

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**September 8, 2021, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm**  
**RMRI Social License Subcommittee**  
**Meeting Summary – FINAL**

RMRI SOCIAL LICENSE SUBCOMMITTEE	
<b>ATTENDANCE:</b> Rob Addington, Daniel Beveridge, Anthony Culpepper, Cindy Dozier, Danny Margoles, Teddy Parker-Renga, Chris Sukach, Nathan Van Schaik, and Samuel Wallace	
ACTION ITEMS	
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	Distribute the handouts on the impacts of fire with and without treatments and the social media plan to the RMRI Social License Subcommittee.
<b>Patt Dorsey and Samuel Wallace</b>	Put together a list of potential approaches for the Social License Subcommittee to pursue based on recent discussions among the subcommittee.
MEETING SUMMARY	
<b>PRESENTATION TOPIC:</b> Wildfire Awareness Month (presented by Teddy Parker-Renga)	
<b>Presentation Points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor Polis signed a proclamation declaring May Wildfire Awareness Month. Colorado is one of many western states to proclaim a month as Wildfire Awareness Month.</li> <li>• Wildfire Awareness Month is a collaborative effort involving multiple partners. The US Forest Service (USFS), Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), and Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) are the central organizers of the messaging and strategy. They use a hashtag (#COWildfireAware) to amplify the reach of the messages.</li> <li>• The goals and objectives of Wildfire Awareness Month are to raise awareness of the upcoming wildfire season, inform Coloradoans about wildfire risk, and educate them on how to reduce wildfire risk.</li> <li>• The primary audiences for Wildfire Awareness Month are residents living in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), homeowner associations, municipalities, community groups, and public land users. The secondary audience is wildfire partners and the news media.</li> <li>• During the last three days of April, the CSFS, USFS, and DFPC will post several wildfire awareness messages. Then, during the first week, each partner will take a day posting higher-level messages. For the remaining three weeks, each agency will be responsible for posting messages using the hashtag during one of the weeks, and the other two will share the posts. Each agency focuses on a different theme around wildfire; for example, the CSFS posts messages about personal accountability and home treatments.</li> <li>• Partners start by sharing messages that lean towards being fear-based. These messages include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The outlook for the wildfire season is not good.</li> <li>○ Wildfire is part of the natural ecosystem. It is not a matter of if a wildfire will occur but when.</li> <li>○ Homes in the WUI are at risk of wildfire. Half of the homes in Colorado are in the WUI.</li> <li>○ Forests are overgrown, unhealthy, and primed to burn.</li> <li>○ Humans cause a high percentage of wildfires.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partners will then start sharing empowering messages, which are meant to change attitudes and inspire action. These messages include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Plan ahead and prepare for wildfire.</li> <li>○ Implement projects to address our home ignition zone.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- Know your wildfire risk.
- Neighbors must work together to reduce their risk.
- Success stories of fire-adapted communities.
- Tips to prevent starting a fire.
- Governor Polis issued a public service announcement (PSA) for Wildfire Awareness Month. The PSA gained traction in the national news cycle. The PSA came directly from the Wildfire Awareness Month talking points.
- One reason Wildfire Awareness Month has been successful is that local organizations share posts, which reach a local audience. Local audiences respond better when the message comes from a local source they trust. Fire Adapted Colorado, for example, helped provide ideas and distribute messages.

**DISCUSSION TOPIC:** Wildfire Awareness Month Opportunities

**Discussion Points:**

- RMRI could help distribute messages and be involved with planning discussions in March and April.
- RMRI could help by working with partners to share posts through local networks.
- There are other nationwide and statewide messaging opportunities. For example, National Fire Prevention week occurs in September.
- RMRI should consider how to take the wildfire awareness messages and put them in the context of RMRI's goals, values, and mission.
- RMRI could work with the local landscapes to amplify the messages at a local level. A coordinated effort could help distribute messages more comprehensively across networks.
- RMRI could serve as a connector among communicators in the RMRI landscapes.
- Most organizations may not share every post, but they may be willing to share one post a week. No one owns the hashtag #COWildfire Aware, so partners are welcome to use that hashtag in whatever messaging they choose.
- It may be possible for Wildfire Awareness Month partners to create a toolbox with graphics and tools to share.
- Local landscapes can also provide the stories to share statewide, creating a two-way communication channel between those at the local and statewide levels. The messages do not only have to come from the statewide level.
- One challenge with messaging is communicating complex science in simple but accurate language. The Southern Rockies Fire Science Network has experience distilling complex science into simplified but accurate messages.
- There are capacity issues at the local level for developing materials. Having access to broader-level materials that can be modified to better fit the local level would be

**Decisions/Action Items:**

None.

<p>helpful. Even with modifications to messages at the local level, having uniform messages is impactful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildfire Awareness Month partners document their successes and challenges annually and continue to refine their messaging and partnerships.</li> <li>• The campaign model is replicable, but there are challenges with coordinating and implementing a new campaign. For example, larger-scale media campaigns do not have messages that are modified for the local level.</li> <li>• The CSFS has messaging campaigns throughout the year. For example, they promote Colorado forest products in October. They use similar messaging year-round but package it differently.</li> <li>• The way social media algorithms work is that sharing posts reaches a smaller share of followers. Original messages are more helpful in reaching audiences.</li> <li>• Teddy Parker-Renga can share communication materials as requested by the Social License Subcommittee.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> RMRI Partner Meeting Takeaways</p>	
<p><b>Discussion Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RMRI partners talked about social license several times during the RMRI partner meeting. RMRI partners referred specifically to a national media article that talks about how forest treatments are ineffective at reducing wildfire risk and that the priority for managers should be on hardening homes.</li> <li>• The Social License Subcommittee needs to promote success stories on the landscape. There needs to be a story on how changing minds created a good result. One example is the picture of the house surrounded by a burned landscape; the visual image highlights a success story.</li> <li>• The questions on the effectiveness of forest treatments are important. RMRI needs to consider how to engage questions like that in a nuanced way while also not communicating that forest treatments are never effective. There is no clear answer on how to communicate these nuanced discussions simply and accurately. There is a need to communicate that partners need to conduct forest treatments <i>and</i> harden homes; it is not an either/or discussion.</li> <li>• One way to increase social license is to show maps that display the proximity of treatments to landmarks that the public would recognize. This strategy would help the public connect treatments to values.</li> <li>• It is beneficial to share positive messages about what works rather than developing counterpoints in response to another message.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decisions/Action Items:</b> None</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners should communicate lessons learned to show that there is an adaptive management element to forest management.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> RMRI Opportunities to Increase Social License</p>	
<p><b>Discussion Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the local landscape level, there is a need to reach the recreation community in particular.</li> <li>Many issues tend to be locally based and focused. There are many new challenges as treatment implementation begins to increase. There are also many new opportunities for public engagement in planning and implementation. Locally tailored messaging is needed.</li> <li>There is an opportunity to make emotional appeals through messaging. The four RMRI values are very powerful and connect with people’s emotions. The Social License Subcommittee could share the success stories that align with those values.</li> <li>Messaging should also focus on post-fire resiliency to highlight the impacts of fires on watersheds and infrastructure.</li> <li>The Communication Subcommittee has discussed a social media plan and strategies for distributing messages. The Social License Subcommittee could work with the Communications Subcommittee to create the messages and gather the stories for RMRI social media. The Social License Subcommittee should consider merging with the Communications Subcommittee since there is overlap between them.</li> <li>RMRI could highlight how partners are working together to accomplish landscape-scale prioritization efforts and projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decisions/Action Items:</b> None.</p>
<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samuel Wallace will distribute the handouts on the impacts of fire with and without treatments and the social media plan to the RMRI Social License Subcommittee.</li> <li>Based on recent discussions among the subcommittee, Samuel Wallace and Patt Dorsey will put together a list of potential approaches for the Social License Subcommittee to pursue. The Social License Subcommittee will discuss these strategies at their next meeting.</li> </ul>	