**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**
**October 26, 2020, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM**
**RMRI Social License Subcommittee**
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**
*Participants:* Rob Addington, Daniel Beveridge, Cindy Dozier, Tim Kyllo, Matt Lindler, Kelle Reynolds, Rebecca Samulski, Nathan Van Schaik, and Kirk Will

*Facilitation:* Patt Dorsey and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

| Patt Dorsey | <ul><li>Make the following changes to the key messages document:<ul><li>Add a reference to the Air Quality Division in the message about small smoke versus big smoke.</li><li>Change the message that says, "prescribed fires and smoke are predictable" to the message that "prescribed fires and smoke are *more* predictable."</li></ul></li><li>Revise the Social License Subcommittee work plan to include the Subcommittee's top priorities.</li></ul> |
| --- | --- |
| **Kirk Will** | Share the key messages on smoke with a colleague at the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) for their review and feedback. |
| **Patt Dorsey and Kirk Will** | Continue to work on the prescribed fire risk message for the next Social License Subcommittee meeting. |
| **Nathan Van Schaik** | <ul><li>Develop multiple options for a one-sentence definition of forest restoration and present it to the Social License Subcommittee at their next meeting for finalization.</li><li>Create a Google Folder to store success stories and share it with the Social License Subcommittee.</li></ul> |
| **Nathan Van Schaik and Kelle Reynolds** | Search for US Forest Service (USFS) data on the cost of wildfires in Colorado for the 2020 fire season. |
| **Daniel Beveridge** | Send a definition of "fire adapted communities" to the Social License Subcommittee to add to the key messages document. |
| **Rob Addington** | Share the chart that outlines how different forest conditions impact water-based outcomes with the Social License Subcommittee |
| **Samuel Wallace** | Develop a Doodle poll to schedule the next Social License Subcommittee meeting. |

**7/20 ACTION ITEM UPDATE**
Meeting participants discussed updates from their 7/20 action items. Their comments are summarized below.
- Patt Dorsey and Kirk Will had an action item to develop a message around prescribed fire risk. They have not developed the message yet. Patt Dorsey and Kirk Will will continue to work on the prescribed fire risk message for the next Social License Subcommittee meeting.
- Kirk Will and Daniel Beveridge shared their respective documents on prescribed fire risk analysis and the cost-benefit of mitigation efforts.

- Patt Dorsey replaced the phrase "wildfire ready" with "fire adapted" in the key messages document.
- Tim Kyllo added information on the economic benefits of the timber and biomass industry on local communities. For every dollar that the timber and biomass industry creates, that dollar stays in the community and rolls over seven times, making the timber and biomass industry an economic multiplier for local communities.

**FOREST RESTORATION DEFINITION DISCUSSION**
Meeting participants discussed how to define "forest restoration." Their comments are summarized below.
- Nathan Van Schaik, Tim Kyllo, and Daniel Beveridge had an action item to define the term "forest restoration." Mo Bookwalter (with feedback from Tony Cheng of the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute), Tim Kyllo, and Daniel Beveridge provided input on a definition for "forest restoration."
- Using the input from Mo Bookwalter, Tim Kyllo, and Daniel Beveridge, Nathan Van Schaik developed a long and short definition of forest restoration. The definitions are rooted in the four RMRI values and incorporate the concept that forest restoration involves creating multi-use conditions.
- The short definition for forest restoration is "multi-partner, cross-landscape management leading to desired outcomes for water, communities, wildlife, and recreation." A one-page document that contains a longer definition for forest restoration can be found at this Google Doc link. In that one-page document, there is a second definition for forest restoration that reads, "forest restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of forest landscapes to more resilient, resistant and multi-use conditions."
- It is a challenge to define "forest restoration." A definition that is too specific may limit RMRI's activities. The short definition is meant to be broad enough to encompass many different RMRI activities and allow for greater flexibility in projects.
- The short definition is succinct, broad, and is not misleading. Some of the phrasings may be vague, such as "desired outcomes," but that vagueness is by design. There should be talking points that go with this definition of forest restoration.
- The definition could benefit from incorporating concepts related to preparing the landscape for fire and making the forest resilient to fire and other disturbances.
- The definition of forest restoration may better generate social license if it focuses less on what RMRI is and more on the vision of RMRI and what the partners are trying to accomplish. The definition of forest restoration in the one-page document may better capture the RMRI vision than the shorter definition.
- The definition should be simple, kept at a high level, and incorporate the concept of creating a resilient, resistant, and multi-use landscape. The definition should not include an in-depth summary of how RMRI is making the landscape resistant and resilient. The definition should include the high-level goals for the forest and be further defined as time goes on.
- In the short definition of forest restoration, the words "forest and fire management" should be included after the phrase "multi-partner, cross-landscape."
- The short definition of forest restoration could be combined with the second definition on the one-page document. This combination would create a definition of forest restoration that reads, "forest restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of forest landscapes to more resilient, resistant, and multi-use conditions, leading to desired outcomes for water, communities, wildlife, and recreation."

- Based on the feedback, Nathan Van Schaik will develop multiple options for a one-sentence definition of forest restoration and present it to the Social License Subcommittee at their next meeting for finalization.

**KEY MESSAGES DISCUSSION**
Meeting participants discussed the key messages. Their comments are summarized below.

*Climate Change Message*
A message on climate change was added to the key messages document. It is important to align the message on climate change with the Colorado State Forest Service's (CSFS) definition and message around climate change in the Forest Action Plan. The CSFS is near the end of their process to finalize their definition of climate change, and they will be finalizing an internal training on climate change by the middle of November. Daniel Beveridge will be able to review the message on climate change more thoroughly once the CSFS has finalized their definition, but as of now, there are no concerns. The key messages document is also meant to be dynamic and can be revised based on new information.

*Small Smoke versus Big Smoke Message*
- The message on small smoke versus big smoke says that air quality standards are set by the Environmental Protection Agency and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). In Colorado, the Air Quality Division in the CDPHE approves smoke permits. Patt Dorsey will add a reference to the Air Quality Division in the message about small smoke versus big smoke.
- The purpose of the small smoke versus big smoke message is to raise awareness that people have a choice between controlled and uncontrolled emissions. The message that "smoke from prescribed fire is a sign that we are reducing risks and reaping the benefits of fire" is particularly good.
- The message that "prescribed fires and smoke are predictable" should be changed to say that "prescribed fires and smoke are *more* predictable." Smoke from prescribed fires is not completely predictable. Patt Dorsey will make that change in the key messages.
- Kirk Will will share the key message on smoke with a colleague at the DFPC for their review and feedback.

*Carbon Message*
- Air quality is not only related to the smoke from fires but also the carbon benefits of removing dead trees that are acting as carbon sources and increasing the growth of live trees that will take in carbon dioxide produce oxygen.
- The CSFS has indicated in the past that due to the number of dead trees in Colorado's forests, Colorado's forests are acting as a carbon source.
- The East Troublesome and Cameron Peak fires moved through areas due to the presence of jackstraw timber and burned healthy regeneration in treated areas. The loss of the regeneration in the fires pushes the forests' ability to produce oxygen back decades.
- Researchers and forest managers are growing concerned about forest regeneration following catastrophic wildfires due to the lack of seed sources. They are starting to consider whether reseeding efforts will be needed following catastrophic wildfires.
- There is a summary of forest carbon sources and sinks for each state that highlights how several states in the West are acting as carbon sources. The Social License Subcommittee could highlight this summary in their message.

- There should be a chart that shows how different forest conditions act as carbon reducers or carbon producers. For example, in the column on carbon reducers, the chart could list prescribed fires and live trees, and in the column for carbon producers, the chart could list catastrophic wildfires and dead trees. Side-by-side pictures are often eye-catching and can help tell the story.
- There is an existing side-by-side chart that outlines how forest conditions impact water-based outcomes. Rob Addington will share the chart that outlines how different forest conditions impact water-based outcomes with the Social License Subcommittee. The Social License Subcommittee could consider producing their own charts for different values and considerations, like recreation, carbon, etc. If the Social License Subcommittee can develop and verify the factual content, the Communications Subcommittee can develop infographics and social media content.
- There is currently not a message on carbon, but the Subcommittee could add a message on carbon.

*Economic Messages*
- One of the messages on the economic benefits of forest treatments is that $1 spent on mitigation saves $3 in post-fire rehabilitation.
- If the USFS has data on the cost of real wildfires in Colorado for the 2020 season, the wildfire costs could be compared to prescribed burning costs. The USFS releases daily messages on the status of the current fires in the West and their destruction, but there have not been any messages related to the cost of wildfires with a concrete value yet. The USFS pulls together an annual report on the cost of wildfires after each fire season. Nathan Van Schaik and Kelle Reynolds will search for USFS data on the cost of wildfires in Colorado for the 2020 fire season.
- One challenge with comparing the cost of wildfires across different locations is differences in property values. It will help to have the national average for the costs of wildfires, the costs of wildfires in the West, and the cost of wildfires in Colorado specifically.
- Based on a quick search, the cost of wildfire suppression in USFS Region 2 has been $148 million, with most of that cost being in Colorado and southern Wyoming.
- The Bureau of Land Management has a helpful document on the true cost of wildfires. That document can be found in the Social License Subcommittee Google Drive.

*Definitions*
There should be a definition for "fire adapted communities" in the key messages document. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group has a good definition, which can be included in the key messages document so long as RMRI does not take credit for the definition. Daniel Beveridge will send a definition of "fire adapted communities" to the Social License Subcommittee to add to the key messages document.

**SOCIAL LICENSE SUBCOMMITTEE WORK PLAN DISCUSSION**
Meeting participants discussed the Social License Subcommittee work plan. Their comments are summarized below.
- Peak Facilitation Group conducted a gap analysis by aligning the different strategies and barriers that RMRI partners identified during the February 26 RMRI meeting with the Social License Subcommittee's current work. The analysis shows which strategies the Subcommittee is currently addressing and which ones they are not addressing yet. This list is supposed to help the Social License Subcommittee determine what strategies they want to add to their work plan for the upcoming year.

- One strategy that the Social License Subcommittee could add to their work plan for the upcoming year is to "partner with local schools to introduce a learning curriculum on forest health and the importance of fire." This strategy could help introduce concepts to students wondering what is going on with the wildfires.
- Groups, like Project Wild and Project Learning Tree, already have curriculums and have a relationship with schools. The Social License Subcommittee could partner with them to develop and introduce a new curriculum. Additionally, the CSFS has an employee whose job is to work with schools to integrate a curriculum about forests, and the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network has educational materials. There are existing resources, like Ted Talks, that can be used in classrooms as well.
- The Social License Subcommittee is near the end of developing their messages but has not dedicated as much time to organizing a campaign to release their messages. As the Social License Subcommittee finalizes their key messages, they need to start to think about how to implement them. Organizing a campaign is an umbrella strategy, and tasks like developing school curriculums or developing social media content are sub-strategies. The Communications Subcommittee can help develop some of the communication material as they develop a brand and logo for RMRI and a long-term communication plan.
- The Social License Subcommittee could look for real-life examples highlighting forest treatment successes, particularly from the 2020 fire season. For example, there is evidence that the Elk Horn-Pingree prescribed fire altered the behavior of the Cameron Peak Fire. Additionally, treatments on Rocky Mountain National Park were critical for firefighters to control and secure the East Troublesome Fire before reaching Estes Park. These stories about the success of treatment would be a powerful messaging tool.
- The message of these success stories could be that in dire situations, treatments work and help firefighters tactically control fires. Another message should be that treatments help leave green trees scattered on the landscape, which is critical to spreading seeds and restoring the forest following a wildfire.
- The success stories could come from both firefighters on the front line and scientists that are quantifying how treatments impact fire behavior. Having various stories, like stories that are science-based and stories from the front lines, will allow the Subcommittee to respond to different events. The success stories would not necessarily have to come from RMRI landscapes so long as the stories focus on solutions and successes.
- The Social License Subcommittee should be careful with how they communicate success stories to not give people the impression that private property and defensible space treatments guarantee home protection during a wildfire. There are cases where landowners treated their land and their homes still burned down, and there are also cases where landowners did not treat their land and their homes were not destroyed. The success stories should illustrate that treatments can never guarantee home protection but that there are actions one can take to reduce their risk. Wildfire Partners has YouTube videos on the impacts that treatments had on homes saved in the Cold Springs Fire.
- The success stories could take a landscape-level approach to show how treatments affected fire behavior rather than taking a personal approach to storytelling. Any stories should be carefully vetted for their truthfulness. More personal stories should still be rooted in facts.
- One of the challenges with communicating science-based stories is there is often a delay between a wildfire event and the fire behavior studies. The Social License Subcommittee should keep this in mind as they begin to collect success stories.
- Timing is critical in the release of information and success stories. There is a short window after a catastrophic wildfire when people will be open to new messages; simultaneously, the Subcommittee needs to make sure they share messages tactfully when people are in

response and recovery mode following a fire. If the Social License Subcommittee begins to develop a database of success stories, they can be prepared to communicate before the fire season even begins. Beginning to tell stories in the spring and early summer may encourage private landowners to treat their properties before the fire season. In Colorado, May is wildfire awareness month, which will be a good time to share stories along with state and federal agencies, like CSFS, USFS, and DFPC.

- The Social License Subcommittee could create a Google Drive Folder to start collecting success stories now. Nathan Van Schaik will create a Google Folder to store success stories and share it with the Social License Subcommittee.
- The Social License Subcommittee agreed that collecting treatment and fire behavior success stories, including stories from the 2020 fire season, should be one of their top priorities. In the work plan, the Social License Subcommittee priorities are to 1) finish reviewing key messages, 2) collect success stories on treatments and fire behavior to develop communication materials, and 3) develop an outreach/implementation strategy for key messages, and 4) work with ongoing efforts to develop and integrate a forest health curriculum into schools. Patt Dorsey will revise the work plan to include these top priorities.

**NEXT STEPS**
- The next Social License Subcommittee will be at the end of November/early December. Samuel Wallace will develop a Doodle poll to schedule the next Social License Subcommittee meeting.
- The Communications Subcommittee can help support the Social License Subcommittee by developing communication materials based on the key messages and strategies.