

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
December 6, 2021, from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm
RMRI Social License Subcommittee
Meeting Summary – FINAL

RMRI SOCIAL LICENSE SUBCOMMITTEE

ATTENDANCE: Patt Dorsey, Tim Kylo, Jason Lawhon, Kate McIntire, Kelle Reynolds, Travis Smith, Tara Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik, Kirk Will

MEETING SUMMARY

PRESENTATION TOPIC: Communications Subcommittee Update, presented by Nathan Van Schaik, US Forest Service (USFS), and Kate McIntire, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)

- The Communications Subcommittee is in the process of updating their work plan and efforts. There are several upcoming opportunities that the Communication Subcommittee wants to take advantage of. The infrastructure bill is an opportunity for the Communications Subcommittee to show how funding is being used locally to accomplish the RMRI mission and better position partners to receive funding. To do this, the Communications Subcommittee is reevaluating how they tell the RMRI story.
- RMRI is working off the mantra that "a problem for all, takes all to solve." This mantra encompasses the idea that partners need to tackle problems that they could not manage individually.
- The Communications Subcommittee is conducting a "compass check" to think about how they can retool the Subcommittee to potentially recruit more people and leverage their skills to best tell the RMRI story.
- The Communications Subcommittee and Social License Subcommittee have distinct roles, but it would be helpful to clearly define those roles so that they complement each other.
- The Communications Subcommittee has a variety of platforms to communicate with its audience. They have published the RMRI quarterly newsletter for the past seven quarters and have begun publishing monthly updates this year. There are over 230 people on the contact list, and the open email rate is 36%.
- The Communications Subcommittee also manages social media handles on Facebook and Twitter. In 2021, they grew their Twitter audience by 37%. On Facebook, they have increased their number of followers by 86% and reached over 800 people.
- The RMRI website has about 450 views per month. However, the number of people visiting the website each month has plateaued.
- Overall, RMRI platforms have a growing audience, but there is much room for growth. There is a need to engage partners to elevate messages better. Many great stories are going on in the RMRI priority landscapes, so the RMRI Communications Subcommittee needs to develop and implement a method to tell those stories.
- During emergency wildfires, an Incident Command Post (ICP) will form to serve as the central communication hub. The ICP manages communications in two directions: 1) emergency managers will come to the ICP with their needs, and 2) the ICP will communicate these needs to external partners as they have the highest situational awareness of the emergency. This type of communication structure aligns with the mission and goals of RMRI.
- RMRI partners can serve as the ICP, communicating in two directions with the three priority landscapes. Landscape partners can communicate their needs on the ground, and the Communications Subcommittee can then contact partners to try and obtain those resources. This system would also help RMRI communicate with the public, mobilize support for

resources and funding, and recruit new partners. With better information on the ground level, the RMRI Communications Subcommittee could serve in the ICP role.

- The Communications Subcommittee is looking to recruit more people that can access their agency's social media accounts and amplify the message. Having more partners involved and committed would allow the Subcommittee to share content more broadly.
- Nathan Van Schaik developed a template to gather information from partner organizations as part of the communication channels. As another part of the communication channel, eventually, it would be helpful for the Communications Subcommittee to create a dashboard that tracks the status of different projects to share information externally. The goal of the template is to make the communications as easy and simple as possible to fill in information voids occurring between and within landscapes.
- At times, it is unclear what constitutes an "RMRI partner." It would be beneficial to ensure everyone is aligned in their understanding of what defines an "RMRI partner."
- The Communications Subcommittee has several steps to improve communications. First, they should establish realistic goals for the Communications Subcommittee to pursue (e.g., increase Facebook followers by "X" by December 2022"). It would also be beneficial to establish monthly information forums to track projects and make it easier for partners to share information. These meetings would help generate information on what is happening in the landscapes for landscape leadership and those in the field. The last project for the Communications Subcommittee is to improve the website, including add a "subscribe" feature on it.
- This proposal is in draft form, and it will require input and support from the Communications and Social License Subcommittees to move forward. The Subcommittees can help evaluate the existing tools that RMRI uses and provide input on improving them.

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Communications Subcommittee Update

Discussion Points:

- The proposal presents a clear picture of where the Communications Subcommittee has been, where they are now, and where they are going.
- The Communications Subcommittee could use support acquiring commitments from partners to support RMRI's communication efforts.
- The Communications and Social License Subcommittees need to clearly define their roles under this new vision to ensure their efforts are complementary and not redundant. The Subcommittees also need to define their roles in relationship with the landscapes so that they can be deliberate in how they work with landscape partners.
- The RMRI messaging should be based on the goals of RMRI and the subcommittees in 2022.
- With new funding sources coming soon, there will be funding available to increase the pace and scale of treatments. The Communications Subcommittee will need support from partners to identify projects and generate the resources needed to sustain them.
- The retooling of the Communications Subcommittee is an opportunity to showcase successes and build momentum in a direction that will make partners want to be engaged with RMRI.
- The communications strategy should involve encouraging partners to follow RMRI on social media. It should also involve creating storyboards to showcase the accomplishments of landscape partners and subcommittees.
- The Communications Subcommittee's next step is to build a network of communicators across agencies and organizations. Once there is a network, communicators can use the template developed by Nathan Van Schaik to share information for communication materials.

Decisions/Action Items:

None

Discussion Topic: Communications and Social License Subcommittee Roles

Discussion Points:

- The Communications and Social License Subcommittee should remain as separate subcommittees. The role of the Communications Subcommittee is to coordinate how information gets out to internal and external audiences. Many parts of the communications effort are not related to social license.
- One way to think about the roles of the two subcommittees is that the Social License Subcommittee develops the "what" in terms of messages. The Communications Subcommittee develops the "how" to collect and distribute stories. For example, the Social License subcommittee could say they want "x" number of people to be aware of timber sales in Southwest Colorado. The Communications Subcommittee can then identify the audience and provide the tools to distribute messaging on the timber industry and products.
- When developing communication materials, the Communications Subcommittee has to consider the audience they are trying to reach with messaging. They also have to think about the appropriate medium (e.g., billboards, website) to reach identified audiences. The Social License Subcommittee can help identify the purpose of communication materials (i.e., the "why") that will help the Communications Subcommittee identify the appropriate audience and medium for messaging.
- There is a lot of research on social license and people's beliefs and perceptions around forest management. The Social License Subcommittee can use that research to help inform the work of the Communications Subcommittee.
- Social license goes beyond "educating" people through social media. It requires building trust through the community through public meetings and field trips. It also requires nuanced messaging, which the Social License Subcommittee can help develop in collaboration with landscape partners. The Social License Subcommittee needs to work with landscape partners to identify social license challenges and needs.
- There is currently not a budget to administer communication projects, like purchase billboards. There may be an opportunity to develop a budget in the future.
- The Communications Subcommittee should explore the idea of implementing a messaging campaign. The Subcommittee would need to tailor a campaign to certain audiences to be effective.
- The Communications Subcommittee should clarify who they are communicating on behalf of. The purpose of the communications should be clear.

Decisions/Action Items:

None

NEXT STEPS

The Leadership Team should be informed of the communications efforts at the next Leadership Team meeting. The Leadership Team can then identify their expectations and needs related to communications. The Leadership Team should set goals at the state level, and local landscapes should set the goals at the local level.