

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**March 1, 2021, 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM**  
**RMRI Social License/Communications Subcommittee Joint Meeting**  
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Rob Addington, Dan Beveridge, Cindy Dozier, Tim Kylo, Matt Lindler, Nathan Van Schaik, Catherine Schloegel, Kirk Will, and Lo Williams

*Facilitation:* Patt Dorsey and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Nathan Van Schaik</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribute the messaging template to the Social License and Communications Subcommittee.</li><li>• Gather information on any relevant projects in the priority landscapes for which the Subcommittees could fill out the messaging template.</li></ul> |
| <b>Kirk Will</b>         | Share the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) communications plan for prescribed fires.   |

**SOCIAL LICENSE AND COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ROLES DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed the Social License and Communications Subcommittee's roles and the opportunity to work together moving forward. Their comments are summarized below.

- The Social License Subcommittee has developed a database for success stories and a document of key messages. Now is a good time for the Social License Subcommittee and Communications Subcommittee to discuss how to use them to convey messages to audiences.
- According to the RMRI charter, the Social License Subcommittee's role is to develop messages to develop social license in the priority area landscapes. The Communications Subcommittee's role is more operational, focusing on managing the communication functions of RMRI and creating an RMRI brand and logo. The Social License Subcommittee should also consider how to build social license for specific projects.
- The immediate concern of the Communications Subcommittee is the development of the RMRI brand logo. They are also focused on creating a process to track projects across all three landscapes. Jake Todd is currently working on creating a priority landscape dashboard to track projects.
- There are several ways for the Social License and Communications Subcommittee to interface:
  - The Social License Subcommittee could send their key messages to the Communications Subcommittee. The Communications Subcommittee would develop the communication tools and materials based on the key messages. The Communications Subcommittee would think about imagery, font choice, and the minutiae that goes into developing a messaging campaign.
  - The Communications Subcommittee could develop a messaging plan for the Social License Subcommittee's key messages. The messaging plan would outline the need to build social license, key messages, frequently asked questions and answers, talking points for new releases, and points of contact. RMRI partners could use the messaging plan for meetings. Nathan Van Schaik has a template for the messaging plan.

- The Communications Subcommittee and Social License Subcommittee could develop a strategy to reach out to communities involved with a specific project. They could work on releasing messages that provide science-based information on treatments.
- There are two communication needs. The first is to develop external-facing messages with information on the whole partnership (e.g., the RMRI brand), and the second is creating messages about specific projects. These different communication needs require two different messengers and strategies. RMRI partners should communicate messages on the whole partnership, while local partners should communicate messages on specific projects.
- The Social License and Communications Subcommittees could merge indefinitely or temporarily as they put together communication materials. The Communications Subcommittee still has some independent projects that require meeting separately, like developing the RMRI brand/logo and the mechanism to track projects. Instead of merging, the Subcommittees can continue to hold joint meetings.
- Many RMRI partners, such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), have messages and ways to distribute messages. The Subcommittees should use existing resources to develop and distribute messages. RMRI should not develop new communication materials if the material already exists through partner organizations. RMRI could also post messages on their social media and have partner organizations re-post the content.
- The Social License and Communications Subcommittee should jointly develop messages and a messaging strategy for specific projects. They could begin to fill out the template to create talking points for a specific project or issue. Nathan Van Schaik will distribute the messaging template to the Social License and Communications Subcommittee and gather information on any relevant projects for which the Subcommittees could fill out the messaging template.
- In any messaging materials, the Subcommittees should use publicly accessible language and avoid terms like the "wildland-urban interface."

## **SOCIAL LICENSE AND COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE POTENTIAL PROJECTS DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed potential projects for the Subcommittees to pursue. Their comments are summarized below.

- An upcoming project for the subcommittees to consider is the Salter Vegetation Management Project Environmental Assessment (EA). There are opportunities to work with community members in the Town of Dolores because more logging trucks will be traveling through the area due to the Salter Project. The deadline for submitting comments for the Salter EA is March 11.
- There are fewer opportunities to use the prescribed fire messages in Southwest Colorado because prescribed fire on the San Juan National Forest will be limited this season due to drought. Kirk Will will share the DFPC communications plan for prescribed fires.
- Lorena Williams is writing a newsletter with information on prescribed fires on the San Juan National Forest. The Social License Subcommittee key messages on prescribed fire could help her write part of that newsletter.
- The Upper South Platte Partnership (USPP) could use messaging and outreach support for the MacArthur Gulch Project.
- There is a need to improve internal communications to keep partners up to date in the RMRI partnership. The Source is one example of internal communications, but the Subcommittees could think of other ways to keep partners updated. Part of the reason for developing communication infrastructure is to create a pipeline of information to the Communications Subcommittee to provide regular updates to partners.

- The new US Forest Service (USFS) budget process has changed how the National Forests will allocate funding to treatments and timber projects. The Communications Subcommittee could develop a statement to inform partners of the USFS budget process and what it means for projects moving forward. Federal agency partners in RMRI would have to abstain from signing onto a message that affects federal policy.

### **COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS ON WATER AND FOREST HEALTH DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed creating communication products for messages, particularly around the relationship between water and forest health. Their comments are summarized below.

- RMRI partners presented at the Colorado Water Congress (CWC) meeting. The presentation went well. The presentation's goal was not to provide answers to CWC members but to ask them how they can engage and contribute to the solution. The presentation focused on water security and the relationship between forests and water.
- There are several potential messaging tools the Subcommittees could focus on to communicate messages about the relationship between water and forests:
  - A map that shows how treatment protect water supply
  - An infographic that shows how prescribed fires versus a catastrophic wildfire affects a drop of water
  - An interactive map where users can click and learn more about treatments occurring in the RMRI priority landscapes
- It would be advantageous for the Subcommittees to develop communication materials that partners can use in many different contexts. The purpose of developing communication materials is to highlight how forest treatments in the RMRI priority landscapes affect people's drinking water.
- Nathan Van Schaik can work on any communication tool so long as a subject matter expertise provides him the information.
- Communicating science is a particularly difficult task. Scientific conclusions often do not convey a simple cause-and-effect relationship. The messages should accurately convey the science.
- The messaging should communicate that Coloradoans have unhealthy forests and need to start managing their forests differently to achieve different results.
- The messaging should communicate that catastrophic wildfires are bad, but fires themselves are not inherently bad. Fires are a part of a natural cycle. The messaging should not demonize fire while also acknowledging the effects that fire has on water supply.
- The Berkley Lab - Earth and Environmental Sciences Division has messaging on watersheds that could help the Subcommittee.

### **PARTNER UPDATES**

Meeting participants provided updates on upcoming events. Their updates are summarized below.

- For the branding and logo process, Nathan Van Schaik and Matt Lindler will be sending out a copy of The Truth's presentation to the RMRI partners soon. The Truth is re-recording the presentation to incorporate concerns from RMRI partners about the proposed name change.
- Tim Kylo will be presenting at the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) wood utilization seminar. He will be talking about the upgrades they have made to their sawmill, including upgrades to process ponderosa pine. Montrose Forest Products is testing the new equipment for the first time on the day of this meeting.

- The USPP is developing a project on MacArthur Gulch. The MacArthur Gulch project is a multi-partner effort that the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is leading. There may be opportunities to promote the project through communications and outreach.
- The USFS South Platte Ranger District is creating a collaborative partnership to conduct a 250,000-acre National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning effort. The effort will look at the watershed over the last 20 years and consider different areas to return to for maintenance and treatments. There will also be a prescribed fire component of the NEPA planning effort. The Social License Subcommittee could engage with that effort as well to deliver projects.
- The USFS Regional Office has launched its budget modernization project, which will affect regional and national forest budgets. There should be messaging coming from the Regional and Washington Office on the USFS budget modernization soon.
- Tammy Angel is the temporary Regional Forester of Region 2. The Region 2 Office is very busy right now as they receive new directives from the new presidential administration.
- The Colorado Forest and Water Alliance (COFWA) is drafting basic principles about the relationship between watershed and forest health. They are looking for water users to help draft those principles and put them into easily understandable terms.
- Club 21 has recently met with the Colorado senate delegation to discuss upcoming legislation.
- The San Juan National Forest recently met with Representative Boebert's staff in Durango. They talked about RMRI and forest health priorities for the five National Forests in Congressional District 3. Those meetings were productive.
- The USFS Region 2 Office has provided funding for the San Juan National Forest timber program. The funding will help with RMRI priorities as well as free up funding for road maintenance and repair. The San Juan National Forest will also be conducting prescribed burns in each of their districts.
- Nathan Van Schaik is working with the Colorado Film and Television Office to create a 30 to 60-minute documentary for the Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Service. The project still needs funding from the state and federal levels. If they can find funding, there will be an opportunity for the Subcommittees to develop messaging and identify subject matter expertise for the film.
- Patt Dorsey will be presenting at the Colorado Timber Industry Association conference in the spring.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

The next RMRI Social License Subcommittee meeting will be on ***Tuesday, April 6, from 2pm to 4pm***. The goal of that meeting will be to begin developing messaging documents for specific projects and topics using the templates developed by Nathan Van Schaik.