Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
April 13, 2022, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Communications Subcommittee Meeting Summary - DRAFT

ATTENDANCE: Patt Dorsey, Liz Dowling, Tim Kyllo, Jason Lawhon, Kate McIntire, Scott Owens, Teddy Parker-Renga, Kelle Reynolds, Tom Spezze, Tara Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik

04/13 ACTION ITEMS:

Nathan Van Schaik	- Send meeting summary notes for review. - Consider staging RMRI presentations on the RMRI website. - Survey Communications Subcommittee members for best date/time to meet every other month. Social License Subcommittee hosts its meetings on alternating months.
Comms Subcommittee members	- Share an RMRI social media post - Submit RMRI partner/landscape update (5W's) - Bring campaign/project idea to next Comms Subcommittee (see Teddy example) - Use an RMRI comms product (https://restoringtherockies.org/brand) - Connect agency comms specialist with RMRI Comms Subcommittee - Submit an RMRI volunteer
Comms Subcommittee members	Send Kate and Nathan potential list of speakers you'd like to see deliver remarks at future Comms Subcommittee meetings.

AGENDA

- Review The Source; Current RMRI presentation, publications, other tools
- May is Wildfire Awareness Month; Social media coordination w/ Teddy Parker-Renga
- Guest Speaker: Leadership Perspectives on RMRI & RMRI Communications with Tom Spezze, NWTF Senior Director of Conservation-West
- Update regarding RMRI Marketing Effort, upcoming meetings and presentations
- Member round robin

COMMS CHALLENGE

Nathan opened up the meeting with a challenge to RMRI Communications Subcommittee members: Accomplish at least 1-2 of the following over the next month:

1. Share an RMRI social media post
2. Submit RMRI partner/landscape update (5W's)
3. Bring campaign/project idea to next Comms Subcommittee (see Teddy example)
4. Use an RMRI comms product (https://restoringtherockies.org/brand)
5. Connect agency comms specialist with RMRI Comms Subcommittee
6. Submit an RMRI volunteer

RMRI COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

- Released the next issue of *The Source*, which focuses on 2021 outcomes. The issue doubles down as a practical handout for the landscapes—front page RMRI, and back page individual landscape. See https://rmri2019.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/the-source-apr-2022.pdf.
- Reviewed RMRI social media pages (https://twitter.com/RestoreRockies and www.facebook.com/RestoreTheRockies) demonstrating content released and how to share. Our annual goal is to increase reach on Twitter and Facebook by 100% compared to 2021 numbers.
- Reviewed RMRI communications resources making it easier to be an RMRI ambassador. Materials include logos, PowerPoint presentations and letterhead at https://restoringtherockies.org/brand.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK

National Volunteer Appreciation Week is ***April 17-23.*** We would like to start highlighting RMRI all-stars throughout the year—beginning with our volunteers next week. The Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI) has volunteers we want to highlight on social media for their dedication and accomplishments. RMRI leaders and communicators can send Nathan and Kate profiles, which will be posted on RMRI social media and RMRI Daily Update. Profiles should include:

- Name & Photo
- Volunteer Position (if applicable)
- Location or RMRI-Landscape
- Partner Organization (if applicable)
- 1 or 2 sentences about why the volunteer is so great

WILDFIRE AWARENESS MONTH

The RMRI Communications Subcommittee can be used as a platform to coordinate messaging among partners. Members are encouraged to bring forth their agency campaigns or social media ideas advancing RMRI objectives so partners can amplify messaging on their respective social media and news outlets. For example, May is Wildfire Awareness Month. Teddy Parker-Renga provided an update on the upcoming effort to raise wildfire awareness among the public.

- Legislation is in motion in Colorado's General Assembly to pass a bill that would increase resources and funding into Wildfire Awareness Month. A working group would consider how best to conduct enhanced wildfire awareness month outreach campaigns in 2023 and 2024. See https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-007.
- The effort in Colorado is led by Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), Colorado Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Each of the three agencies will contribute content in the first week. CSFS will lead the second week, DFPC the third week and USFS the fourth week.
- RMRI partners are encouraged to follow and share the content. Use **#COWildfireAware**.
- Tim Kyllo: For those of us who do not use or manage social media pages, is it okay if we email content direct to Kate and Nathan? Yes, send content direct to kmcintire@nwtf.net, Nathaniel.vanschaik@usda.gov.

COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

The RMRI Social License Subcommittee will begin hosting its meetings every other month. The specific day/time is yet to be determined. Once the Social License Subcommittee establishes a date/time, as well as which month to begin, the Communications Subcommittee will begin meeting alternating months at a date/time to be determined. We will survey Comms Subcommittee members to determine best date/time.

GUEST SPEAKER TOM SPEZZE: LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES ON RMRI & RMRI COMMUNICATIONS

Tom Spezze is the Senior Director of Conservation-West for the National Wild Turkey Federation. He was also one of the original RMRI members who led conversations leading to the formation of RMRI. The Communications Subcommittee invited Tom to speak on RMRI's relevance at the national level and provide guidance to Subcommittee members. Here are some of the highlights of that conversation.

- RMRI is one of Tom's favorite things to have been involved in during his career. It's so important that "RMRI is an acronym I say in my sleep," he said. RMRI started with a conversation and a need. In December 2018, Tom asked his staff to think about the stewardship agreement work with USFS across the country and consider what NWTF could do along with USFS to increase pace and scale of restoration work with nontraditional partners. So within a week his staff provided him a 30-page document with ideas on how to grow and improve. In February 2019, NWTF CEO Humphries asked Tom to consolidate the report to put in action. Tom boiled it down to five bullet points that would begin the conversation and eventual challenge between USFS Chief Christiansen and NWTF CEO Humphries to find a place in the western United States where they could showcase the USDA's Shared Stewardship Strategy.
- This would become one of the most "formidable, landscape-scale, multi-partner conservation coalitions in the country." This transformational change does not happen overnight, but it sparked a new way of doing business and new dialogue around conservation delivery and landscape-scale restoration.
- Today, RMRI is a national topic of discussion—and not just in Colorado. For example, Tom and Patt Dorsey were asked to deliver remarks on RMRI May 4, 2022, at the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) awards dinner. They intend to explain how RMRI is the model for Shared Stewardship. Another example of RMRI's relevance on the national level is that RMRI is discussed at the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy round tables that Tom attends. RMRI is also a hot topic among members of the Western Governors' Association.
- Discussion of RMRI at the national level is not just about the work we're accomplishing on the ground. It's also about what we originally intended: Setting a new standard; a new way of doing business; bringing your assets to the table; sharing investments.
- There's an opportunity now for RMRI landscapes to be funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Brian Ferebee of USFS had asked Tom to work with the Wildfire Risk Reduction Infrastructure Team where Tom pushed to get RMRI landscapes listed on the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy initial investments. And on April 11, 2022, Tom and Patt Dorsey attended the USDA Forest Service announcement regarding Wildfire Crisis Strategy initial investments. And RMRI is listed as a partner in the WCS initial investments (see page 14 at https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WCS-Initial-

Landscape-Investments.pdf). This reflects an opportunity to fund RMRI landscapes where they align with high-priority firesheds in Colorado.

- Discussion surrounding RMRI is happening at the national level. But now the push has to come at the local level to continue the momentum—and that's where the RMRI Communications Subcommittee fits in.

What's the connection between RMRI and the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy?

- Over the past few years in RMRI we've all felt like we're "building the bicycle while we're riding it." WCS feels very similar. The WCS is new, big and cutting edge. RMRI has come up at every one of the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy round tables that Tom attends. People attending these round tables want to know: What does RMRI do? How does it accomplish things in a different way? How might it be applied to the WCS?
- RMRI is unlike other programs like CFLRP or NFWF where organizations apply for money. But in some ways the WCS is. But when you look at the amount of money associated with the WCS, it's not a lot compared to the 20 million acres it intends to address. So that shared investment approach is how RMRI and the WCS are similar. Instead of saying, "give me $50 million and we'll get the work done," rather we have to say in RMRI and in the WCS, "give me $50 million and we'll make it look like $100 million."

How does RMRI stay relevant when competing with programs that may be in receipt of large buckets of money? We can use your help Tom to remain relevant.

- First, let's look at those initial RMRI discussions in July 2019. The initial RMRI partners got it right in identifying those high-priority landscapes. The Front Range landscapes in the WCS align with RMRI. We need to continue telling that story.
- RMRI brings more than just the opportunity to do the work. RMRI brings to the surface and addresses cross-cutting issues. RMRI has a leg up in that it's years ahead in building an infrastructure with its Subcommittees. Don't lose sight on the landscapes that were chosen within RMRI and keep pushing to have those landscapes funded and figure out ways to turn $1 into $5. RMRI does not take a Request for Proposal (RFP) approach. That is, RMRI does not execute only when it receives funding. The RFP approach tends to be linear as opposed to a Shared Stewardship approach. Help decision-makers navigate and avoid the RFP approach to land management and forest restoration. Instead keep RMRI on a path to keep partners integrated in shared responsibility and shared investment.
- At the beginning of RMRI, we looked at many things. So when things begin to look shaky, always look to home base. For RMRI, our home base is (1) the need for RMRI and why we started; (2) our 4 core values.

We made RMRI to be duplicated. But the other thing we need to consider is RMRI's durability— that is, it's ability to continue as key players move on. What happens if RMRI key players leave?

- The resilience we build into our forests we must also build into our RMRI mechanisms. This circles us back to our discussion about RMRI's relevance: We must keep RMRI infrastructure resilient to ensure continuity in operations.

The April 11 announcement was just about the [initial WCS funding](). Criteria to receive funding requires cross-boundary work. This suggests future RMRI landscapes could be added to the list.

- Building RMRI to be duplicating is important. But consider this. When asked if we can build an RMRI somewhere else, Tom says, "No." But Tom explains that RMRI fit the opportunity and challenges of the landscapes and partners. Vew RMRI as the model for Shared Stewardship, but consider its dropdown menu—outside landscapes should take from RMRI what applies to their landscape. Other organizations are picking up and cherry-picking some of the RMRI features and criteria.