

Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
October 29, 2021, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee
Meeting Summary – FINAL

RMRI WORKFORCE CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE	
ATTENDANCE: Samantha Albert, Kate McIntire, Molly Pitts, Tim Reader, Scott Segerstrom, Tara Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik, and Samuel Wallace	
ACTION ITEMS	
Tim Reader and Molly Pitts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a call with Front Range Community College (FRCC) to talk about their simulator and explore options for acquiring a simulator in Southwest Colorado. • Share the outcomes of their discussions with the Front Range Community College on their timber harvesting simulator.
Samantha Albert	Follow up with the OEDIT director to determine if any economic development legislation coming up in the next legislative session is relevant to the Subcommittee's work.
MEETING SUMMARY	
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Partner Updates	
<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is in the process of hiring a new state forester. Their goal is to have someone hired by January 2022. • Tim Reader, CSFS, and Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA), participated in the forestry and restoration workforce development panel for the Western Governors Association Working Land and Communities Workshop. In her remarks, Molly emphasized an opportunity to create a pipeline to transition corps members to other jobs, including those in the timber industry. • The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) has had conversations with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about starting an internship program through the agency. • Several Workforce Capacity Subcommittee members attended an economic development conference in Steamboat. Samantha Albert, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (COEDIT), and Molly Pitts were on the main panel. Molly Pitts and Tim Reader also participated in a breakout group on forestry and timber business. One takeaway from the conference was that many of the challenges facing the forestry and timber industry are also facing other industries around the state, such as 	<p>Decisions/Action Items:</p> <p>None.</p>

<p>employee housing and supply chain issues. Another takeaway was that Hinsdale and Gunnison County are exploring possible biomass entrepreneurial start-ups.</p>	
<p>DISCUSSION TOPIC: Action Item Updates</p>	
<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Segerstrom is working on a white paper that outlines the high-level details of a potential private industry apprenticeship/internship through the corps program. Due to the CYCA being short-staffed, he has not had the opportunity to complete it. He plans to write the white paper in November. • Tim Reader and Molly Pitts have been working with potential applicants to explore options to pursue an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant. They have reached out to Colorado Economic Region 10 and determined they are already planning on applying for an EDA grant. Community colleges or a local or regional economic development group are best positioned to apply for EDA grants to develop a timber industry training program. However, community colleges are not yet ready to stand up a program. In particular, Pueblo Community College – Bayfield is not prepared to stand up a program, but they are interested in exploring the option for future applications. • The EDA will continue to offer the Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant, which may be an option for funding in the future. Specific EDA programs, like the Good Jobs Challenge, were specifically created by the American Rescue Plan and will expire in January. EDA grants also have a lot of reporting requirements, which is important to keep in mind when applying for funding. • There may be an opportunity to apply for EDA funding to get a forestry equipment simulator into Southwest Colorado. The simulator could then be taken to different community colleges and corps programs around Southwest Colorado as a demonstration. 	<p>Decision/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Reader and Molly Pitts: Schedule a call with Front Range Community College (FRCC) to talk about their simulator and explore options for acquiring a simulator in Southwest Colorado.
<p>Discussion Topic: Legislative Updates</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wildfire Matters Review Committee was recently considering a draft forestry bill that would have done three things: 1) created a paid internship program to help businesses pay for the cost of an employee for six weeks, 2) extended the bark beetle tax exemption to all wood products in 	<p>Decision/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samantha Albert: Follow up with the OEDIT director to determine if any economic development legislation coming up in the next

<p>Colorado (which would have exempted sales tax for all products that use Colorado wood supply), and 3) created a tax credit up to \$10,000 to purchase Colorado wood material. The Wildfire Matters Review Committee ultimately decided not to move the bill through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wildfire Matters Review Committee may also be considering a firefighter workforce development bill. • Increased allocations to national conservation corps have been kept in recent iterations of the national infrastructure bill. If the bill passes as is, it will allocate over \$1 billion over ten years to the corps program. Most of the funding would fund a civilian climate corps, which is still being defined programmatically at the national level. Additionally, a statutory change may allow AmeriCorps to grant funding with other agencies through interagency agreements. • There are barriers to growing the corps membership quickly. For example, there is a cap for how much AmeriCorps members can be paid. This cap can be a barrier to having people from underrepresented communities participate in the corps. The new infrastructure bill may raise the compensation for AmeriCorps members to help them better compete in the job market. • The US Forest Service (USFS) is also determining ways to recruit people into their workforce. They are currently hiring a regional recruiter. The challenges the USFS face when hiring, especially seasonally, are barriers to increasing the pace and scale of restoration. • A working group was formed in the USFS Washington Office to determine how the USFS can spend its allocations from the infrastructure bill to increase the pace and scale of forest management and support industry and biomass utilization. Their conversations are in the initial stages. • Reforestation is a big need following catastrophic wildfires, and the need is for more capacity and personnel in nurseries. 	<p>legislative session is relevant to the Subcommittee’s work.</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>	
<p>Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle to schedule the next Workforce Capacity Subcommittee meeting in December.</p>	

