

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)  
 July 20, 2020, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM  
 RMRI Social License Subcommittee  
 Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Rob Addington, Daniel Beveridge, Mo Bookwalter, Cindy Dozier, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Molly Pitts, Kelle Reynolds, Nathan Van Schaik, and Kirk Will

*Facilitation:* Patt Dorsey and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Patt Dorsey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the term “wildfire ready” with “fire-adapted communities” in the key messages document.</li> <li>• Add Mo Bookwalter and Daniel Beveridge to the Social License Subcommittee Google Drive.</li> <li>• Develop slides for the Social License Subcommittee update during the July 22 full RMRI meeting with support from Samuel Wallace.</li> </ul>
<b>Patt Dorsey and Kirk Will</b>	Develop a message around prescribed fire risk.
<b>Kirk Will</b>	Share the Prescribed Fire Council document with information on the complexity and risk analysis for prescribed fires with the Social License Subcommittee.
<b>Daniel Beveridge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) staff to gather more information on what language they use to define forest restoration in the Colorado Forest Action Plan.</li> <li>• Share CSFS resources on the cost-benefit of mitigation efforts with the Social License Subcommittee.</li> </ul>
<b>Tim Kylo</b>	Share information on the economic impacts of the timber and biomass industry on local communities with the Social License Subcommittee.
<b>Tim Kylo, Nathan Van Schaik, and Dan Beveridge</b>	Develop suggestions for a definition of forest restoration to bring back to the Social License Subcommittee for their review. Once the Subcommittee has reviewed the suggestions, they will be sent to the full RMRI partner group for their review.
<b>Mo Bookwalter</b>	Reach out to Tony Cheng to get his thoughts on the definition of forest restoration.
<b>Communications Subcommittee</b>	Gather information on the cost-benefit of mitigation treatments in comparison to the cost of post-fire recovery.

**KEY MESSAGING OVERVIEW**

Patt Dorsey, Matt Lindler, and Nathan Van Schaik gave an overview of the process of developing the social license key messaging. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Communications Subcommittee reviewed and provided suggestions to the key messages for the Social License Subcommittee. The intention of the Communications Subcommittee’s feedback was not to change the messaging but only provide some additional thoughts and perspectives.
- The Social License Subcommittee has the task of reviewing the feedback from the Communications Subcommittee and further refining the social license key messages.

- Once the key messages are finalized, they will be used to develop communication tools, whether that is signage, social media posts, etc. These communication tools will go into some type of shared drive for partners to use in their landscapes.
- The goal of the social license key messages is to ultimately help increase the pace and scale of treatments and support the work of the three priority landscapes. The key messages will also create a consistent set of messages for partners to use with tweaks to address their specific, local context.

## **FOREST RESTORATION DEFINITION DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed how to define forest restoration. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Communications Subcommittee suggested that the Social License Subcommittee define the term “forest restoration” if they are going to use it in communication materials.
- It is important to define the word “restoration” considering that restoration is the name of the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative.
- Members of the public may not understand what forest restoration means and what that looks like on the ground. The general public will also not understand the word “restoration” in a scientific way.
- There are multiple definitions of forest restoration. It is important to keep the defining language as consistent as possible across organizations and agencies.
- The term “restoration” in previous discussions was intended to mean salvaging trees that had been killed by insect infestation and disease. However, it is important to make sure that the Subcommittee is using and interpreting terms, like restoration, in the same way.
- The Colorado State Forest Action Plan, which is in the process of being finalized, has language on forest restoration. Daniel Beveridge will reach out to CSFS staff to gather more information on what language they use to define forest restoration in the Colorado Forest Action Plan.
- Another potential definition for forest restoration is, “actions to re-instate ecological processes, which accelerate recovery of forest structure, ecological functioning and biodiversity levels towards those typical of climax forests.” The Social License Subcommittee may need to refine the language of this definition. This definition does a good job of capturing the goal of forest restoration in promoting biodiversity and ecological function.
- To some people, the term “forest restoration” means returning the forest to historic conditions. For some forests, the goal of treatment may not be to return the forest to historic conditions. Instead, the goal may be to create a resilient forest that can withstand disturbances in the long term. This concept of creating a resilient forest is important in the context of climate change.
- Some people understand restoration as returning to pre-European settlement conditions. The goal of restoration should not be to return to these conditions or to get the entire forest to an old-growth forest that would never have human management again.
- The Social License Subcommittee should try to develop suggestions for a definition of forest restoration to bring to the RMRI partner group. The definition of forest restoration should be based on partner documents, like the Colorado Forest Action Plan. The definition of forest restoration does not have to be ready for the July 22 RMRI meeting, but it should be ready for the next full RMRI meeting after that.
- Tim Kylo, Nathan Van Schaik, and Dan Beveridge will work together to develop suggestions for a definition of forest restoration to bring to the Social License Subcommittee for their

review. Once the Social License Subcommittee has reviewed it, the definition will be sent to the full RMRI partner group for their review.

- Mo Bookwalter will reach out to Tony Cheng to gather his thoughts on the definition of forest restoration.

### **PRESCRIBED FIRE MESSAGES FEEDBACK DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the feedback on the prescribed fire key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Communications Subcommittee provided feedback that there should be a message on the risk associated with prescribed fire. There are inherent risks related to prescribed fire, including smoke and escaped fires. The message should both inform the public about the risks that are associated with prescribed and that fire crews and planners do everything they can to reduce these risks.
- It is important to acknowledge the risks that are associated with prescribed fire. The message may need to be refined more, but the concept should be included in the social license key messaging.
- The Colorado Prescribed Fire Council has a document with information on interagency complexity and risk analysis for prescribed fire. The document contains information for prescribed fire managers to assess risk and make decisions on what they should and should not do during a prescribed fire. This document would be a good place to start to develop a message on risk. Kirk Will will share that document with the Social License Subcommittee, and Patt Dorsey and Kirk Will will work together to develop a message around prescribed fire risk.
- The RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW) partners suggested that there be a message for managed wildland fires. Managed wildland fires are fires that occur naturally and can be used like prescribed fires to manage the forest if maintained correctly. Managed wildland fires could be another tool in the toolbox for forest management. This message could use more details on how managers decide when and how to let a natural wildfire burn.
- The Communications Subcommittee provided feedback that the “let’s fight fire with fire” message might be ineffective in some areas and should be taken off the list of potential messages. Fire can be an emotional topic for communities, particularly communities that were recently affected by a fire, and this message might not be effective at reaching audiences that had recently experienced a catastrophic wildfire.
- The Communications Subcommittee was uncertain if the message “prescribed fire works for us all” is a correct statement. The message should be oriented around the idea that prescribed fire works for forest restoration.
- The Communications Subcommittee liked the messages that “fire restores wildlands” and that “prescribed fires = healthy fires” and suggested the Social License Subcommittee focus on these messages.
- The messages should be crafted in a way that anticipates and prepares for potential counter messages.
- A message that should be added to the list of the key messages is a “big smoke versus small smoke” message. This message would inform the public that there is a choice between experiencing small smoke from a prescribed fire or big smoke from a wildfire.
- The message that “prescribed fire is a remedy for wildfire” is a message that should be elevated.
- A messaging strategy that resonated with the Communication Subcommittee is having vignettes of wildlife and plant species that rely on fire for rejuvenation. That could be a communication material that could help promote the messaging.

## **FIRE-ADAPTED COMMUNITY FEEDBACK DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the feedback on the fire-adapted community key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Communications Subcommittee discussed adding a message on climate change to the list of key messages. They suggested a message about how a change in climate calls for a change in strategy. They suggested adding a message on how climate change increases the size and likelihood of fire and how forests have experienced impacts from diseases and insects. This message is intended to reach a more general audience. This messaging needs to be developed further.
- The Communications Subcommittee also recommended adding a message about the high cost of post-fire recovery efforts. The message would include information on how proper forest management reduces the cost of post-fire recovery. The message should also include information on how forest management creates jobs in rural communities and helps the local economy.
- The CSFS has information on how \$1 towards forest restoration saves \$3 in post-fire recovery costs. This information could be effective at reaching a general audience. Daniel Beveridge has CSFS resources on the cost-benefit of mitigation efforts and can share them with the Social License Subcommittee.
- Another idea that the Social License Subcommittee should explore is how prescribed fire increases the profitability of the land. Burning some areas may make the land more profitable. That message would resonate with audiences, particularly those in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) communities.
- The timber and biomass industry is an economic builder in their local communities. For every dollar that the timber and biomass industry creates, that dollar stays in the community and rolls over seven times. The increase in economic output generates additional funding that can then, in turn, be used in a post-fire recovery situation. Tim Kylo will share information on the economic impacts of the timber and biomass industry on local communities with the Social License Subcommittee.
- The Communications Subcommittee suggested bringing in messages that would resonate with urban communities around the importance of being wildfire ready.
- The term “wildfire ready” should be changed to “fire-adapted” in the key messages. Over the past ten years, many agencies and organizations at the state and national level have been educating the public on the term “fire-adapted communities.” Using the term “fire-adapted communities” would keep the messaging consistent with state and national efforts. The Social License Subcommittee supported using the term “fire-adapted communities” in the messaging instead of “wildfire ready.”

## **ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT FEEDBACK DISCUSSION ON LOGGING**

Meeting participants discussed the feedback on the term “logging” in the active forest management key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Communications Subcommittee discussed at length about using the term “logging” in the messaging. During the discussion, there was not a representative from the logging industry on the call. The Communications Subcommittee discussed how different audiences perceive the term logging in different ways. Some people have a negative stereotype in certain areas of the country. In other areas of the country, people have a positive association with the word because the logging industry provides jobs and economic benefits to local communities. The Communications Subcommittee’s discussion was only about the word “logging” and not the concept or act of logging. There was a suggestion from the

Communications Subcommittee about using terms like “thinning,” “forest restoration,” or “active forest management” in place of “logging.”

- Logging is a proud profession that has been going on for millennium. Part of social license is bringing forward the terms that are normally avoided. Forest treatments involve cutting and logging trees. If the term “logging” is not used in the key messages, then the Social License Subcommittee is missing an opportunity to inform the public about the importance of logging.
- Terms like “thinning” are not a good substitute for “logging” because thinning is only one aspect of logging. “Active forest management” may be an acceptable term to substitute for “logging.” Even then, it is important to be honest with the public about what is occurring in the forest and use the term “logging.” The public is going to see logging trucks and mechanized equipment, and if the messages are not honest with the public, there might be a negative impact on the social license.
- One reason for the suggestion of using the term “active forest management” is because active forest management captures a variety of treatment methods and management tools, such as mastication. The fact that active forest management includes a variety of treatment methods and management tools should be considered any time it is used in the messaging. The term “active forest management” should not be used in place of the term “logging” if the treatment activity involves logging.
- Each of the landscapes is going to pick and use messages from the list of key messages that will most resonate with their communities. For this reason, logging should be in the messages. Each landscape can then decide how to best use the messaging for their communities.
- There is an opportunity to reframe logging as an important and essential activity to achieving good outcomes on the ground. These messages represent an opportunity to change the perceptions of people who have a negative perception of logging. RMRI represents a unique opportunity to change those perceptions.
- There is evidence that communities and people support logging. As loggers cut and salvage dead trees, they have gained broad support for the industry. The general public is not opposed to logging, and there has not been any push back from major communities, like Telluride and Durango, through which log trucks haul. Anyone who has experienced catastrophic wildfires is highly in favor of loggers. The Communications and Social License Subcommittee could elevate the stories of people who have seen fires and seen the benefits of logging in their communities.
- Loggers are an important audience for messaging. The messaging should reach not only current loggers but also potential future loggers.
- The messaging should focus on the desired outcomes as the reason for applying a variety of different management techniques.
- The Social License Subcommittee participants agreed to keep the term “logging” in the key messages.

### **ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT OTHER FEEDBACK DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed other feedback from the Communications Subcommittee on the active forest management key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

- Other feedback from the Communications Subcommittee included adding a message about how active forest management impacts water quality and supply, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat, and wildfire risk. There should also be messages on how active forest management can save the lives of firefighters and residents in the WUI.

- There should be messaging on how forest management improves habitat. One story that demonstrates how logging improves habitat is the story about the lynx recovery program on the San Juan National Forest. The slash and slash piles that are being produced through logging on the San Juan National Forest are improving habitat for snowshoe hares, which in turn is improving habitat for lynx. This story should be promoted and could be a national story because the lynx recovery program has national attention.
- There could be an opportunity to craft messaging to reach people who have a spiritual tie to nature.
- There should be a message on how active forest management is needed to salvage the dead trees on the landscape.

### **RMRI FULL MEETING UPDATE**

Meeting participants discussed what they will share during their update during the full RMRI meeting on July 22. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Social License Subcommittee will share what they have been discussing, including the conversation around the definition of forest restoration and the term “logging.”
- Tim Kylo will give the update during the July 22 full RMRI meeting. Patt Dorsey will develop slides for the Social License Subcommittee update with support from Samuel Wallace.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- The Communications Subcommittee will take the direction from the Social License Subcommittee and begin to create communication materials with the themes and messages from the social license key messages document. They would like to take three or four of these messages to the branding and marketing firm The Truth to further refine these messages.
- The Social License Subcommittee will need to develop more in-depth messages around climate change and the concept of big smoke versus small smoke.
- Social License Subcommittee will continue to work on the Social License Subcommittee key messages through a shared Google Doc.