and sorts information on different grant programs. The goal of the grants database is to help partners make decisions on which grants they should pursue. The development of the grants database is currently in progress.

RESTORE GRANT UPDATE

Chris West, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), provided updates on the RESTORE grant. His comments are summarized below.

- Before COVID-19, the NFWF, DNR, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the Gates Family Foundation, Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW), and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) partnered to establish the RESTORE grant program.
- The RESTORE grant program accepted applications and closed on March 12. The RESTORE partners were planning on announcing the grant awards during the Partner in the Outdoors Conference, but the Conference was canceled due to COVID-19. They did not distribute a press release because of complications related to COVID-19. They will make an announcement on the awardees from the first round of RESTORE grants when they release the request for proposals for the second round of RESTORE grants. Information on all the awardees can be found on the NFWF or GOCO website.
- The RESTORE grant program funded 11 grant applications for a total of \$2.7 million. Applicants provided over \$3.5 million in matching funds.
- Two of the projects that were awarded funding are in the RMRI project areas: the "Restoring Forest Habitat in Chaffee County to Reduce Risk of Catastrophic Wildfire" project (Upper Arkansas) and the "Improving Big Game Winter Habitat on the San Juan National Forest" project (Southwest Colorado). There is a third project in the Upper Arkansas landscape that received funding; although, that project is not related to forest management.
- There were 57 applications submitted for RESTORE funding, so 80% of applicants were not successful in their submission. The number of applicants demonstrates the high demand for this type of funding, and the partners may be able to raise more funding for future RESTORE grants.
- The RESTORE partners selected projects that had a strong wildlife component. Some applications in the Southwest Colorado and Upper South Platte priority landscapes had great wildfire mitigation projects but did not make the strongest connection to wildlife.
- The Chaffee and Lake County application did a good job of selecting a project area where treatments could mitigate wildfire risk and improve wildlife habitat. Their application could serve as a good model for other priority landscapes during the next round of RESTORE grants.

- The RESTORE partners learned many lessons from the first round of applications. In the next round of the RESTORE grant program, RESTORE partners will be more clear about what they are looking for in applications. They will also have a two- to four-month open application period so that applicants can have more in-depth discussions with RESTORE partners before submitting a proposal. The goal is to have a fewer number of high-quality projects apply for funding.
- The application period for the second round of RESTORE grants will likely be in the fall.

UPPER SOUTH PLATTE ORIENTATION

Members of the USPP gave an orientation on the projects and efforts currently occurring in the Upper South Platte priority landscape. The orientation is summarized below.

Overview

- The USPP presenters are Christina Burri (Denver Water), Nate Beckman (CSFS), Brian Banks (USFS), Rob Addington (The Nature Conservancy), Ben Yellin (Elk Creek Fire Protection District), and Andrew Slack (CFRI).
- The USPP formed in 2015 from a unique funding opportunity provided by a USFS National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy grant. The American Forest Foundation (AFF), Denver Water, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) contributed additional funding. This funding opportunity aligned with the urgency to treat in the Upper South Platte watershed.
- The USPP focuses its work on the Upper South Platte watershed. This watershed is a priority for partners, in part, because it contains Strontia Springs Reservoir, which provides 80% of Denver Water's water supply and 90% of Aurora Water's water supply. The watershed is vulnerable and has a high risk of burn probability. For the water utility providers, it made business sense to invest in proactive mitigation efforts in the watershed.
- Water is an important focus of the USPP's work, but they also incorporate the values of safe and resilient communities, recreation and tourism, and forest health and wildlife habitat into their work.
- The Upper South Platte Watershed is roughly 885,000 acres and is located southwest of Denver. Most of the watershed is forested, and it contains towns, like Conifer and Bailey.
- The 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire and the 2002 Hayman Fire occurred in this watershed.
- The Upper South Platte watershed has diverse land ownership. There is National Forest land, as well as a high number of private landowners. The diverse land ownership and number of private landowners in the watershed requires the USPP to engage in cross-boundary work. The USPP has focused on building projects off of one another to cohesively and strategically increase the size of treatment areas across private and public lands. These larger treatment areas have a more significant impact on a landscape-scale level.
- The USPP adopted the three legs of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy to inform their work. The three legs of the Strategy are: 1) restore and maintain resilient landscapes, 2) create fire-adapted communities, and 3) ensure safe and effective wildfire response. The vision of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is to extinguish fires when needed, use fire when appropriate, create a resilient landscape, and create communities that can live with fire. Each leg of the Cohesive Strategy is dependent on the other. The USPP is continuously thinking about the Cohesive Strategy as a whole when they are prioritizing and planning efforts.
- Since 2015, the USPP has evolved. Partners meet once a month to plan projects. They have built better relationships, and they are looking forward to continuing to build a partnership with RMRI.

Role of Science

- Science has been an essential component of the USPP since it first formed. Science serves as a strong underpinning to inform the work of the USPP as it relates to planning, treatment design, monitoring, and adaptive management.
- One of the first tasks of the USPP was conducting a wildfire risk assessment to prioritize treatments. The wildfire risk assessment overlaid data on burn probability, post-fire soil loss, and the location of wildland-urban interface (WUI) communities to create a composite treatment priority map. They identified two priority sub-watersheds from that assessment and have focused their work in those watersheds.
- CFRI conducts effectiveness and adaptive management monitoring for the USPP. The USPP continues to learn as they identify other priority areas and implement treatments. They utilize an adaptive management approach to inform their work. The simple adaptive management model follows a continuous cycle of plan, implement, and learn and adapt. The most difficult step of an adaptive management approach is taking what is learned from a planning and implementation effort and applying that to the next planning effort. This fall, the USPP is going to learn from the monitoring data they have collected from their first phase of projects and apply those lessons to how the USPP will move forward on future projects. Many practitioners and foresters in the Upper South Platte are interested in learning from the monitoring data.
- The data that CFRI has been collecting is informed by the principles outlined in GTR-373. CFRI has collected a lot of data, particularly on ponderosa pine forest treatments, and the large amount of data collected will give the USPP flexibility in determining how they want to analyze the data to inform future decisions. For future monitoring efforts, the USPP wants to continue to monitor prescribed fires, spatial heterogeneity, and impacts on wildlife habitat. These monitoring efforts will help answer questions about what the right number of tree groups is to leave on the landscape and how the GTR-373 is applied on the ground.

Restore and Maintain Resilient Landscapes

- The landscape resilience leg of the Cohesive Strategy aligns with the forest health and wildlife habitat, water, and recreation values of RMRI. The goal of the USPP is to treat 75,000 acres on federal lands (30,000 acres mechanically and 45,000 acres by prescribed fire) and treat 75,000 acres on private, local, and state lands (60,000 acres mechanically and 15,000 acres by prescribed fire) by 2035. Partners have been implementing treatments over the past five years, but they need to increase the pace and scale of treatments if they are to reach that goal.
- The current barriers to achieving their landscape resilience goals include social license, landowner engagement, funding, adequate staffing, lack of a biomass utilization industry, lack of available contractors, smoke management, and the availability of qualified staff for high complexity prescribed burns.
- The USPP's needs related to landscape resilience include funding for a landowner engagement specialist and funding for someone to manage an education, community, and outreach campaign, including the implementation of a robust social media campaign. They also need additional foresters to help plan and implement projects and funding to hire a contractor/consultant to conduct a biomass market analysis. They also need dedicated resources for prescribed fire efforts and a steady funding stream to pay for the planning and monitoring of projects instead of funding streams that require shelf-ready projects.
- The USPP is planning and preparing several projects related to landscape resilience. One of those projects is in the Deer Creek focus area, which is located by Harris Park. After receiving positive feedback from the community of Harris Park on previous treatments, the

USPP decided to look for more opportunities in the area. They are working with local landowners to treat 300 acres. The project is organized under a Good Neighbor Authority agreement. More landowners are interested in conducting treatments after seeing the projects that are being completed on their neighbors' properties.

- Another focus area is the McArthur Gulch area, which includes the Payne Gulch project. In 2017, the USFS treated 800 acres under the Payne Gulch project. There are many recreation residences, privately-owned homes on National Forest lands, in the project area. The USPP applied the GTR-310, which calls for an aggressive prescription for forest treatments, and some members of the community pushed back against those prescriptions, which required the USPP to work closely with landowners and the Town of Bailey. The 64A Fire in 2019 displayed different fire behaviors in the areas treated under the Payne Gulch project in comparison to the adjacent, untreated areas.
- CFRI installed 21 monitoring plots in the Payne Gulch project area. One goal of the Payne Gulch project was to reduce wildfire risk. The monitoring data collected on the Payne Gulch project indicated that the project was successful at achieving this goal. The fine woody fuel loading decreased as a result of the treatment. Additionally, the data collected indicated that following treatments, the wind speed required to induce torching or an active crown fire doubled from pre-treatment to post-treatment, which means it would be more difficult for trees to torch as a result of the treatment.
- The Payne Gulch project improved the resiliency of the forest to future disturbances. One goal of the project was to reduce the representation of smaller trees on the landscape because larger trees are more resilient to drought and infestation. The monitoring data indicated that the Payne Gulch project achieved this goal. The Payne Gulch project also restored the south-facing forests in the project area to a pure ponderosa pine forest, which are becoming rarer on the Front Range.
- The Payne Gulch project also created more spatial heterogeneity on the landscape. A goal of the project was to create smaller, separated tree groups. This goal aligns with historical data on the forest and considers not only the number of trees on the landscape but how they are positioned in relation to each other. The data indicates that the Payne Gulch project was successful at achieving this spatial heterogeneity.
- The next step for the McArthur Gulch focus area is to create opportunities to treat private lands that build off of the work of the USFS in the Payne Gulch project. Local fire protection districts are working with CPW and local land boards to grow the treatment area.
- The third focus area for the USPP is the Jerome-Miller focus area. In this focus area, the USPP is using RMRI funds to conduct boundary and archaeological surveys. They are in the process of laying the unit out and will be using GTR-373 to inform the treatment design. The northern boundary of the Jerome-Miller focus area borders private landowners. The USPP is working with some of these private landowners as they plan projects on National Forest land so that they can treat private properties and federal lands at the same time.
- The three focus areas (Deer Creek, McArthur Gulch, and Jerome-Miller) are positioned close to each other to achieve landscape-scale change.
- The USPP would like to engage in outreach and education efforts to build social license as they work on planning projects in these focus areas.

Fire-Adapted Communities

- The fire-adapted community leg of the Cohesive Strategy aligns with RMRI's value of safe and resilient communities.

- The USPP's fire-adapted community goal is to achieve a unified and consistent approach toward fire adaptation in a way that is collaborative and not limited by jurisdictional boundaries.
- To further their fire-adapted community efforts, the USPP needs to develop an organizational structure, educate and engage with community stakeholders on wildfire preparedness, increase the number of fire resilient structures in the watershed, and reduce fuels around communities through strategic fire breaks.
- Over the past six months, the Mountain Metro Wildfire Mitigation Council formed and has been meeting regularly to address fire-adapted community goals in the watershed.
- The Rotary Wildfire Ready is another group in the Upper South Platte watershed that is working on fire-adapted community goals. They engage in outreach efforts and help with home assessment programs.
- The USPP's needs related to fire-adapted communities include funding for a wildfire mitigation specialist, a contractor/consultant to manage an education, communication, and outreach campaign, foresters to plan and implement strategic fuel breaks, a biomass market analysis, dedicated resources for prescribed fire, and steady funding streams for planning and monitoring.

Fire Response

- The fire response leg of the Cohesive Strategy relates to the RMRI value of safe and resilient communities.
- The USPP has begun to take actions to increase the safety and effectiveness of fire response. The local fire protection districts are communicating with each other to strengthen their pre-planning capabilities. They are also conducting joint trainings to make sure that firefighters across fire protection districts have a shared understanding of protocols and procedures.
- The USPP's needs related to fire response are primarily focused on developing and managing a cross-boundary database. There are also needs for the participation and cooperation of outside agencies/contractors to develop watershed-scale programs and for a steady funding stream for wildfire suppression resources and training.

USPP Links to RMRI

- The USPP has several bodies in its organizational structure: The Goals, Strategies, and Funding Team (GSFT), the Management and Science Team (MST), and the Education, Communication, and Outreach Team (ECO). They also have the Biomass Utilization Group (BUG) and would like to establish a workforce capacity workgroup.
- There are connections between the organizational bodies of the USPP and the organizational bodies of RMRI. The RMRI Governance and Funding Subcommittees connect to the work and responsibilities of the GSFT and MST. The RMRI Communications and Social License Subcommittees connect to the work and responsibilities of ECO. BUG connects to the work of the RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee, and the future USPP workforce capacity workgroup will connect to the work of the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.

Needs and Contributions

- For continued success, the USPP needs funding for additional agency staffing, contractors/consultants, planning, implementation, and monitoring. They also need engaged partners, a portfolio of projects, and industry in the area.

- Moving forward, the USPP needs active support from RMRI and representatives from recreation, industry, wildlife, and the energy/utility sector to participate in USPP meetings.
- USPP needs financial support for additional agency staffing and contractors/consultants, including funding for a USPP director or coordinator, an education and outreach campaign specialist, a landowner engagement specialist, and foresters. They also need funding to pay for administrative support for the USPP subgroups, monitoring of past and future projects, and individual project support.
- On the technical support side, the USPP needs assistance with local industry development and growth and assistance with social license, prescribed fire, wildlife habitat, and recreation interests.
- The USPP could also use political support from RMRI to remove barriers through supporting local, state, and federal regulations and to tie the Upper South Platte into the Colorado Water Plan updates and Shared Stewardship Strategy.
- The USPP can give back to RMRI by:
 - Participating in the subcommittees to tackle cross-cutting issues.
 - Providing lessons learned from their experiences with adaptive management processes.
 - Providing expertise in planning restoration prescriptions in ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests.
 - Sharing case studies on fire-adapted community project implementation in high-wildfire risk communities, like Conifer and Evergreen.
 - Providing access to projects that demonstrate RMRI success stories.
 - Engaging and promoting RMRI and RMRI projects in a highly visible area.

Clarifying Questions

Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about the USPP. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

Does the USPP need dedicated staff to address their administrative and staff capacity needs, or can RMRI partners assist through an in-kind contribution?

The USPP will take any assistance, but having a dedicated staff member or contractor take on some of the tasks would help move the USPP forward in a significant way. In-kind contributions alone may not be enough for the USPP to make significant progress towards its goals.

A lack of industry is a challenge in every region in Colorado. A secure wood supply is needed to support industry. What is the amount of available wood supply in the Upper South Platte?

- The USPP does not have the information on the available wood supply in the Upper South Platte. The USPP has identified the need to gather information on the overall volume available in treatment areas and whether projects could be planned in a way to establish a sustainable supply of wood for operators.
- Dr. Han-Sup Han of Northern Arizona University was awarded a grant from the USFS to research biomass utilization efforts. He may expand his research into Colorado and could potentially get involved with all three RMRI priority landscapes. Part of his research will involve wood supply analysis, transportation costs, and new market analysis.
- As the USPP begins to engage with more private landowners, there will be more woody material for a potential industry.
- The lack of information on wood supply is an issue on both the Pike and San Isabel National Forests and the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. They could potentially work together to better understand and address this need.

What type of support does the USPP need from recreation interests?

- The USPP is looking for a representative from recreation interests to attend USPP meetings. They are not looking for any specific type of recreation interest at this time.
- Christina Burri will forward invitations to USPP meetings to Samantha Albert.

Can the slides used in the USPP orientation be sent to the RMRI partners?

Yes.

With decreases in Colorado's State Budget, is there going to be a drastic decrease in the amount of work the USPP can accomplish?

- The USPP has not relied on state funding as their only source of funding. The USPP receives funding from Denver Water through the Forest-to-Faucets agreement, and that agreement goes until 2022. They also have National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy funding available to them.
- Fire protection districts dedicate funding from their small budgets to mitigation efforts and are committed to their contributions.
- Partners continue to explore new options for funding, such as the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership funding.
- Moving forward, one point of uncertainty is whether landowners will have the match funding to implement projects under a cost-share program.

For what type of monitoring efforts is the USPP requesting funding? Could options, like citizen science groups, provide enough data for monitoring, or are more heavy-duty monitoring efforts, such as those conducted by a university, necessary?

- There is not a developed scope of work for monitoring yet. Funding is needed for both effectiveness monitoring and for consistently tracking accomplishments. Currently, about 10% of project costs are for effectiveness monitoring.
- Funding is needed to expand prescribed fire monitoring efforts. Additionally, as projects begin to be conducted at higher elevations, there will need to be more high-elevation monitoring plots.
- CFRI is engaging in more social monitoring efforts and could potentially monitor the effectiveness of a public engagement program.
- The USPP is open to suggestions from the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) on how to engage in monitoring efforts moving forward.

Has the USPP thought about messages or materials they could distribute to build social license as they implement projects? Is there a role for RMRI in building social license?

CFRI has hired a research associate that focuses on communications. Her role is to summarize research and make the science more digestible for the public. There may be an opportunity for her to work with the Social License and Communications Subcommittee to distribute materials.

Is the USPP able to sell any of the wood material through a timber sale to fund their treatments? Or does this work have to be paid for to be implemented?

- The USPP has had to pay to implement their treatments. Timber sales do not cover the total cost of treatments in the watershed, and prescribed fires do not have a revenue stream to offset the costs of conducting a prescribed burn.
- Without industry, the cost of treatments is very high. The USPP has sold some material for firewood at a small scale in the past.

- The USPP has a workgroup that is trying to encourage forest product utilization, but it needs support due to staff time limitation, limited contacts, and a lack of wood volume information.

NEXT STEPS

The next RMRI meeting is on July 22, from 1pm to 5pm. The Upper Arkansas partners will be giving their orientation at that meeting.