

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**March 9, 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**  
**RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee**  
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Kerry Lucas, Pete McCormick, Tim Reader, Ellen Roberts, Scott Segerstrom, Jake Todd, Tara Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik, and Jack Wiley

*Facilitation:* Molly Pitts and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Molly Pitts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to Angela Boag to see what opportunities exist for the state to support applications for the Apprenticeship Expansion and Apprenticeship Training Center Establishment grants.</li> <li>• Reach out to Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC) administrators to identify opportunities for the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee to partner with the TSJC trail-building program.</li> <li>• Reach out to Clarke Becker to discuss getting the forest restoration industry recognized in the <i>Colorado Talent Pipeline Report</i>.</li> <li>• Update the work plan to reflect the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee's progress over the past several months.</li> </ul>
<b>Tara Umphries</b>	Talk to the US Forest Service (USFS) Region 2 Office to determine whether there are workforce shortages in the recreation industry.
<b>Tim Reader</b>	Identify which state agency provides programmatic support for wood manufacturing training programs, such as the one at Red Rocks Community College.
<b>Scott Segerstrom</b>	Keep the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee updated on the impacts of the stimulus package on the Conservation Corps.
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send the Job Corps presentation slide deck to the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.</li> <li>• Distribute a Doodle poll for mid-April to the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.</li> </ul>

**ACTION ITEM UPDATE**

Meeting participants shared updates on their action items from the RMRI Workforce Capacity meeting on February 10. Their comments are summarized below.

- Jake Todd researched federal workforce development grant opportunities. He created a document with information on relevant grants. The grant table includes:
  - The Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, which offers 10 to 15 \$4 million grants
  - The Apprenticeship Training Center Establishment Grant, which offers grants up to \$7.5 million
- The Gates Family Foundation and Walton Family Foundation are also shifting their strategies to increase the scale and pace of landscape restoration grants. These grants could be a potential opportunity for the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.
- Molly Pitts will reach out to Angela Boag to see what opportunities exist for the state to support applications for the Apprenticeship Expansion and Apprenticeship Training Center

Establishment grants. Clarke Becker, the Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium Director, and Kate Greenberg, the Colorado Department of Agriculture Commissioner, are also good contacts for these grants. Jake Todd can help support the grant research if needed.

- Jake Todd talked with a staff member from Conservation Legacy about opportunities for veterans in the Conservation Legacy program. They were interested in partnering with the US Forest Service (USFS), which has opened up a conversation on workforce development planning in the USFS.
- Jake Todd met with Fort Carson staff to discuss transition assistance opportunities under the Soldier for Life program. He has also connected with the Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center. Partnering with these two organizations can help get people involved with the private timber company and veteran-owned small businesses if they do not want to join the federal government. The partners are interested in creating a program to train veterans to develop small business plans. Jake will continue to work with Fort Carson to identify opportunities for recruiting veterans to be a part of the forestry workforce.

### **JOB CORPS PRESENTATION**

Kerry Lucas, Job Corps vocational development specialist in Collbran, Colorado, presented on the Job Corps program. His comments are summarized below.

- The Job Corps program started in the 1960s under President Johnson. Most of the centers were in rural locations; now, there are Job Corps offices in some cities.
- The Job Corps accepts applicants between the ages of 16 and 24. Applicants must demonstrate they have a disability or are from a low-income community to qualify for the program.
- The Job Corps is meant to serve at-risk young adults. There are 125 centers across the United States, and the USFS operates 24 of them. The US Department of Labor hires contractors to operate the centers, and the USFS is the largest contractor.
- The USFS employs all the staff in the Collbran Job Corps Center. Some job centers focus on quickly training and placing students, but the Collbran Job Corps Center focuses on training their students in leadership and integrity.
- Most of the USFS Job Corps centers are in the Northwest and Southeast. The Collbran Job Corps Center is the only one in Colorado.
- All Job Corps centers provide educational and vocational training programs for students. The Collbran Job Corps Center also has a program for students to earn their GEDs or high school diploma if they do not already have it. These programs operate as a regular high school, with sports and extracurricular activities.
- The vocational training program is set up to help train students to become successful taxpayers. They have eight vocational training programs in Collbran: carpentry, cement masonry, floor covering, facilities maintenance, office administration, welding, and Cisco computer networking. The Collbran Job Corps Center is introducing a new program in June: advanced fire training.
- Each Job Corps center has its unique programs. Admission counselors across the county guide students to the appropriate center based on their vocation of interest. Most of the students enrolled in the Collbran Job Corps Center are from Colorado, but there is also a good proportion from Texas and Wyoming.
- The Collbran Job Corps Center has worked closely with the National Forests. They have a firefighter training program as an extracurricular activity for students. In this program, students train in Type 2 hand crews on the evening and weekends. This program allowed students to take other courses while receiving training to receive their red card.

- The Collbran Job Corps Center's operations were going to change from the USFS to a private entity. However, the US Secretary of Agriculture and USFS Chief wanted to keep the Center under the operations of the USFS. They established a new position in Denver to find ways for the USFS and Job Corps Program to work together more closely. Because of these initiatives, the Collbran Job Corps Center will start administering an advanced fire training program.
- The Collbran Job Corps Center will be one of two centers offering an advanced fire training program. Students graduating from any job corps center with a red card can enroll in the advanced fire training program. In the program, students will train in engine crews and initial attack crews. The program will begin in June.
- The pipeline for the program begins with students enrolling in an initial trade and earning their red card. Students will then transfer to the advanced fire program and upon graduation, join the USFS as firefighters.
- COVID has had a large impact on the program. Enrollment numbers are down, so the Job Corps Center hopes to restore the enrollment levels to pre-COVID numbers.

### ***Clarifying Questions***

Meeting participants asked several clarifying questions about the Collbran Job Corps Center. Questions are indicated in italics with corresponding answers in plain text.

*What is the pay rate for students going through a Job Corps program?*

- Students enroll as students, not employees. They do not pay any training costs and receive a small stipend of \$200/week. The campus is residential, so students also receive meals and have access to recreational activities.
- The Collbran Job Corps Center normally hosts an annual country music fundraiser in Grand Junction to help raise funds for student and leader bonuses. The program can be difficult for students who need additional resources, like a vehicle. Students who participate in the fire training program receive payment for their work.

*Do students graduate from the Collbran Job Center programs with a certificate in their trade?*

- The Job Corps centers provide a certificate for each of the trades. Some of the programs also provide credentials and other benefits. For example, students who graduate from the welding program gain membership to the Association of Welding Distribution (AWD).
- Unions help run some of the programs. For example, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters provides instructors for the carpentry program, and students can join the union and start as a second-year apprentice if they choose.
- The Job Corps centers act as a post-secondary school, like a trade college.

*Does the program last two years?*

Students can graduate from their programs in a year. The average student takes a year and a half. Students can stay in the program for up to two years, with a request for additional time if needed. Students in the advanced fire program will receive an additional year of training.

*Has the Collbran Job Corps Center considered offering forest training along with fire training?*

- In addition to the two Job Corps, a third center offers an advanced dispatch program. Some centers have programs for forestry-related trade.
- The decision to offer an advanced fire training program in Collbran came from decisions at the national office and the USFS offices in Denver.

- The advanced fire program will take in the top students who are committed to firefighting as their trade.

*How could RMRI help Job Corps?*

- The Collbran Job Corps Center will often work with employers to identify potential students for Job Corps programs. For people who want to develop skills and gain experience in the forests, RMRI partners could send them to the Job Corps centers to prepare for a trade in that field.
- RMRI partners should tour the Collbran Job Corps Center to become more familiar with their program.

*Do students who go through the Job Corps program get federal hiring preference?*

They can receive federal hiring preference. The Job Corps program has partnered with the Bureau of Land Management to use the Public Land Corps agreement in the past. The expectation is that students in the advanced fire program will be placed within different USFS internships and jobs. In the past, students who worked on public lands received a certificate, which allowed them to compete for other positions as though they were already employees of the USFS. Veterans will still receive preference over Job Corps graduates. Many graduates are applying for GS-4 jobs, for which there is normally not a lot of competition.

**Group Discussion**

Meeting participants discussed opportunities for the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee and the Collbran Job Corps Center to work together. Their comments are summarized below.

- Students that receive federal hiring preference do not always find an open position in the timeframe during which they have that hiring preference. Partners could coordinate with the Collbran Job Corps Center to help find open positions for students coming out of the advanced fire program. The Collbran Job Corps Center encourages employers, such as the USFS, to meet with students before their federal hiring preference ends. This way, the USFS can decide whether to hire students before they graduate.
- The USFS Regional Office had fewer applicants for seasonal timber jobs than seasonal fire jobs. The Collbran Job Corps Center should consider looking at expanding the program to include timber job training. The Collbran Job Corps Center is moving forward with the advanced fire program. They are in the process of hiring one of seven instructors for the program. Often, professionals in the field will come to the Center to talk to students. USFS staff have come to talk to students about jobs in timber and other fields. The Collbran Center is always interested in showing students different opportunities and career pathways, such as timber.
- Samuel Wallace will send the Job Corps slide deck to the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.

**TSJC TRAIL-BUILDING CURRICULUM DISCUSSION**

The presenter on the TSJC trail-building curriculum could not attend today's meeting, so Molly Pitts provided a brief overview of the TSJC trail-building curriculum. Their comments are summarized below.

- Before the meeting, Samuel Wallace sent out the trail-building curriculum to the Subcommittee.
- The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee has talked a lot about heavy equipment operations training, but recreation management is another important workforce component.

- The TSJC trail-building program is 17-credit hours. The curriculum has not yet been approved. The TSJC trail-building curriculum is an example of how groups there is a growing interest in the trail business at the county and local level.
- The curriculum outlines the need to develop sustainable trails at the right specifications to account for trail use. The curriculum also includes classes on wilderness first aid. The curriculum also provides an opportunity for students to intern with a Conservation Corps, federal agency, or town or county government.
- TSJC program administrators have said they are interested in looking at a forestry class if there is a need. Molly Pitts will reach out to TSJC administrators to identify opportunities for the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee to partner with the TSJC trail-building program.

### **WORKFORCE CAPACITY WORK PLAN DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed progress on the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee work plan. Their comments are summarized below.

- There were four tasks in the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee work plan:
  1. Get the forest and resilience industry recognized as a growth industry in the Colorado Talent Pipeline Report.
  2. Work with Colorado Department of Higher Education to develop curriculum for two and four-year colleges, including hands-on equipment operations.
  3. Produce written material (pamphlet, handout, etc.) that could be used during career days at middle schools, high schools, and colleges.
  4. Educate Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Workforce Centers, and Department of Agriculture about the forest and resilience industry and the needs concerning workforce development and training.
- Molly Pitts will reach out to Clarke Becker to discuss getting the forest restoration industry recognized in the *Colorado Talent Pipeline Report*.
- Ellen Roberts has been spearheading an effort with Fort Lewis College to improve their curriculum to increase the number of students coming out of Fort Lewis College with the skills to tackle wildfire problems. Fort Lewis administrators have expressed interest in revamping and remarketing their curriculum.
- The two big ideas for Fort Lewis College are to update their program to meet today's need and create a certificate program for private landowners that cannot attend a two-year college to develop skills.
- Junior colleges may be better suited to stand up a Northern Maine Community College (NMCC) or Shasta College-type program than a four-year university. Four-year universities have not been interested in a heavy equipment training program. Junior colleges are also statutorily required to provide direct workforce training services.
- Fort Lewis College has not discussed a 12-week training program, similar to the NMCC program. The State of Maine subsidized that program, which is not currently an option in Colorado. Funding will be needed to support a program. The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee could reach out to the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) to identify potential funding sources. Tim Reader will identify which state agency provides programmatic support for wood manufacturing training programs, such as the one at Red Rocks Community College.
- The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee still has acquiring a forestry training simulator on the backburner.
- It would be helpful to confirm that the recreation industry faces the same workforce shortages as the timber and logging industry. There is an issue with workforce retention for

developed recreation. Tara Umphries will talk to the USFS Region 2 Office to determine whether there are workforce shortages in the recreation industry.

### **WORKFORCE CAPACITY COMMUNICATIONS AND RECRUITMENT DISCUSSION**

Meeting participants discussed Workforce Capacity Subcommittee communication and recruitment needs. Their comments are summarized below.

- Communications can help the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee work with partners to recruit people to their programs, such as Job Corps or the Conservation Corps. The Communications Subcommittee could potentially help produce messages.
- The Conservation Corps always appreciate help with recruitment. The big headline news for the Conservation Corps is the new stimulus package. The Conservation Corps is currently making the case that they are a good investment for those stimulus funds. With an increase in those funds, the number of Conservation Corps may double in the next couple of years. The Conservation Corps is trying to position themselves to be ready for that funding. RMRI could help recruit crew members.
- There is a long-term need to recruit people to the Conservation Corps program and place them following the program in natural resource-focused jobs.
- The Conservation Corps has a history of engaging long-term unemployed Coloradoans as part of their workforce. Following the floods in Boulder County, the Conservation Corps hired crews of long-term unemployed Coloradoans around the age of 50. Following the potential passing of the stimulus package, there may be an opportunity to recruit an entirely new demographic to the Conservation Corps.
- Scott Segerstrom will keep the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee updated on the impacts of the stimulus package on the Conservation Corps.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Molly Pitts will update the work plan to reflect the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee's progress over the past several months.
- Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle poll for mid-April.