

RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Work Plan (2022-2023)

Last Updated: June 28, 2022

WORKFORCE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

(Outlined in the [RMRI Governance Charter](#))

- Develop strategies and approaches that lead to improving workforce capacity on the ground.
- Identify already existing resources on workforce programs and improve access to them.
- Research workforce capacity issues to better understand the opportunities and barriers to increasing workforce capacity.
- Develop a conference or workshop on workforce capacity.
- Identifying and addressing policy changes if/as needed.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Climate. Changing climates, wildfires, water shortages and invasive species demand a more robust, sustainable workforce.

- **10%** of Colorado's **24 million** acres of forest need urgent attention to address forest health, wildfire risk and threats to water supplies. ([CSFS 2020 Forest Health Report](#))
- **22%** of standing trees in Colorado forests are dead wood. Most are killed by insects (65%), disease (23%) and fire (4%). For the **9th** consecutive year, spruce beetle remained the most destructive forest pest in Colorado. ([CSFS 2020 Forest Health Report](#))
- Colorado State Forest Service study estimates a **\$4.2 billion backlog in tree-thinning needed** to create safety buffers around the most at-risk homes built in woods. ([Denver Post](#))
- Forests dense with beetle-killed trees significantly affects a fire's behavior and the options available for fire managers. ([CSFS 2020 Forest Health Report](#))

Industry. Colorado's forestry industry is small and taxed by the demands on our forest landscapes and watersheds.

- **95%** of homes in the U.S. are built of wood but **90%** of all wood products are imported into Colorado. ([USFS](#))
- Colorado sawmills and other wood products manufacturers generate just over **\$100 million** in annual sales—about **33%** of these sales are within Colorado while **66%** of their annual product sales are to consumers and markets outside of Colorado. ([BBER & CSFS](#))
- Colorado's consumer spending on wood products amounts to around **\$3 billion** annually—if our industry capacity grew, we could potentially replace up to **\$500 million** of wood products imported to Colorado by truck or rail annually with local products. ([BBER & CSFS](#))
- 37% of Colorado's timber-processing capacity goes unused. ([USFS, Region 2](#))

Workforce. We have an aging workforce with few to backfill. The demand for workers is greater than the supply.

- A major barrier to increasing the pace and scale of restoration treatments and reducing the threat of wildfire is *a lack of forest product industry workforce and capacity,*

RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Work Plan (2022-2023)

Last Updated: June 28, 2022

according to a [study](#) that surveyed logging, trucking, and business contractors in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico.

- Since 2020, lumber prices have increased **240%** due to decreased workforce capacity, demand, a housing shortage and covid. ([Colorado Sun](#))
- The labor shortage, an issue before the pandemic, significantly contributes to the spike in lumber prices. ([Colorado Sun](#))
- Between 1982 and 2016 there was a 64.3% decrease of sawmills in Colorado. ([BBER & CSFS](#))

DESIRED END STATE:

A vibrant wood products industry thrives in Colorado with the capacity to meet forest management needs. Colorado has decreased its reliance on imported wood products, which significantly reduces the costs of forest management, the severity of our wildfires, and increases economic well-being of our rural communities. Colorado boasts accessible, inclusive, and sustainable recreation opportunities for local communities and visitors.

PRIORITIES

- Grow Industry
- Target Education
- Support Recreation

RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Work Plan (2022-2023)

Last Updated: June 28, 2022

ACTION PLAN:

Priorities	Desired Outcome	Timeline/Actions
Grow Industry		
<i>Figure out what program(s) work and get people there</i>	Track infrastructure bill and other state and federal legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to address workforce development in Colorado
	Track workforce development strategy in Southwest Colorado.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to support it
	Obtain a forestry equipment simulator for use in SW CO, esp. for training programs being developed by NRCS, AFF and SCC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with Front Range Community College to learn about their forestry equipment simulator
	Address workforce issues at Colorado Forest Health Council (CFHC) meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By FY22, 4th Quarter—Clarify speaking roles. Coordinate with Angela Boag and Molly Pitts to schedule a workforce capacity presentation at the next (CFHC) meeting.
Priorities	Desired Outcome	Timeline/Actions
Target Education		
<i>Attract and help students into programs supporting industry</i>	RMRI Workforce Subcommittee meeting serve as platform for experts and speakers to present and educate for informed planning and decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a speaker from the CalFire Workforce Program to learn about their workforce development grant program and what lessons can be applied in Colorado.
	Support Pueblo Community College to scope out a forestry operations program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour timber mills in SW CO to discuss workforce opportunities associated with launching a forest industry program in Pueblo Community College – Bayfield
	Revise RMRI Workforce page to support Subcommittee objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate and manage a centralized clearinghouse of internship opportunities on the RMRI website (have a standing agenda item about internship opportunities to add to the RMRI website)
	Maintain open dialogue/advance conversation with higher education.	
Priorities	Desired Outcome	Timeline/Actions
Support Recreation		
<i>Forest industry and Outdoor Rec industry mutually exclusive</i>	Support Youth Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design info material on how to enter the forestry industry geared toward students, Youth Corps volunteers, and anyone interested in the industry. Molly Pitts: Continue to work with Nick Olsen to develop a survey on future career interests for Colorado youth corps members. By August 2022—Draft brochure/flyer for CYCA students graduating Sept. 2022.

RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Work Plan (2022-2023)

Last Updated: June 28, 2022

Priorities	Desired Outcome	Timeline/Actions
	Build social license around the outdoor recreation industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">By July 2022—Determine how Social License Subcommittee can help outdoor rec industry. Nathan Van Schaik cross-checks with Social License Subcommittee. Samantha Albert agrees to discuss topic at a future Social License Subcommittee.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/OUTCOMES:

GROW INDUSTRY

- Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA), talked with Xcel Energy about their funding needs to develop a woody biomass energy facility. Xcel Energy is able to finance the project if they decide to pursue it and does not need to apply for additional grants at this time. ([April 2022](#))
- Molly Pitts testified at the State Legislature and talked about workforce capacity issues in the timber industry. ([April 2022](#))

TARGET EDUCATION

- Molly Pitts and Tim Reader, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), met with Front Range Community College to learn about their forestry equipment simulator. The simulator is a great training tool with training modules for students to gain simulated but realistic experiences operating forestry equipment. The simulator is not mobile, so it would be difficult to transport it to Southwest Colorado or career fairs. It will be helpful to elevate this issue to the state and tie in the US Forest Service Region 2 Office and the Society of American Foresters to support the existing program at Front Range Community College and expand the use of simulators across Colorado, including Southwest Colorado. ([April 2022](#))
- Heather Houk, Pueblo Community College, and Tim Reader toured timber mills in Southwest Colorado to discuss workforce opportunities associated with launching a forest industry program in Pueblo Community College – Bayfield. ([April 2022](#))
- Heather Houk has been able to collect narrative data on the industry need. It would be helpful to have more quantitative data on the industry need to make the case to the Pueblo Community College decision-makers that a forestry industry training program would result in successful job placements for students. ([April 2022](#))
- Nathan Van Schaik prepared and consolidated data on industry needs to help prepare a presentation for decision-makers at Pueblo Community College and the Colorado Forest Health Council. ([April 2022](#))

SUPPORT RECREATION