

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
March 31, 2021, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Cindy Dozier, Molly Pitts, Ellen Roberts, Mark Shea, Jeremy Taylor, Nathan Van Schaik, and Laura Wolf

Facilitation: Tim Reader and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee Members	Email any feedback on the biomass utilization factsheet to Nathan Van Schaik by May 1.
Tim Reader	Send the proposal for the bark beetle documentary to Laura Wolf and Nathan Van Schaik to identify potential funding sources.
Molly Pitts	Send a document with Colorado legislative updates to Samuel Wallace to distribute to the Subcommittee.
Samuel Wallace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a link to the bark beetle documentary trailer. • Send a Doodle to schedule the next Biomass Utilization Subcommittee meeting.

FEBRUARY 5 BIOMASS UTILIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION ITEM UPDATE

Meeting participants provided updates on their action items from the February 5 Biomass Utilization Subcommittee meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

- Tim Reader sent information to the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee on an interactive virtual workshop on biochar opportunities in the Southwest from April 7 to April 9.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced a pilot biochar program for private land use through their Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The NRCS is administering the biochar program on a trial basis in a few states, including Colorado. Tim Reader reached out to the NRCS to obtain more information. For now, the NRCS is not looking to expand the program or emphasize it until they see how well the program works in other states.
- Tim Reader reached out to Les Owens from the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) to discuss biochar applications further. As far as economics, the CDA does not see a great opportunity for biochar applications based on the cost. The CDA is interested in researching biochar applications further, but they will do that in partnership with other entities, not as an individual agency.
- Tim Reader reached out to the CDA Colorado Proud program and is working to connect the Colorado Wood Products database with the Colorado Proud database.
- Angela Boag could not attend this Biomass Utilization Subcommittee meeting, but she sent her updates ahead of the meeting. Angela had reached out to cannabis industry representatives to ask them about their interest in biochar. They said the cannabis industry was interested in biochar, but they were unsure if there would be enough demand.
- Several bills are going through the state legislator related to forest restoration. The legislator has awarded additional funding for the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk

Mitigation (FRWRM) grant program. The legislator is also considering other forestry bills, including re-upping the Beetle Kill Tax Exemption bill.

BIOMASS UTILIZATION FACTSHEETS DISCUSSION

Before the meeting, Nathan Van Schaik shared a template for communicating biomass utilization messages. Cindy Dozier and Molly Pitts helped contribute to the templates as well. Meeting participants discussed the messaging template. Their comments are summarized below.

- There are many different aspects to biomass utilization. Messages on biomass utilization for an external audience should focus on outputs and what RMRI is trying to address in the context of forest health. The messages should focus on communicating what biomass utilization is and its role in increasing forest health. The messages should also be simple.
- Nathan Van Schaik developed a biomass utilization factsheet that was originally too complicated. He revised the factsheet to serve as a communication plan template. The template includes major sections for biomass description, biomass sources, opportunities, challenges, and a glossary of terms. He began filling out the template using information from previous Biomass Utilization Subcommittees, but the intent is to have subject matter experts fill in the information in the template.
- Ultimately, the intent of the communication plan template is to create common terminology and lexicon among RMRI partners.
- RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee members can email any feedback on the biomass utilization factsheet to Nathan Van Schaik by May 1. There will be a version of The Source that focuses on subcommittee activities in October.
- The Communications Subcommittee can take messages from the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee and push them out to external audiences.
- Once the Subcommittee completes the biomass utilization factsheet, Nathan Van Schaik could put it on the RMRI website if the Subcommittee requests it.
- The US Forest Service (USFS) has messaging on wood innovations that the Subcommittee could add to the biomass utilization factsheet. The more partners can repeat messages, the better traction they will have with an external audience.
- The section that describes biomass is a good one for external audiences. The messages need to be accessible to every Coloradoan.
- There has been renewed nationwide discussion on the carbon emissions from biomass utilization, sparked by an article in Politico. The article focused on the biomass industry in the Southeast United States. The Southeast's biomass industry is very different from the West's biomass industry, both in capacity and need. Messages should focus on the regional differences between the West and Southeast biomass utilization. The USFS has infographics on the relationship between forest products and carbon that the Subcommittee could use.

FOREST DOCUMENTARY DISCUSSION

Tim Reader shared a trailer for a documentary on bark beetles in Colorado. The filmmaker is from American University, and she met with Tim Reader and other forest industry leaders as she was filming. Meeting participants watched the trailer and discussed opportunities to promote the film.

- The documentary focuses on biomass utilization of bark beetle-killed trees. The interviewees in the film include representatives from Meier Skis, Timber Age, and Aspen Wall Wood.
- Currently, the filmmaker is working to generate more funding to complete the full-length version of the film. She is currently looking for around \$15,000. Potential funding sources include Gates Family Foundation, Great Outdoors Colorado, and USFS Region 2.

- The distribution plan is to submit it to environmental film festivals. Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Station (RMPBS) may also be interested in playing it. Wood innovations group will also be a potential audience for the film.
- As of now, the filmmaker has completed her filming in Colorado. She needs additional funding for editing and production.
- Tim Reader will send the funding proposal to Laura Wolf and Nathan Van Schaik to identify potential sources to finish the bark beetle documentary. Samuel Wallace will provide the link to the trailer.

FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS

Meeting participants discussed what topics they would like to discuss at future meetings. The suggested topics for future meetings are listed below:

- Legislative updates (particularly for a current bill going through the legislature that will create a commission to study biomass utilization possibilities in Colorado, including biomass energy and biochar)
- Results from the USFS's industry capacity survey

PARTNER UPDATES

Meeting participants shared updates with the Subcommittee. Their updates are summarized below.

- Tim Reader is working with the CDA to apply for a grant focused on improving forest products marketing. They would use the grant funding to expand industry capacity data and create an industry capacity layer in the Colorado State Forest Service Forest Atlas. He will provide an update on this grant at future meetings.
- The Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) is hosting its annual meeting in person on April 24 in Delta.
- There will be an interactive virtual workshop on biochar opportunities in the Southwest from April 7 to April 9.
- The La Plata County Commissioners are considering the Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund (SWIF). There has been more publicity on SWIF recently, which is drawing more attention to the project.

NEXT STEPS

- Molly Pitts will send a document with Colorado legislative updates to Samuel Wallace to distribute to the Subcommittee.
- Samuel Wallace will create a Doodle to distribute to the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee to schedule the next Biomass Utilization Subcommittee meeting.