

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**April 24, 2020, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**  
**RMRI Communications Subcommittee**  
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

*Attendance:* Patt Dorsey, Rachel Franchina, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Teddy Parker-Renga, Mike Preston, Kelle Reynolds, Catherine Schloegel, Tom Spezze, and Jodi Stemler

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Matt Lindler and Kelle Reynolds</b>	Develop a preliminary wish list of images and photographs and share it with the Communication Subcommittee via a Google Document to receive additions and suggestions.
<b>Matt Lindler</b>	Coordinate with Heather Bergman to invite representatives from The Truth to attend the next Communication Subcommittee meeting.
<b>Kelle Reynolds and Rachel Franchina</b>	Reach out to the public affairs staff of the USFS to see what photographs they have of forests and forestry treatments in Colorado.

**COMMUNICATION SUBCOMMITTEE ROLE DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the role of the Communication Subcommittee. Their comments are summarized below.

- Since August 2019, Matt Lindler, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), and Reid Armstrong, US Forest Service (USFS), have been operating the communication aspect of RMRI, including developing the website, social media presence, and other communication tools. RMRI lost capacity to operate the communication aspects of RMRI when Reid Armstrong left for another position in the USFS. The USFS is currently hiring someone to fill Reid Armstrong’s position, and they expect to announce the new hire soon.
- One of the takeaways from the discussions on communication during the February 26 RMRI meeting was that there is a need to develop consistent communication, messaging, and brand for partners to use at the local, state, and national level. Communication plans and strategies should align between local, state, and national groups while also giving local groups flexibility to incorporate local sensitivities into the messaging. For example, the San Juan National Forest is currently developing a communication plan in Southwest Colorado, and it would be beneficial if the communication strategy in that plan aligned with the communication strategies of RMRI.
- The Communication Subcommittee has several identified tasks, including developing a communication strategy with details on how RMRI communicates different messages and successes across and within landscapes, developing a communication channel between project areas and RMRI-Colorado (RMRI-CO), and creating a RMRI brand that also respects and recognizes the identity and history of the local area partners. Other identified tasks include researching internal and external audiences, developing a RMRI point of contact for all communication needs, and developing tools to track and communicate successes (e.g., newsletters, website, etc.).
- The Communication Subcommittee should also consider and be mindful of how RMRI puts messages out on the behalf of individual partner organizations to ensure that they respect the agency of individual organizations. The messaging will be vetted through the RMRI-CO partners. If there are any messages or strategies that are against the policy or principles of an organization, they will be discussed by the Communication Subcommittee and RMRI

partners. The Communication Subcommittee will be involved in the development and approval of communication materials to share with the RMRI-CO partner group.

- The pace of RMRI activities will continue to increase as RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW) begins to implement projects. This period as the pace of activities increases can serve as an opportunity to develop protocols and communication infrastructure as communication needs intensify.

### **SOCIAL LICENSE AND COMMUNICATION SUBCOMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the relationship between the Social License and Communication Subcommittee. Their comments are summarized below.

- There is crossover between the RMRI Social License Subcommittee and the Communication Subcommittee in terms of tactics, methods, strategies, and participants, and although they are two separate Subcommittees, they will continue to work together. The Social License Subcommittee, in particular, will look to the Communication Subcommittee to apply their communication expertise and skillsets to help develop messages and communication materials to build social license for prescribed fire and active forest management. The Communication Subcommittee is also connected to the Governance Subcommittee as communication is an important part of the governance structure.
- The Social License Subcommittee is developing messages to build broad social approval for prescribed fire, active management, and actions homeowners can take to protect their property. The Social License Subcommittee members are discussing messages related to prescribed burning because many of the discussion points from the February 26 RMRI meeting on social license were related to prescribed fire, and burning is a cheap and effective tool to achieve the pace and scale. The Social License Subcommittee messaging may be a subset of the larger RMRI brand. Anyone who is interested in further discussing communication strategies around prescribed fire and active vegetation management to build broad social approval can join the RMRI Social License Subcommittee.

### **COMMUNICATION RESOURCES DEPOSITORY DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed creating a depository to store communication materials. Their comments are summarized below.

- There is currently not a depository or archive to store RMRI materials and documents for people to access. A centralized location that contains RMRI materials would be beneficial to broadly distribute materials to RMRI partners and other interested parties. The Communication Subcommittee can consider a central depository as a way to facilitate the management of knowledge among RMRI partners.
- Meeting participants discussed how other collaborative groups share their resources throughout a collaborative network. In Southwest Colorado, the Dolores Watershed Resilient Forests Collaborative uses their website to share resources and are in the process of establishing communication protocol. The Water Center at Fort Lewis College also provides access to reports for Southwest Colorado partners. The Upper South Platte Partnership uses Google Drive and have learned that it may not be the best platform for sharing information across complex collaborative networks. The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) uses SharePoint because more federal partners can access it, and it is a secure way to share sensitive documents between agencies and organizations.
- There are multiple options that can serve as a central depository for RMRI communication materials, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.
  - *Google Drive* can be challenging due to some difficult but surmountable restrictions around the USFS's and other federal partners' ability to use the program. It is also

easy to lose materials in Google Drive through a nest of folders, and it allows users to delete documents; however, it may be the most familiar and accessible to users, and it allows for the editing of draft documents.

- *Box* is the default file sharing program for the USFS, but there are size limitations on what can be uploaded (e.g., videos) unless upgrading to a paid subscription.
- *SharePoint* allows for the secure sharing of materials and access across organizations, but it is a cumbersome program to manage and requires a Microsoft subscription.
- *The RMRI website* has technical challenges related to uploading and managing material and does not allow regular users to edit and delete materials, which is both a pro and a con in terms of access.
- Meeting participants discussed who the audience is for RMRI materials and to what materials they will have access. Open and transparent access for as many people as possible to as many documents and materials as possible helps to build trust and awareness with partners and the public. As soon as documents are sent to a federal email, that document becomes public information, so it is better to provide information upfront and increase transparency. There may be exceptions that should be excluded from an open shared drive, such as documents concerning funding and financial resources as well as any documents with proprietary or sensitive information.
- The meeting participants decided to recommend to the full RMRI-CO group that they use Google Drive and Google Docs to store and share draft documents during editing and the RMRI website to store and share final versions of documents with as much information and transparency as possible. They will bring that recommendation to the full RMRI-CO group during the May 1 RMRI meeting. In the future, there may be an opportunity to research into specific software packages for file sharing.

## **RMRI BRANDING DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed RMRI branding. Their comments are summarized below.

- An RMRI brand is an important communication product that the RMRI Communication Subcommittee needs to develop. Branding consists of developing the overarching message, image, and identity of RMRI and determining how to market that brand to raise awareness about RMRI. The brand is the visual representation of RMRI's story and identity as well as the elevator speech for those who are unfamiliar with RMRI. Elements of a brand include a logo, tagline, and other text-based elements.
- There could be a partner toolkit that contains high-level messages about RMRI so that partners can tell the story of RMRI in a consistent manner and create a shared understanding of what RMRI is and does. It is important to have an open and accessible shared drive for partners to access RMRI branding resources (e.g., logos, taglines, etc.) so that they can use the branding elements on their own platforms.
- Meeting participants discussed the message and story of a RMRI brand. The message should be broad, simple, and self-explanatory. The RMRI brand could potentially focus on the partnership component of RMRI. The Social License Subcommittee discussed what messages may achieve broad social approval during their meeting, and one idea from that meeting was to promote the idea of making Colorado "wildfire ready," which could serve as the central brand of RMRI. Another perspective was that the RMRI brand should distinguish itself from other organizations that are already releasing messages on wildfire. RMRI could broaden their message and their audience by focusing on RMRI's four values (water, wildlife, recreation, and community) to tie together how the activities of RMRI are protecting and improving a person's and community's quality of life and well-being.

- The NWTF hired a marketing organization called The Truth, which is composed of three marketing organizations: Fisher Design, Meoli Digital Group, and Cutthroat Branding and Marketing. Two of the principles of The Truth have ties to Colorado and have a concern and interest in the state. The Truth has successfully managed the NWTF's rebranding effort and can bring expertise in marketing research and branding. The NWTF can expand their already existing scope of work with The Truth to have them assist in building the RMRI brand. The Truth will put together a portfolio for this Subcommittee to evaluate. Matt Lindler will coordinate with Heather Bergman to invite representatives from The Truth to attend the next Communication Subcommittee meeting to discuss the potential for them to work with the Communication Subcommittee to build the RMRI brand.

### **RMRI COMMUNICATION ASSETS DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed what assets RMRI currently has and what materials they still need to develop. Their comments are summarized below.

- Assets are the methods, venues, and tools that already exist through which RMRI partners can further share and expand the RMRI message. The communication assets that already exist include:
  - The RMRI website, which has links to a Frequently Asked Questions document, news articles, and published stories.
  - A periodically released RMRI newsletter called The Source, which is written and maintained by Matt Lindler and goes out to 186 recipients.
  - Social media channels.
  - Constant Contact email marketing subscription.
  - Historical documents/timelines.
  - Meeting summaries.
- There are additional assets needed to support RMRI-CO and the three priority areas. The assets needed include:
  - Print-ready/digital-ready images with messaging.
  - A stock image library with photographs of before and after treatments, logging activity, mastication, mechanical removal of shrubs, thinning treatments, burn scar imagery, beetle-kill imagery, water resources that have been damaged or influenced by wildfires, etc.
  - Stock video resources.
  - Printed material (e.g., pamphlets, flyers, etc.).
  - Various messaging for cross-cutting issues.
  - Elevator speeches for RMRI-CO, priority areas, and cross-cutting issues.
  - Training for "spokespeople."
- The RMRI Communication Subcommittee identified those with the skillsets needed to develop these additional assets. The NWTF has a graphic design department that can offer their services, and one person on their video production staff who can edit videos but not capture new video footage. A photographer is a needed as well. The Communication Subcommittee can request support from RMRI-CO partners with the necessary resources and skillsets to help develop the additional assets needed during the RMRI May 1 meeting.
- Meeting participants discussed which RMRI partners may have access to the resources to produce these needed assets. Local partners can use the list of additional assets needed to begin to organize the resources they have and create a plan to track and collect the resources they do not have (e.g., photographs of an area before, during, and after the treatment) in advance of any work. The additional assets needed list represents a structured approach in which local partners provide resources, like photographs, to the Communication Subcommittee, which then in turns takes those resources to create

communication materials for the local partners to use. The Mule Deer Foundation has access to before and after treatment photographs; although, not all of their photographs are from Colorado. The CSFS has flyover photographs of beetle-kill forests and photographs of before and after pictures from their treatment projects. The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute and Rocky Mountain Research Station have photographs from their pre- and post-treatment monitoring work as well. The USFS should also have photographs, and Kelle Reynolds and Rachel Franchina can reach out to the public affairs staff of the USFS to see what photographs they have of forests and forestry treatments in Colorado.

- The Communication Subcommittee should develop a wish list of specific photographs and images by topic and forest cover type. Local and statewide RMRI partners can use this list to provide the photographs requested from their already existing inventory of images or by taking new photographs. Location should be a factor when selecting photographs for communication materials, so each photo should be labelled by area. The Communication Subcommittee should create this wish list as soon as possible as treatments in Southwest Colorado will begin soon.
- There are a couple of factors that may impede the work of taking new photographs: 1) there may be restrictions on who can be onsite during a treatment due to the COVID-19 situation, and 2) the cost of hiring photographers and videographers.
- During the RMRI May 1 meeting, the Communication Subcommittee should request assistance from local and statewide RMRI partners to provide photographs based on the wish list. Matt Lindler and Kelle Reynolds will develop a preliminary wish list of images and photographs and share it with the Communication Subcommittee via a Google Document to receive additions and suggestions.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- During the RMRI-CO full meeting on May 1, the Communication Subcommittee will provide an update. In that update, they will:
  - Share how the Communication Subcommittee is interested in having The Truth work on RMRI branding with the Communication Subcommittee.
  - Shop the wish list of photographs and images for RMRI-CO partners to provide photographs from their already existing inventories of images or by taking new photographs.
  - Request support from RMRI-CO partners that have the necessary skillsets and resources to develop the additional assets needed.
  - Recommend that there be a central depository of information on the RMRI website for final versions of documents, like meeting summaries and historical documents, with as much information and transparency as possible and a Google Drive to share draft files and discussion documents.