

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)  
Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Meeting  
February 22, 2024, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM  
Zoom Meeting  
Meeting Summary – FINAL**

RMRI WORKFORCE CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE	
<b>ATTENDANCE:</b> Samantha Albert, Liz Dowling, Greg Felsen, Heather Houk, Audrey Miles-Cherney, Kim Poast, Tim Reader, Nathan Van Schaik, and Matt Tuten	
ACTION ITEMS	
<b>Tim Reader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute the announcement and registration for the CTIA conference.</li> <li>Invite his contact in Southwest Colorado to discuss opportunities to build a pipeline from conservation corps to professional forestry careers.</li> </ul>
MEETING SUMMARY	
<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> Action Item Updates	
<b>Discussion Points:</b> At the November Workforce Capacity Subcommittee meeting, Lisa Blank and Chris Moore from Flathead Valley Community College presented their experience using a simulator for their workforce programs. Following the meeting, Tim shared resources on recent studies on the effectiveness of simulator training with them and connected them with other colleagues to inform curriculum development.	<b>Decisions/Action Items:</b> None.
<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> Colorado Water Congress Update	
<b>Discussion Points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RMRI hosted a three-hour workshop on January 31 as part of the Colorado Water Congress' Annual Convention. The workshop was entitled <i>Wildfire Crisis Strategy in Action!</i>, and it was split into four panels:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading through crisis</li> <li>Success stories along the Colorado Front Range: From Forests to Faucets Partnership</li> <li>Getting it done at landscape scale (which will showcase partners from Southwest Colorado)</li> <li>Colorado Forest Health Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tom Spezze, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), and Brian Ferebee, US Forest Service (USFS), led another session to discuss the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.</li> <li>Liz Dowling and Tara Umphries also reported on RMRI at the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) to the Making Tracks Partnership (i.e., the partnership between NWTf and the US Forest Service) and other conservation partners.</li> </ul>	<b>Decisions/Action Items:</b> None.

**PRESENTATION TOPIC:** SB23-005 Forestry and Wildfire Mitigation Workforce Update, provided by Kim Poast, Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

**Presentation Points:**

- SB23-005 allocated \$1.8 million to the CDHE to expand the forestry workforce. The funds may be used for program design, administrative expenses, such as acquiring a simulator for the forestry program, and any other costs associated with expanding or creating new forestry programs. Because the legislative language is broad, CDHE can use the funding for various tasks, like curriculum development, recruitment, and hiring professors.
- The act appropriated \$15,000 to the Healthy Forests Vibrant Communities Cash Fund and \$1.5 million to the CDHE. Of the \$1.5 million, the act allocated ~\$100,000 to the Colorado State Forest Service, ~\$1.2 million for use by the CDHE commission for new and expanded forestry programs, and \$250,000 to be used for fee-for-service contracts for the community college board state system colleges for the recruiting program. The funding was a one-time appropriate, but if the program is successful, legislators may be more open to renewing the funding.
- The grantees have included a joint program between Colorado State University (CSU) and Front Range Community College (FRCC), FRCC, Pueblo Community College, Northeastern Junior College, Western Colorado University, Colorado Mountain College, and Fire Adapted Colorado.
- Grantees are using the funding for various activities, including curriculum development, expansion of current programs, recruitment, outreach, training facility, and equipment purchases.
- The funding from SB23-005 is available for two years (i.e., until 2024). The CDHE anticipates they will extend grants given the time it takes to put together educational programs and curricula. Kim Poast will recommend to her board that grantee funding automatically be rolled into 2025.
- The CDHE will create a Community of Practice for grantees through CSFS and Fire Adapted Colorado. The Community of Practice will allow grantees to discuss grant requirements and share their plans. They will also discuss an opportunity to share a forestry simulator.
- The CDHE has unspent funds. There may be a second round of applications, but the CDHE has not decided how to allocate the unspent funds.

**DISCUSSION TOPIC:** SB23-005 Forestry and Wildfire Mitigation Workforce Update

**Discussion Points:**

- The RMRI Social License/Communications Subcommittee is interested in telling success stories. The CDHE has a communications team and can collaborate on press releases and visual media with RMRI communicators. The CDHE also manages several social media platforms, like LinkedIn and X.
- The CDHE would be interested in pursuing a guaranteed transfer pathway with CSU if community colleges are interested. Pueblo Community College would be interested in pursuing guaranteed pathway transfers.
- There are a few potential reasons why the amount of funding requests was less than the amount available. Some institutions have initiative fatigue; with so much funding coming from the federal government, there is some exhaustion about new grant programs. Additionally,

**Decision/Action Items:**

None.

<p>some colleges have limited capacity to launch new programs, which can be arduous. Lastly, the state has few wildfire programs, so it is a more specific niche in the educational community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SB23-005 intends to increase the forestry workforce by launching new higher-education forestry programs and expanding existing ones. There is a need for both foresters, who develop prescriptions, layouts, and contracts, and loggers, who operate equipment and do the work on the ground. The benefit of working with community colleges is that they can place students in internships with agencies like the USFS and businesses like Aspen Wall Wood. The community colleges are generally more workforce-oriented and are interested in pursuing credentialed pathways so students can step into careers like equipment operator, diesel mechanic, etc.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> SB23-005 Forestry and Wildfire Mitigation Workforce Internship Update, provided by Tim Reader, CSFS</p>	
<p><b>Discussion Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another component of SB23-005 involved the establishment of an internship program. The CSFS is in charge of setting up the program.</li> <li>• The CSFS is modeling the internship program of the Colorado Department of Agriculture's internship program.</li> <li>• The internship program will be for new employees with less than 40 hours of experience. Through the program, for-profit businesses can host interns with a \$5,000 cash match from the CSFS. The internship must exceed 130 hours and be less than six months.</li> <li>• A person must be enrolled or a recent graduate from a high school/academy, trade/technical school, 2-year certification program, or 4-year institution to be eligible for an internship. The goal is for the internship to transition into full-time work.</li> <li>• The CSFS intends to have internship applications available as early as April. This timeline aligns with the traditional hiring season. The CSFS decided not to put a deadline on applications during the first round of internships because they are piloting the program for the first time and want to see what type of interest they get.</li> <li>• The CSFS has nearly finalized their application for the internships.</li> <li>• The Workforce Capacity Committee will have a role in sharing the internship opportunity with potential entities. Tim will present the internship opportunity at the Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) conference.</li> <li>• The Upper South Platte Partnership hosts an intern in partnership with the Arner College of Natural Resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decision/Action Items:</b></p> <p>None.</p>

(NRCS). In 2023, they hosted an intern for six weeks, and she has since been able to extend her internship.	
<b>DISCUSSION TOPIC:</b> Partner Updates	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CTIA conference will be from April 18-19 in Montrose. The first day of the conference will include presentations on logger education and certification, best management programs, federal grant programs, and a banquet. The second day will include a tour of Montrose Forest Products.</li> <li>• The CSU Spur Campus in Denver is launching an urban forestry program. The program may be a way to connect urban forestry to traditional forestry to grow workforce capacity. One idea was to bring a forestry equipment simulator to the campus.</li> <li>• Heather Houk presented at the Montelores Coalition, a group focused on outdoor recreation, about the forestry program Pueblo Community College is developing. There was a lot of interest in the program and the internship opportunity.</li> <li>• There was a meeting with the natural resources and tribal staff in Durango. They discussed wildfire mitigation and workforce development strategies. One of the outcomes of the meeting was greater interest in producing a pipeline from the conservation corps into professional forestry careers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decision/Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tim Reader:</b> Distribute the announcement and registration for the CTIA conference.</li> <li>• <b>Tim Reader:</b> Invite his contact in Southwest Colorado to discuss opportunities to build a pipeline from conservation corps to professional forestry careers.</li> </ul>
<b>NEXT STEPS</b>	
Samuel Wallace will distribute a Doodle to schedule the next Workforce Capacity meeting.	