

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
August 31, 2020, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
RMRI Funding Subcommittee
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Angela Boag, Mo Bookwalter, Christina Burri, Patt Dorsey, Jason Lawhon, Emily Olsen, Nathan Van Schaik, Cindy Williams, Scott Woods,

Facilitation: Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

Mo Bookwalter, Patt Dorsey, Scott Woods, and Heather Bergman	Meet to discuss what would be a useful first step and what information should be requested from the priority landscapes to assist with matchmaking.
---------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

RMRI FUNDING COMMITMENTS DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed previous commitments made by RMRI towards priority landscapes. Their comments are summarized below.

- At the December 2019 full RMRI meeting, RMRI partners selected the Southwest Colorado project as the primary landscape in addition to agreeing to provide support to the Upper Arkansas and Upper South Platte landscapes. During that meeting, RMRI partners identified that one of the strategies to support the Upper Arkansas and Upper South Platte landscapes was to develop a funding strategy.
- At the Governance Subcommittee on August 25, the Subcommittee discussed the commitments that RMRI has to each of the three priority landscapes. Two of the commitments that RMRI partners have to the Southwest Colorado partners are a “full commitment to achieve all project goals” and the “prioritized investment of funding and staff.” Two of the commitments to the Upper Arkansas and Upper South Platte landscapes are “support for progress towards project goals” and “investment as resources allow.”
- Two commitments to all three landscapes are the “identification of funding opportunities and matchmaking” and the “cooperative development of a funding strategy.” These two commitments seem to fall under the roles and responsibilities of the Funding Subcommittee.

FUNDING STRATEGY OVERVIEW DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed how they could approach developing a funding strategy. Their comments are summarized below.

- There are multiple ways to approach developing a funding strategy. A funding strategy could identify ways to increase funding through public and private sources.
- In the past, RMRI partners have discussed strategies to fund projects through public grant dollars, and the Funding Subcommittee has discussed developing a private funding strategy. Developing a public and private funding strategy will require work from the Funding Subcommittee.
- In addition to finding new sources of funding, one way to increase funding is to better leverage funding from available sources. One way to better leverage funding is through communication and coordination. By being aware of the funding sources that are already available, partners can be more strategic about applying for available funding.

- In US Forest Service (USFS) Region 1, partners are trying to become more strategic with their funding by raising awareness of who is applying for what grants and where projects are taking place. The USFS Region 1 Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist developed a story map of the different funded projects in Region 1. The story map focuses on grant programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USFS, and state natural resources departments. The story map also includes information on private funding sources. The story map is supposed to help partners identify opportunities for joint work. It is also a support tool for organizations developing funding applications and proposals.
- The USFS Region 1 story map has one layer focused on Forest Action Plan priority areas. They also have a layer that identifies where the USFS is investing in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses and projects. There is a layer with the NRCS's priorities to identify areas for potential Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding. The map also identifies areas where state and private forestry programs support non-federal fuel reduction activities.
- Unlike in Region 1, RMRI partners already know where the work is occurring in the three priority landscapes. The Colorado Forest Action Plan also has information on priority watersheds in each of the three landscapes. In addition to information on ongoing projects and priority areas in each of the three landscapes, RMRI partners should also know where people are investing in projects. Including information in a funding strategy on where partners are investing can help RMRI partners identify opportunities to leverage funding and staffing.
- The funding strategy broadens the focus of the Funding Subcommittee. Originally, the Funding Subcommittee was primarily focused on traditional grant opportunities. Landscape partners already have a good idea where they would like to implement projects. The funding strategy should not only include what projects are ongoing but also what funding programs, like EQIP and Good Neighbor Authority, apply to future projects.
- If information was collected on current planning and funding efforts to develop a funding strategy, it is important to identify who would use that information and how (e.g., potential funders).
- A funding strategy does not have to only focus on direct monetary allocations. It could also focus on other types of investments, such as matching funds, hiring new staff, tasking existing staff with action items, or elevating RMRI landscapes in grant applications.
- Through the RMRI partner survey, some RMRI partners have indicated they can help develop a funding strategy and fundraise. Samuel Wallace is organizing the partner survey results by subcommittees to determine how partners can contribute to the subcommittee efforts.
- A funding strategy could help align non-traditional investments, like investments in recreational assets, with other, more traditional forest restoration work.

PRIORITY LANDSCAPE FUNDING DATA AND INFORMATION DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed what funding data and information priority landscapes already have. Their comments are summarized below.

- There was a question on whether the Funding Subcommittee should identify the current investments in the priority landscapes or if priority landscape partners are in a better position to provide that information.
- The Upper South Platte Partnership (USPP) keeps track of funding in a spreadsheet. Currently, the USPP funding is primarily from Denver Water and associated matching funds. An assessment of current investments may not be useful to the USPP because funding from

RMRI that has not yet been funneled to the USPP. A current assessment of investments in the Upper South Platte would be a few lines that show Denver Water's investments and the associated matching funds.

- An assessment of current investments in the priority landscapes may be a necessary but insufficient step. There is a possibility that an assessment of current investments may uncover new information about investments unbeknownst to current partners that could be used to complement or match other known investments.
- The Upper Arkansas partners produced a map that has been useful locally. The map displays the projects that Upper Arkansas partners are currently working on, including projects in concept development. The map includes a wide variety of partner projects, including the USFS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), utilities, Envision Chaffee Chips, and BLM.
- The Envision Chaffee County map helps partners better collaboratively plan their projects and apply for funding. For each project, there is a spreadsheet that lists the associated funding sources. RMRI funding to the Upper Arkansas landscape has been solely from the USFS, so an assessment of RMRI investments into the Upper Arkansas landscape would be one line.
- The Chaffee County assessor manages the map layers, and the Envision Forest Health Council members provide shapefiles to add to the map. The Envision Forest Health Council members are working with Lake County partners to develop a map for Lake County as well.
- The Envision Chaffee County map identifies future treatment priorities as well as priority areas where there is no planning currently happening. This map helps the Envision Forest Health Council members identify partners and strategies to begin planning in priority areas. The map also helps partners work to create landscape-scale features by planning projects across jurisdictional boundaries.
- The Envision Chaffee County map also includes wildlife habitat layers to incorporate multiple values into planning. The map is public and can be found online on the ArcGIS database.
- Documenting investments will not be particularly helpful to priority landscape partners as priority landscapes have already identified what they need and where. A greater need is to have partners look at existing projects and identify new ways to fund projects.
- In the past, the USPP organized meetings during which partners used a huge map of the watershed to identify current treatments. They then used the location of ongoing treatments to identify patterns and prioritize future projects to create landscape-scale features.
- There is a utility in understanding the gaps in project development. For some agencies in the priority landscapes, they cannot move forward until they have additional funding or capacity. Funding is needed for cultural resource surveys, NEPA studies, and other activities that can help facilitate project momentum. For the priority landscapes, it is helpful to identify the gaps and then identify where there is potential funding to fill those gaps.

PRIORITY LANDSCAPE FUNDING SUPPORT NEEDS DISCUSSION

Meeting participants discussed how to support the funding needs of the priority landscapes. Their comments are summarized below.

- A funding strategy could help scale up funding efforts for RMRI. Matching each project with a funding source could be a useful activity, but it may also be inefficient.
- The USFS can contribute funding in two ways. The first way is related to base funding and how the Forest Supervisor allocates funding. For example, the USFS often has end-of-the-year funds to allocate to projects. The second way is the distribution of funds allocated

specifically for RMRI. It would be helpful to the USFS to have as much information on projects as possible when they are allocating end-of-the-year funds or when they request funding from the USFS Washington Office. Having maps with identified projects also makes projects more competitive for grant applications, like the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Program.

- For private and state forest activities, the USFS can allocate additional private and state forestry funds to areas where there are identified needs. Having information ready on both the acres and the cost of private and state forestry projects will make them more competitive for funding.
- It would be helpful to map where there may be opportunities for alternative sources of funding for projects if traditional sources are unavailable (i.e., if the BLM does not have base funding for a forest treatment, there could be opportunities through Good Neighbor Agreements to treat areas around BLM land).
- Information that could be helpful when allocating funds and finding matchmaking opportunities include land ownership, existing capacity, available matching funds, and project objectives. It would also be helpful to know the priority landscapes' annual goals and funding gaps for planning and implementing projects. If RMRI partners know the goals of the priority landscapes, the current investments, and the funding gaps, then RMRI partners can help matchmake more effectively and efficiently.
- The support for the priority landscapes should expand beyond funding. An increase in funding may not be helpful if there is not the capacity to implement projects with that funding. There are different types of investments, such as investing staffing capacity, that could each have their own goals.
- Providing in-kind match is a way to potentially help priority landscapes. RMRI partners have invested time and energy into RMRI. Quantifying the in-kind contributions from RMRI partners can be used as match in some grants. It would also make a compelling case on a grant application or in a request for funding from the USFS Washington Office. There could be a system for people to share in-kind contributions.
- There could potentially be a matching funds database that displays unclaimed in-kind match that partners in the landscapes could leverage in grant applications. Collaboration is often not quantified; gathering information on the RMRI partner in-kind contributions demonstrates the cost of collaboration that can be used to make RMRI landscape grant applications and requests for funding from the USFS Washington Office more competitive.
- In the Upper Arkansas landscape, each project has a current set of needs that need to be met to move them forward. The Upper Arkansas partners could potentially identify what the needs are for the projects they are planning based on how much information is required from them.
- A Project Advancement Subcommittee may be more beneficial than a Funding Subcommittee. Instead of focusing solely on raising funds, the Project Advancement Subcommittee would look at project development and implementation holistically. When raising private dollars, it is helpful to have a list of project needs, but the projects also have to respond to the needs and goals of private donors and foundations. A Project Advancement Subcommittee could identify project needs and match and be ready with that information when the appropriate funding opportunity arises.
- RMRI priority landscapes do not have the capacity to gather in-depth information on priority landscape goals, funding gaps, and current investments without seeing results from their efforts. Many funding opportunities do not provide funding for additional capacity, which is needed to write grants and gather information on project goals, gaps, and current

investments. The Subcommittee should be mindful to not make any burdensome requests of the priority landscapes

- If priority landscapes can develop near-term public and provide funding goals, the RMRI Leadership Team and other agencies could have a better understanding of how to help the priority landscape partners meet their goals. Having concrete public and private funding goals makes it easier for agencies, like the USFS, to request funding because they can explain what projects the funding will be applied towards and why. It also allows RMRI partners and the Leadership Team to ask whether RMRI is achieving its goals.
- The Funding Subcommittee could help package information provided by priority landscapes into a consolidated narrative to use to request funding.
- The USPP is spending around \$1.5 million a year on private land treatments and \$2 million per year on USFS lands using funds from Denver Water and the USFS.
- The Funding Subcommittee could ask for basic data from priority landscape partners. As long as the request is for simple and specific information, it is not too much of a burden for priority landscapes to provide that information. The priority landscapes could provide information on project costs, the RMRI values that different projects address, and the funding gaps fairly easily. They could also divide their 10-year treatment goals into smaller goals. This information is not in the RMRI proposals and would require additional data gathering effort from the priority landscapes.
- In Southwest Colorado, they are identifying their base capacity to determine how much work they can feasibly accomplish based on their current capacity. They are then identifying what additional capacity is needed if they receive “x” amount of funding. This exercise is helping Southwest Colorado identify their capacity gaps. The other priority landscapes could identify their current capacity and future capacity needs as well.
- A spreadsheet could be created for priority landscape partners to provide basic information on projects. Information that the spreadsheet could request from priority landscape partners includes:
 - A numerical value on a scale of one to three that indicates how much a certain project impacts each one of RMRI’s four values
 - Project costs
 - Funding gaps
 - Capacity gaps
- The National Forest Foundation has a spreadsheet that lists individual projects, needs, gaps, and timeline. This spreadsheet could serve as an example for a Funding subcommittee spreadsheet.

NEXT STEPS

The next step for the Funding Subcommittee is for Patt Dorsey, Mo Bookwalter, Scott Woods, and Heather Bergman to meet to discuss what would be a useful first step and what information should be requested from the priority landscapes to assist with matchmaking. The amount of information requested from priority landscapes should align with the capacity of the priority landscapes to collect information.