

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
January 20, 2021, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Samantha Albert, Tim Reader, Ellen Roberts, Jake Todd, Tara Umphries, and Nathan Van Schaik

Facilitation: Molly Pitts and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Tim Reader	Reach out to the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) Office of Engagement to explore opportunities to engage cooperative extension offices to develop forestry training programs for the general public.
Molly Pitts and Tim Reader	Reach out to the panelists for the Workforce Capacity Webinar to confirm they are okay with recording the webinar.
Molly Pitts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a representative from Colorado Mountain College (CMC) and invite them to the Workforce Capacity Webinar. • Reach out to Angela Boag to discuss whether there are funding opportunities from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for workforce development following the 2020 wildfire disaster declaration.
Molly Pitts and Ellen Roberts	Reach out to John Whitney from Senator Bennet’s Office to discuss opportunities in the Outdoor Restoration Force Act to fund workforce development.
Ellen Roberts	Connect Molly Pitts with representatives from the Colorado Youth Corps Association to present at the next meeting.
Samantha Albert	Talk to her colleagues to see what opportunities exist to get the forest and restoration industry recognized in the <i>Colorado Talent Pipeline Report</i> .
Jake Todd	Research potential funding opportunities through the Department of Labor for workforce development.

WORKFORCE WEBINAR DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed the upcoming RMRI Workforce Capacity Webinar on Wednesday, January 27. Their comments are summarized below.

- Molly Pitts and Tim Reader have put together a panel consisting of representatives from Shasta College, Northern Maine Community College, and Northern Arizona University (NAU) to learn about their forestry workforce training programs. Tim Reader is waiting to hear back from a Red Rocks Community College representative on whether they plan to present during the webinar.
- Members from community colleges around Colorado were invited to attend the webinar as well. Rich Edwards from the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) recently took a job at NAU; he will be on the webinar and will be a good connection for the Subcommittee moving forward. Ray Lucero from the Southwest Colorado Workforce Center may also attend the meeting.

- An invitation has not been sent out to a representative from Colorado Mountain College (CMC) yet. Molly Pitts will attempt to identify a representative from CMC and invite them to the Workforce Capacity Webinar.
- RMRI partners are aware of the webinar. The webinar should not be publicized through RMRI's social media platforms. It would be better for the audience size to remain small.
- The recreation component of the forestry workforce is not represented on the webinar, but the Subcommittee should consider that component of the workforce moving forward.
- The webinar will be recorded, and Samuel Wallace will write a meeting summary for the webinar too. Tim Reader and Molly Pitts will reach out to panelists to confirm they are okay with recording the webinar.

PARTNER ACTION ITEM UPDATES

Meeting participants shared updates related to the action items from the December 1 Workforce Capacity Subcommittee meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) Update

- Tim Reader has been in contact with Dr. Han Sup-Han. He is interested in connecting the regional timber training center being developed in NAU with projects in Colorado. It will be beneficial to stay engaged with NAU as they develop their training center.
- The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) are hosting a wood innovations seminar on March 2 and 3. Tim Reader distributed the draft agenda to the Subcommittee. They will be releasing the final agenda soon. People will have to register to attend the training.

Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) Updates

The CDA recently announced they are accepting applications for their Specialty Crop Block Grant. Tim Reader is exploring the opportunity to develop a proposal to obtain a mobile biochar production machine. The mobile biochar production machine would use biomass from mitigation treatments to develop biochar for specialty crops. The end goal of this proposal would be to develop a biochar market for specialty crops. The application is due to the CDA on February 15. The CDA will review proposals and then send them to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for final review.

Workforce Center Updates

Molly Pitts contacted Ray Lucero to discuss ways for the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee to connect with the workforce centers. He identified two approaches to connecting to workforce centers: 1) reach out to the boards of local workforce centers and 2) reach out to the statewide Colorado Workforce Development Council. The Subcommittee could host a webinar and invite local boards to discuss RMRI and forestry workforce challenges. Subcommittee members could also present individually at the quarterly meetings of local boards. At the statewide level, the Subcommittee could present at a Colorado Workforce Development Council meeting. Ray Lucero is currently contacting different workforce center committees and will be reaching out to Molly to identify opportunities for presentations.

Forestry Training Simulator Updates

There have not been any updates on the forestry training simulator. John Deere manufactures the forestry training simulator. More information on the simulator can be found at [this link](#).

Colorado Talent Pipeline Report Update

The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee has discussed getting the forest and restoration industry recognized as a growing industry in the *Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*. If the forest and restoration industry is recognized in the *Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*, it will create funding opportunities for forestry businesses. With Samantha Albert from the Outdoor Recreation Industry Office joining the Subcommittee, there may be an opportunity to better connect with the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) about the *Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*. Samantha Albert will talk to her colleagues to see what opportunities exist to get the forest and restoration industry recognized in the *Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*.

UPCOMING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed upcoming state and federal opportunities for workforce development. Their comments are summarized below.

- Senator Bennet has recently announced the Outdoor Restoration Force Act. The bill provides \$60 billion for conservation and restoration efforts. They are still developing the bill language, but it looks like a part of it will go towards workforce development efforts. Molly Pitts and Ellen Roberts can reach out to John Whitney from Senator Bennet's Office to discuss opportunities in the Outdoor Restoration Force Act to fund workforce development.
- There is a bill in the Colorado State Legislature that may provide funding for youth conservation corps to conduct forest restoration work. Funding youth conservation corps can help support cost-effective work at the local level.
- With a new presidential administration, there may be more opportunities to access funding through federal agencies via a potential federal stimulus package. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee should be tracking federal opportunities to fund workforce development.
- The forestry training simulator has been quoted at \$25,000. If the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could identify a funding source, they could apply for funding to purchase a forestry training simulator to move around Colorado.
- For federal agencies, it is difficult to determine how increases in funding impact workforce capacity. For example, the Great American Outdoors Act recently allocated funding to repair recreation infrastructure and roads, but it is unclear how that money is being applied to the US Forest Service (USFS) workforce.
- There may be an opportunity for funding through other federal agencies and programs beyond the USFS. In 2020, Colorado issued a declaration of disaster because of wildfires. A declaration of disaster often means a quicker timeline to access funds. There may be funding opportunities through the Department of Labor, FEMA, and the Economic Development Administration for disaster relief. Jake Todd can research potential funding opportunities through the Department of Labor. Molly Pitts will reach out to Angela Boag to discuss whether there are funding opportunities from FEMA for workforce development following the 2020 wildfire disaster declaration.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed opportunities for workforce development through cooperative extension programs. Their comments are summarized below.

- Oregon State University has used its cooperative extension program for workforce development in rural communities in Oregon. In Colorado, the La Plata County cooperative extension office organized a master gardener apprenticeship program. There could be an opportunity to develop a similar program for private land forest restoration.

- In addition to developing training for professional foresters, the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee should develop training for the average person to treat forests in their backyard in a scientifically consistent way.
- The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture has a grant program for workforce development and education. The grant would require partnering with a cooperative extension office. The grant program accepts applications on an ongoing basis.
- One avenue to begin establishing programs in the cooperative extension office is to contact the CSFS Office of Engagement. Tim Reader will reach out to the CSFS Office of Engagement to explore opportunities to engage cooperative extension offices to develop forestry training programs for the general public.

NEXT STEPS

- The RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee has not engaged with the Job Corps yet. At a future meeting, the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could host a presentation from Job Corps. Additionally, there is an opportunity to engage with the Colorado Youth Corps Association to learn about their programs. Ellen Roberts will connect Molly Pitts with representatives from the Colorado Youth Corps Association to present at the next meeting.
- Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle to schedule a meeting in mid-February.
- The agenda items for the next Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Meeting are to:
 - Debrief the webinar
 - Host a presentation from the Colorado Youth Corps Association
 - Follow-up on action items