

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**May 11, 2020, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM**  
**RMRI Social License Subcommittee**  
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Rob Addington, Paul Amundson, Patt Dorsey, Cindy Dozier, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Dan Lowell, Kelle Reynolds, Nathan Van Schaik, and Kirk Will

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Rob Addington and Kirk Will</b>	Follow up with the Prescribed Fire Council to find out if they have any talking points on prescribed fire.
<b>Rob Addington</b>	Contact the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative to find out if they have any talking points on prescribed fire.
<b>Tim Kylo, Patt Dorsey, Kelle Reynolds, and Kirk Will</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine the themes and messages in the key messaging document based on the Social License Subcommittee discussion.</li> <li>• Fill out the communications strategy document for the Social License Subcommittee to review.</li> </ul>
<b>Kelle Reynolds</b>	Reach out to Frank McCormick of the Rocky Mountain Research Station to see if there is interest in assisting with any social science studies or hosting a graduate student.
<b>Heather Bergman and Kirk Will</b>	Discuss opportunities for graduate students to work with the Social License Subcommittee through the Division of Fire Prevention and Control.
<b>Heather Bergman</b>	Distribute the governance charter to the Social License Subcommittee for any last reviews before it is finalized.
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the outline of a communications strategy document.</li> <li>• Edit the Social License Subcommittee work plan based on the discussion.</li> <li>• Add an extra bullet related to the Social License Subcommittee's responsibilities for developing natural and social science outcomes to the governance charter.</li> <li>• Distribute a Doodle for the week of Memorial Day</li> </ul>

**ACTION ITEM UPDATES**

Meeting participants gave updates on their action items from the 4/17 RMRI Social License Subcommittee meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- Rob Addington, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), reached out to a representative on the Prescribed Fire Council to find out if they have any talking points on prescribed fire. Rob Addington and Kirk Will, Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), will follow up with them to gather information. Rob Addington can also contact the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative to find out if they have any talking points. It would be helpful to cross-reference any talking points from other groups with the messages from the Social License Subcommittee.

- Tim Kylo, Montrose Forest Products, talked with Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association, about the idea of hanging banners on forestry equipment, and they agreed that it would be a good idea as long as the messaging is provided.
- Rachel Franchina's detail as the RMRI communications specialist has ended, and so, she is not at the meeting to report on any communications research.

## **KEY MESSAGING DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the key messaging document that a subset of the Social License Subcommittee developed before the meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- The key messaging document includes themes for three topics: prescribed fire, fire-adapted communities, and active forest management. Each topic contains overarching themes with detailed information and brief messages that can serve as the "slogans" in the communication materials. The Communications Subcommittee will take the themes and messages from the Social License Subcommittee and use them to brainstorm potential messages before they are finalized.
- The Communication Subcommittee will be talking with the marketing firm The Truth to see if they can help build RMRI's brand and communication strategy. The Truth can potentially organize focus groups to test any messaging from the Social License and Communications Subcommittee.

### ***Prescribed Fire Messaging Discussion***

- Meeting participants discussed whether they should use "prescribed fire" or "controlled burn" as the standard term in their messages. Members of the public may focus on the word "fire," which may make it difficult to distinguish prescribed fires from wildfires. "Burn" may be a less threatening term. Using the word "fire" may help increase the understanding that communities in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) need to be fire-adapted. Groups like the Prescribed Fire Council and Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative have intentionally stopped using the word "controlled" because it gives people the connotation that every fire will be controlled. If there is an accident, there is a risk of losing social license due to raised expectations as a result of using the term "controlled." The Prescribed Fire Council also uses the term "prescribed fire" in all of their communications, so the Social License Subcommittee should use "prescribed fire" to be consistent. The word "burn" is used in the term "burn plan," which is the document that outlines how to implement a prescribed fire. The Social License Subcommittee agreed to use "prescribed fire" as their standard term.
- Some of the definitions for terms in the key messaging document are from the National Park Service (NPS) rather than USFS. The USFS and NPS have different definitions for terms, like "wildland fire." The key messaging document should include the USFS definitions rather than the NPS definitions.
- One of the messages for prescribed fire is that "prescribed fire is the fastest, least expensive, and most efficient method of securing the health of our forests, water resources, and communities." This message is not accurate; prescribed fire is a tool for forest management, but it is not always the most appropriate and efficient depending on the situation. Replacing the word "securing" with "maintaining" may make the statement more accurate, but the statement still may be too far-reaching. The comparative language could be removed so that the statements says that "prescribed fire is fast, inexpensive, and efficient." The word "fast" should also be taken out of the statement because it may imply that prescribed fires are not well planned or thought out. Prescribed fire is not necessarily a fast tool because it takes months to plan. The word "effective" should be added to the statement as well.

- One of the themes for prescribed fire messages is that prescribed fire can help maintain the visual quality of forested landscapes. One message under this theme should be that the landscape is not visually appealing immediately after a prescribed fire due to red needles, scorched trees, and blackened earth. However, the forest will recover in the long term and may look better than before the burn. It is important to acknowledge the immediate aesthetics of the landscape so that people are not surprised following a prescribed fire.
- The messages overall should include lighter language. Qualifiers, like the word "help," will keep the statements more general and suggest that prescribed fire is a tool in the toolbox rather than the single solution to improve forest health.
- It is common for people to be wary of prescribed burning because of the worry that noxious weeds will encroach into the forest following a prescribed burn. The key messages should include a statement on noxious weeds and how increased coordination can control noxious weed before and after a prescribed fire.

### ***Fire-Adapted Communities Messaging Discussion***

The informational themes for fire-adapted communities are that wildland fire is a societal problem and that people can be a part of the solution.

### ***Active Forest Management Discussion***

- Mastication should have its own messaging since it will be used as a mechanical treatment tool on the San Juan National Forest. Some of the public has concerns about surface fuels, including the surface fuels that mastication and mechanical treatments generate. The messaging for mastication could be that mastication potentially creates opportunities for surface fires but reduces the opportunities for catastrophic crown fires. The messaging for mastication also could be that mastication is a specific tool that creates different results based on the specific context of a stand and that it is not the only tool for treating forests.
- Active management involves a variety of tools and treatment methods. The messaging around active forest management could mention other methods for treating surface fuels, such as pile burning or lop-and-scatter, along with mastication as alternatives to prescribed burning.
- The messaging should be simple and straightforward and assume that the audience is not familiar with any forestry principles or treatment methods, like mastication. The Social License Subcommittee could then provide links and other opportunities for those who are interested in exploring topics further beyond the basic messaging. For example, there could be a virtual toolbox labeled "forest health" that allows members of the public to click on different treatment tools to learn more about them. Having focus groups organized by The Truth can help vet messages with the general public. There could also be members of the Subcommittee who have less familiarity with forest treatments to help vet messages.
- Messages for the general public should focus on the end state. Once the desired end state of the forest is identified, the Social License Subcommittee can identify the tools that will help achieve the desired end state of the forest. If the general public agrees with the end state, then they can support the tools needed to achieve the end state. The idea of starting with the end state is related to the idea that there can be universally applicable messaging for Colorado that landscapes can then refine and apply to their communities and watersheds.
- One important message for the general public is that forest health means safe and secure water resources. Forest health is not only important for the forest, but it helps protect and secure their water and communities.

### ***Next Steps for Key Messaging***

- The Social License Subcommittee is not ready to finalize the statewide messages yet. The Social License Subcommittee should continue to refine their language and identify their audiences before sending their key messages to the Communications Subcommittee. Once they have refined their key messages, they can give their preliminary list to the Communications Subcommittee and The Truth to help refine the messages further and develop communication materials.
- Tim Kylo, Kirk Will, Patt Dorsey, and Kelle Reynolds will refine the themes and messages in the key messaging document based on the Social License Subcommittee discussion.

### **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the communications strategy that was developed before the meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- The purpose of the communication strategy document is to outline the steps needed to create different communication materials, who is responsible for each step, and what resources, skills, and capacities are needed.
- The first communication material to develop is statewide messaging. The steps to develop the statewide messaging includes developing the key messages as a Subcommittee, reviewing and refining them, and then bringing the key messages to the RMRI-Colorado (RMRI-CO) partners to review before they are finalized. RMRI-CO partners could potentially review the key messages at the next RMRI-CO meeting on June 23.
- Having messaging by topics (e.g., wildlife, prescribed fire, etc.) is another needed communication material. Developing messaging by topics follows the same steps as developing statewide messaging with the added step of identifying for what topics the Social License Subcommittee would like to create messaging.
- The steps needed to develop 30- to 45-second videos to post on social media include identifying which partners would post the videos, gathering video footage in the public domain, editing the video and developing a script based on the key messages, and then reviewing the video before distributing it via partners. Developing the videos will require people with video editing skills or funding to hire a third-party. Tim Kylo found Adobe Stock videos that are free, and Kirk Will has access to time-lapse videos of prescribed fire.
- The Social License Subcommittee could develop banners for industry partners to hang off their equipment. The steps to develop these banners include developing the messages, giving the messages to the Communications Subcommittee to design the images, reviewing the designs, and then distributing them to industry partners. This idea could be expanded to activities beyond forestry equipment and logging practices; for example, fire trucks could hang these banners, which could help promote all the tools that are available.
- Handouts and pamphlets can be created by identifying the audience and topic for handouts, developing the key messages, having the Communications Subcommittee develop the material, and then going through a review process between the Social License Subcommittee and RMRI-CO partners.
- Television spots are another potential avenue for Social License Subcommittee messages. The steps to developing the television spots are similar to developing the 30- to 45-second videos with extra resources needed to purchase airtime. The amount of money needed to purchase television airtime, radio station airtime, and newspaper space is decreasing, and it is possible to buy packages to distribute messages across all three media platforms. The amount of money needed depends on the frequency and time of day those spots will run. There also may be opportunities to promote the messages through public service

announcements, which would not cost money. Developing television spots is doable, but it will likely take around a year for the Subcommittee to be ready.

- The Social License Subcommittee should consider different media platforms, including social media, to promote their messages. The most effective media platform for a given message may depend on who the audience is. Social media can be an effective resource because local forest collaboratives can spread a message or video through their social media account. The Social License Subcommittee could identify forest user groups, like recreators and forest collaboratives, as their audience around which they should develop specific communication strategies. The "TV Spots" section in the communication strategy table should be retitled as "Media" and incorporate strategies for several media platforms.
- The last idea in the communications strategy document is to create a "wildfire ready" certification program to help towns and homeowner associations brand their communities as "wildfire ready." There are already entities that have certification programs, so it will require further research to see what certification programs are already available. This item can be a later task for the Subcommittee.
- The document that the Subcommittee has been discussing should be retitled as a work plan rather than as a communications strategy document. Samuel Wallace can then develop the real communications strategy document for Subcommittee members to identify different audiences, the appropriate methods to reach the audience, the key messages for them, and the messenger. Tim Kylo, Kirk Will, Patt Dorsey, and Kelle Reynolds will then fill out the communications strategy document for the Social License Subcommittee to review.
- Samuel Wallace will edit the Social License Subcommittee work plan based on the discussion.

## **SCIENCE OUTCOMES DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the science outcomes that could come from the Social License Subcommittee. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Social License Subcommittee should think of the tasks that are outside of communications, such as generating fire and forestry science outcomes.
- Using science to build social license can be challenging because science needs to be explained to the general public using laymen's terms. Focus groups can help vet any social license messages related to science to make sure they would be effective. Building social license is more related to addressing values and differing perspectives on what the forest should look like rather than addressing the science. It is important to think about the communities in which RMRI partners are working and external influences outside of those communities when developing messages to build social license.
- The social sciences are also another important element when building social license to help track how social license changes as treatments occur. Graduate students from programs like the Masters in the Environment and University of Colorado – Boulder could be paired with RMRI to work on these types of science-related projects. Heather Bergman and Kirk Will will discuss opportunities for graduate students to work with the Social License Subcommittee through DFPC. Kelle Reynolds will reach out to Frank McCormick of the Rocky Mountain Research Station to see if there is interest in assisting with any social science studies or hosting a graduate student.
- Samuel Wallace will add a section for natural and social science outcomes to the Social License Subcommittee work plan.

## **GOVERNANCE CHARTER**

Meeting participants discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Social License Subcommittee outlined in the RMRI governance charter. Their comments are summarized below.

- The RMRI Governance Subcommittee is developing language in the charter for each of the subcommittees, and each subcommittee is reviewing the language to make sure that they share the same expectation of their roles and responsibilities.
- Samuel Wallace should add an extra bullet related to the Social License Subcommittee's responsibilities for developing natural and social science outcomes to the governance charter.
- Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace will distribute the charter via email to have the Social License Subcommittee review it before it is finalized.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- The Communications Subcommittee is developing a wish list for videos and photos for RMRI-CO partners to provide. They are also developing a method through Box to distribute the photos and videos to RMRI partners.
- Patt Dorsey will distribute the key messaging and communications strategy documents to Tim Kylo, Kelle Reynolds, and Kirk Will to edit and fill out.
- Samuel Wallace will create and distribute a Doodle for the week of Memorial Day.
- The Social License Subcommittee should think about what asks they could bring to the full RMRI-CO group during their next meeting on June 23.