

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
June 17, 2021, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
RMRI Biomass Utilization Subcommittee
Meeting Summary – FINAL

RMRI BIOMASS UTILIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE	
ATTENDANCE: Angela Boag, Molly Pitts, Tim Reader, Ellen Roberts, Jeremy Taylor, Tara Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik, and Samuel Wallace	
ACTION ITEMS	
Nathan Van Schaik	Include the legislative updates in the monthly RMRI newsletter.
Angela Boag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send her slide deck on recent legislative updates to Samuel Wallace to distribute to the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee. • Reach out to state employees at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to determine if there are opportunities in HB21-1264 to strengthen workforce capacity in the forest industry.
Ellen Roberts	Reach out to Nathan Van Schaik to discuss using the biomass utilization factsheet for upcoming RMRI-SW events.
Biomass Utilization Subcommittee Members	Review the biomass utilization factsheet and provide comments.
Samuel Wallace	Send the biomass utilization factsheet to the Subcommittee with a request for final comments.
MEETING SUMMARY	
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Legislative Updates	
<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Colorado General Assembly approved a sustained funding source of \$8 million for the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant program. This funding will be put towards larger fuel mitigation projects, which could help strengthen the forest products industry. In addition, the yearly funding allocation makes it so FRWRM is no longer dependent on severance taxes for funding. Earlier in the year, the General Assembly allocated a one-time fund of \$6 million to FRWRM. • The state allocated funding to bring in a National Incident Management Team to conduct a month-long assessment to determine the highest priority areas for wildfire mitigation treatments. • The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 258 (SB21-258). The bill allocates over \$25 million to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). In addition, the bill provides \$2.5 million in funding for the forest business product loan fund and \$5 	<p>Decisions/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nathan Van Schaik: Include the legislative updates in the monthly RMRI newsletter. • Angela Boag: Send her slide deck on recent legislative updates to Samuel Wallace to distribute to the Biomass Utilization Subcommittee.

<p>million to the healthy forests and vibrant communities fund. There is also \$7.5 million in funding to support the Colorado Youth Corps Association and Department of Corrections crews to implement mitigation work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR is developing a memorandum of understanding with the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) and the US Forest Service (USFS) to determine how to allocate stimulus funding to strategic projects. They will also hire two staff members to oversee and administer grants. As of now, they do not have a structure for deciding how to allocate funds exactly. • The General Assembly passed HB21-1180. This bill establishes a grant program to fund innovative uses of woody biomass. It is at the discretion of the state forester to implement the program. The bill did not receive additional funding, so funding to support the program would have to come from the CSFS general fund. • HB12-1261 extends the beetle wood tax exemption. This bill exempts consumers from paying state sales tax when purchasing products made from beetle kill. • SB21-249 allows Coloradoans to purchase a Keep Colorado Wild Pass when they renew their vehicle registration. The pass will generate funding for state parks. • The US Department of Agriculture established the Pandemic Assistance for Producers program. Timber processors and haulers are eligible for the program if they can demonstrate pandemic-related income loss. Tim Reader, CSFS, is administering the program for Colorado. • HB21-1264 is allocating funding to workforce centers and the Office of Just Transition to help develop workforce capacity. 	
--	--

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Mass timber opportunities

<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Oregon Department of Forestry and USFS Region 6 partners to develop a multimedia platform on mass timber. They recently released a trailer, which can be found at this link. They are continuing to work on the platform, which will include a wood value calculator. • As more construction occurs in Denver, there is an opportunity to promote mass timber by 	<p>Decisions/Action Items: None</p>
--	--

<p>communicating how mass timber improves forest management and reduces carbon outputs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating building and fire codes that accept mass timber is no longer the barrier that it once was. Code officials across the world have helped develop codes that are accepting of mass timber construction. Denver modified their building codes for the use of mass timber in building construction. 	
--	--

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Partner updates

<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tim Reader partnered with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) to submit a Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program grant application. Their proposal involves enhancing and quantifying industry information and data into a spatial database. The spatial database will include metrics on capacity and employees and a harvest cost calculator. They will hear back on their proposal soon. The wood mill outside of Craig, Colorado is employing displaced workers who left the Tri-State Power facility. There were 92 applications submitted for the most recent round of FRWRM, and 85 of those projects were eligible for funding. The number of applications demonstrates the continued need for forest management. The FRWRM program increased the amount of funding applicants can request in their proposals. This will help expand the size of projects and opportunities for biomass utilization. In addition, federal lands adjacent to private and state lands are now eligible for FRWRM funding. Applicants also have to talk with Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA), and Tim Reader about opportunities for biomass utilization plans for eligible projects. Representatives from the Washington Office (WO) were in Colorado discussing new tools to increase efficiencies for forest treatments. The City of Durango and La Plata County are in the middle of negotiations for Phase I of the Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund. Both entities are considering putting seed money in a revolving loan fund managed by the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority. Funds from SWIF will be used to treat private lands in conjunction with RMRI-Southwest 	<p>Decisions/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
--	--

<p>Colorado (RMRI-SW). There is a proposed name change for the Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund to the Wildfire and Watershed Protection Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMRI-SW partners will be visiting Timber Age Systems to discuss existing biomass products in Southwest Colorado. 	
<p>DISCUSSION TOPIC: Biomass Utilization Factsheet</p>	
<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nathan Van Schaik, USFS, put together a biomass utilization factsheet that outlines the assumptions made by the Subcommittee. He recently simplified the factsheet. He also incorporated feedback to highlight other opportunities for biomass utilization beyond biomass power, such as biochar. • Once the factsheet is finalized, Nathan Van Schaik can add it to the RMRI website. The document will also act as a living document, and Subcommittee members can update it at any time. • The biomass utilization factsheet could be helpful as RMRI-SW partners tour forest product sites in Southwest Colorado. 	<p>Decisions/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Wallace: Send the biomass utilization factsheet to the Subcommittee with a request for final comments. • Ellen Roberts: Reach out to Nathan Van Schaik to discuss using the biomass utilization factsheet for upcoming RMRI-SW events.
<p>DISCUSSION TOPIC: Biomass Utilization Subcommittee Work Plan</p>	
<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One challenge with strengthening the forest products industry in Colorado is the lack of a skilled workforce. Until there is more workforce capacity, businesses will face challenges in keeping up with demand. HB21-1264 is an opportunity to strengthen the forest industry. 	<p>Decisions/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Boag: Reach out to state employees at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to determine if there are opportunities in HB21-1264 to strengthen workforce capacity in the forest industry.
<p>NEXT STEPS</p>	
<p>Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle to schedule the next Biomass Utilization Subcommittee meeting.</p>	