Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
June 19, 2020, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
RMRI Communications Subcommittee
Meeting Summary – FINAL

ATTENDANCE
Participants: Tim Kyllo, Jason Lawhon, Teddy Parker-Renga, Kelle Reynolds, Catherine Schloegel, and Jodi Stemler

Facilitation: Matt Lindler, Nathan Van Schaik, and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler	Bring the feedback and proposed revisions from the Communications Subcommittee on the key messages to the Social License Subcommittee for their review.
Teddy Parker-Renga	- Send the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) infographic that contains information on how every dollar spent on mitigation saves three dollars in post-fire recovery to Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler. - Reach out to the CSFS wildfire mitigation program staff to gather their input on the fire-adapted community messages as well as a strategy to better unify fire-adapted community messaging across organizations and agencies. - Invite a CSFS wildfire program representative to join the RMRI Social License or Communications Subcommittee if they are interested.
Communications Subcommittee	Send any additional thoughts or suggestions on the social license key messages to Matt Lindler and Nathan Van Schaik to take to the Social License Subcommittee by June 26.
Samuel Wallace	Send the draft update slides to the Communications Subcommittee for their review before they are sent out to the whole RMRI group on June 22.

SOCIAL LICENSE KEY MESSAGES DISCUSSION
Meeting participants reviewed and discussed the social license key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Social License Subcommittee developed a key messages document. The document outlines the themes and messages for three different topics: prescribed fire, fire-adapted communities, and active forest management. The purpose of the key messages is to generate the necessary social license to achieve the goals of RMRI.
- The key messages were developed with the idea that the priority landscape partners would take these messages and tailor it to their landscapes. The key messages are not intended to be a public-facing document, and it is not expected that priority landscape partners will use all of the messages. Priority landscape partners may select the messages that are most useful and relevant to them.
- The key messages will be used to create communication materials. RMRI-Colorado will use these communication materials in their own messaging (e.g., social media posts), and RMRI partners can edit these materials to take to their respective audiences.

Prescribed Fire Messages
- Some barriers to creating social license for prescribed fire include smoke, concerns around the ability to control a prescribed fire, trust in the agency administering the burn, and wildlife and aesthetic impacts.
- The themes for the prescribed fire messages are:
  - "Fire is a natural element in Colorado, and it always will be. 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 Social License Subcommittee researched messaging from the Prescribed Fire Council and other organizations to inform their key messages.
- One of the prescribed fire messages is "let's fight fire with fire." There were some regional concerns with this message expressed by the Upper Arkansas partners. Due to recent fires in the Upper Arkansas landscape, this message would be less effective than others. Instead of "let's fight fire with fire," the message could be "prescribed fire reduces wildfire risk."
- Prescribed fire is an important tool in some areas, but not in all areas. The messaging should incorporate the nuance that prescribed fire is a tool among many and is not applicable to every situation and area.
- One of the benefits of prescribed fire is that it increases the pace and scale of treatments more than any other tool. Prescribed fire is also the most effective tool for removing small-diameter trees and surface fuels that help increase the rate of fire spread; other tools do not remove that type of woody material. There should be a bullet around the concept that prescribed fire reduces fuel loading.
- Prescribed fire is a cost-efficient forest management tool, which may be a message that would resonate with the public. It is also the riskiest tool because of the chance that a prescribed fire could escape containment. The Social License Subcommittee intentionally did not use the term "controlled burn" to avoid communicating the message that there is no risk associated with prescribed fires.
- Any messages about how prescribed fire is a tool for forest treatments should be sensitive to the ongoing conditions in which the US Forest Service (USFS) Chief and Regional Foresters have directed staff to not use prescribed fires for the time being due to COVID-19.
- There should be a bullet that emphasizes that thinning is sometimes needed before conducting prescribed fires. The need for thinning before a prescribed fire is related to the idea that multiple tools are needed to improve forest health.
- The message "prescribed fire works for all of us" may not be well received by those who have been impacted from prescribed fires that went out of control. The Communications Subcommittee should prepare for any oppositional responses to key messages once they start using them in public.
- The message "fire restores wildlands" is impactful but may need to re-worded.
- The message "Rx fire = healthy forests" is impactful because, ultimately, the overall goal of RMRI is healthy forests. The message could be reversed as well to say healthy forests mean healthy fires. The East Canyon Fire that is burning in Southwest Colorado is an example of how unhealthy forests lead to unhealthy fires.
- Forest health can be a vague concept to the layperson. Using terms people are familiar with, like "wildlife" and "plants," can make some of the messages more relatable. There was an

idea for a messaging campaign that includes portrait-style photographs of birds and plants that benefit from prescribed fires with the message, "I depend on fire."

- One of the challenges with the prescribed fire messaging is that it goes against some of the USFS's previous messaging (i.e., "only you can prevent forest fires"). The USFS released a video on Shared Stewardship to explain why they are shifting their strategy to the Shared Stewardship model. Some of the messages from that video should be added to the key messages.
- Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler will take the following changes to the prescribed fire messages back to the Social License Subcommittee for their review:
  - Remove the message "let's fight fire with fire" and replace it with "prescribed fire reduces wildfire risk."
  - Add a bullet around the idea that prescribed fire is one tool of many to achieve healthy forests and is not applicable in every situation.
  - Add a bullet around the concept that prescribed fire reduces fuel loading.
  - Add a bullet that emphasizes that thinning is sometimes needed before conducting prescribed fires.
  - Remove the message "prescribed fire works for all of us."
  - Add messages from the USFS's Shared Stewardship video.

Fire-Adapted Community Messages
- The themes for 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."
- There should be a bullet under the "wildland fire is a societal problem" theme that explains how conditions are getting worse. The bullet should say that wildfires are becoming more destructive due to a changing climate, increasing population size in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and an increasing number of insect and disease outbreaks. This bullet should communicate the risk in a way that is not overly alarming. This messaging could potentially hurt tourism for small communities if conveyed in a way that is too alarming. The messaging around this concept could be that a change in climate requires a change in strategy. Priority landscape partners can then choose if that message is relevant to their local areas.
- There should be a bullet related to the economic cost of wildfires and the economic benefits of forestry treatments (i.e., for every dollar that is spent on mitigating wildfires, $3 is saved in post-fire mitigation costs). This messaging would connect with communities in the WUI in particular. In previous campaigns, CSFS used an infographic related to this messaging that resonated with the public. Headwaters Economics has a report on the cost of post-fire recovery in comparison to the cost of pre-wildfire treatments. Teddy Parker-Renga will send the CSFS infographic that contains information on how every dollar spent on mitigation saves three dollars in post-fire recovery to Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler.
- The message "enjoy this wildfire-ready forest" is a good message to put at recreational trailheads.
- There should be fire-adapted community messages that target urban communities.
- There are several organizations, like the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and National Fire Protection Association, that have been engaged in fire-adapted community messaging for several years. It would be helpful to connect with these organizations and other relevant agencies around the fire-adapted community messaging to better align

messages and create a cohesive message strategy moving forward. RMRI could be the organization that helps to bring these organizations and agencies together. Representatives from these organizations should be invited to participate in the Communications and Social License Subcommittee meetings.

- Teddy Parker-Renga will reach out to the CSFS wildfire mitigation program staff to gather their input on the fire-adapted community messages as well as a strategy to better unify fire-adapted community messaging across organizations and agencies. He will also Invite a CSFS wildfire program representative to join the RMRI Social License or Communications Subcommittee if they are interested.
- An important message to emphasize is that fire-adapted communities and homes help protect firefighters.
- Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler will take the following changes to the fire-adapted community messages back to the Social License Subcommittee for their review:
  - o Add a bullet under the "wildlife fire is a societal problem" theme that explains how conditions are getting worse and wildfires are becoming more destructive with a changing climate, increasing population size in the WUI, and increasing number of insect and disease outbreaks. (A potential message includes a change in climate requires a change in strategy.)
  - o Add a bullet related to the economic impacts of wildfire and the economic benefits produced from forest treatments.

Active Forest Management Messages
- The key theme for 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 message that "logging saves trees" should be that "logging trees saves forests." The second phrase acknowledges that removing trees saves the forest as a whole.
- The message "logging is forest management" should be changed to "thinning is forest management." The message "logging protects communities" should be removed from the messages because there is nuance and complexity to the statement that may not applicable to many situations.*
- People from different regions in the United States, like the Pacific Northwest, may have a different concept of logging. It is important to distinguish that Colorado forests are not the same as the forests of the Pacific Northwest.
- Logging is an emotional word to some people, and it may not be the best word to highlight in the key messages.*
- Logging is needed in Colorado to address forest health issues, and people from other regions need to see it is a positive practice in Colorado. A message, like "logging restores Colorado's forests," can put a positive light on logging as a helpful practice in Colorado.
- Active forest management includes techniques other than logging. The messaging should not exclusively focus on logging as the only technique for active forest management.
- There should be a message that having fewer trees protects water and homes. A potential message could be "forest management protects your water." Another term, like "forest restoration," may resonate with audiences more than "forest management." If RMRI uses

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*Some Communications Subcommittee members who were not present at the meeting did not agree with these suggestions. This topic will be revisited in future Subcommittee discussions.

the term "forest restoration," it would be important to define it among partners to avoid confusion.

- The messages "forest restoration in progress" and "forest restoration in action" could work in some parts of the state, like the Upper South Platte. Conservation-minded people would have a positive association with the term "forest restoration." There could be signs with these messages posted on popular recreation trails.
- There could be signs that say, "forest restoration for wildlife," "forest restoration for water," "forest restoration to protect firefighters," etc. These messages can capture the nuance of why a specific forest restoration project is being implemented in a simple, understandable way. A message will also be more successful if it connects forest restoration with things that the public likes (e.g., the air we breathe, the water we play in, etc.). Those messages help people know and understand why the work is occurring.
- There should be a bullet about the economic benefits of the wood industry. A message around how forestry creates jobs may resonate with communities, especially rural communities in Southwest Colorado. The messaging could be tied to the "$1 in forestry treatments saves $3 in post-fire recovery" message by saying "a $1 investment in forestry treatments supports local jobs and saves $3 in post-fire recovery." Teddy Parker-Renga can reach out to the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing Program to gather more information on how the wood products industry benefits the economy of small communities.
- Other successful messaging campaigns have tied water quality to beer. The message could be that "healthy forests = healthy water = better beer."
- Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler will take the following changes to the active forest management messages back to the Social License Subcommittee for their review:
  - Change the message that "logging saves trees" to "logging trees saves forests."
  - Change the message that "logging is forest management" to "thinning is forest management."*
  - Add a message that "logging restores Colorado's forests."
  - Consider re-phrasing messages that use the word "logging" with other terms, like "forest restoration," "thinning," etc.*
  - Add messages around "forest restoration for [insert value]."
  - Add a bullet about the local economic benefits of the wood industry.
  - Add a message that "healthy forests = healthy water = better beer."

THE TRUTH DRAFT PROJECT SUMMARY DISCUSSION
Nathan Van Schaik, USFS, gave an overview of the draft project summary that outlines the work The Truth will conduct to build RMRI's brand. His comments are summarized below.

- The purpose of the project summary is to outline for The Truth what RMRI expects in a finished product. The project summary is intended to serve as a guiding document as The Truth develops the RMRI brand. The project summary is also meant to honor the work that RMRI partners have already completed and agreed upon.
- The goal is to get a copy of the project summary to The Truth by June 26.
- The background section of the project summary provides information on the four values of RMRI and lists the three priority landscapes.
- The vision section of the project summary outlines what success looks like for RMRI. The vision statement is from the RMRI governance charter.

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- The target audiences for RMRI messages, as outlined in the project summary, are:
  - General public (focus on CO, WY, UT, ID, MT, NM)
  - RMRI partners and their respective audiences
  - Prospective RMRI partners and funding sources
  - National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) members and constituents (hunting public)
  - USFS personnel and audience
  - Colorado Legislators/Policymakers
- The mandatory items and information that The Truth must consider or include in a final product are a branding guide, consideration of all three RMRI priority landscapes with an option to include future landscapes, consideration of Colorado politics and potential opposition groups, and the NWTF and USFS as the co-conveners of RMRI in the West.
- The potential deliverables outlined in the project summary include branding elements (logo, branding guide, brand positioning, graphics), an initial advertising campaign, and an updated website. The Communications Subcommittee should consider what deliverables they may be able to produce without The Truth if The Truth provides initial guidance and direction (e.g., implementing an initial advertising campaign).
- The Truth can help build a sleek and mobile-friendly website for RMRI partners to manage into the future. The website is currently on WordPress and should remain on WordPress so that partners can continue to edit it once The Truth is no longer under contract. The website could also have a variety of elements, including job listings, project trackers, etc.
- The expected date for The Truth to produce the deliverables is September 2020.
- The project summary defines "the wins" (i.e., how RMRI knows they have been successful). The wins listed in the project summary include:
  - RMRI is considered to be a lead champion in the "Rocky Mountain lifestyle."
  - Change in public and governmental attitudes.
  - Achieve XX% of all partner measurable objectives by 2025, XX% by 2030.
  - State and federal congressional leaders and local government leaders support RMRI.
  - Increased public awareness of NWTF in the West (memberships, partnerships).

Group Discussion
Meeting participants discussed The Truth project summary. Their comments are summarized below.
- The most important deliverable is the branding elements. It is also important to have ready-to-edit communication materials for partners.
- The RMRI website is not going to be a USFS or NWTF website but an RMRI website. The website formatting and content will account for the over 40 organizations that are involved with RMRI. The brand will also be an RMRI brand, not a USFS or NWTF brand.
- The vision in the project summary should articulate the desired end state of RMRI and not the organizational vision. RMRI-Southwest Colorado (RMRI-SW) partners articulated a vision for their desired end state in their project proposal. That vision can serve as an example for the vision in The Truth project summary.
- One challenge for The Truth is going to be understanding RMRI as an organization and then translating RMRI in a way that resonates with the public. The values and desired end goals of RMRI may be the most understandable elements of RMRI to the general public.

PROCESS FOR MEDIA REQUESTS DISCUSSION
Meeting participants discussed the process for collecting quotes for potential media requests. Their comments are summarized below.

- Partners should be able to speak freely with the media. The Communications Subcommittee should be notified if RMRI partners speak with the media.
- The website could offer a media query section with contact information for the Communications Subcommittee. The Subcommittee could then direct questions from the media to the experts or answer it themselves.
- The Communications Subcommittee should consider developing internal messaging plans that can be sent to the communication professionals in partner organizations. The messaging plan could include a list of five questions that are expected from the media, five questions that are not wanted from the media, and five questions that are wanted from the media.
- The Communications Subcommittee will continue this discussion at their next meeting.

NEXT STEPS
- The Communications Subcommittee will continue their discussion around the process to respond to media requests at their next meeting.
- Samuel Wallace and Heather Bergman are creating slides to update the full RMRI group on the activities of the RMRI Communications Subcommittee during the next RMRI meeting on June 23. The slides should include a request for RMRI partners to provide pictures and videos to the RMRI Communications Subcommittee. The two key updates of the Communications Subcommittee are that they are working with the Social License Subcommittee to develop key messages and that they are engaged with The Truth to develop branding assets and a website that are sensitive to partner needs. Samuel Wallace will send the draft update slides to the Communications Subcommittee for their review before they are sent out to the whole RMRI group on June 22.