

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)**  
**February 9, 2022, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**  
***Leadership Team Meeting***  
**Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE:**

*Leadership Team Members:* Samantha Albert, Brian Banks, Alan Bittner, Jacque Buchanan, Patt Dorsey, Cindy Dozier, Vaughn Jones, Jason Lawhon, Paige Lewis, Tim Mauck, Matt McCombs, Frank McCormick, Molly Pitts, Lauren Ris, and Cindy Williams

*Additional Attendees:* Carrie Adait, Rob Addington, Eugene Backhaus, Kara Chadwick, Liz Dowling, Greg Felt, Allen Gallamore, Aaron Kimple, Damon Lange, Andy Lerch, Mark Loveall, Susan Matthews, Kate McIntire, Pat Mercer, Adam Moore, Sarah Mudge, Emily Olsen, Scott Owen, Jonathan Paklaian, Jim Pitts, Kelle Reynolds, Cody Robertson, Bronson Smart, Travis Smith, Tom Spezze, Diana Trujillo, Tar Umphries, Nathan Van Schaik, Scott Woods

*Facilitation:* Heather Bergman and Samuel Wallace

**UPPER SOUTH PLATE LANDSCAPE 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENT PRESENTATION**

Brian Banks (US Forest Service (USFS)) and Allen Gallamore (Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)) presented the 2021 update and accomplishment roll-up. Their presentation is summarized below.

***Overview***

- In 2021, the USFS conducted prescribed fires on 501 acres (321 acres of pile burns and 180 acres of broadcast burning). As the USFS continues to build social license on the South Platte Ranger District, they expect to increase the number of acres treated by prescribed burns. On the state and private land side, partners completed 12 projects on 531 acres.
- The USFS and Colorado State Forest Service secured Fireshed Program funding to hire a full-time Upper South Platte Partnership (USPP) watershed coordinator. The coordinator will increase the ability of the USPP to coordinate activities and track progress on ongoing projects for future accomplishment reports.
- The USFS coordinated with partners under a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement on the Deer Creek Project.
- The USPP completed the utilization of the USFS Cohesive Strategy Funding. The Cohesive Strategy Program funding was the catalyst for the formation of the USPP and focused the USPP on the three legs of the cohesive strategy (landscape resilience, fire adapted communities, and fire response).
- The USPP also distributed a survey and received feedback from partners on several different issues. Partners are using the results of the survey to improve their partnerships.
- In the original Upper South Platte proposal, the identified goals were to treat 75,000 acres of private land and 75,000 acres of public land over ten years. Partners also indicated that they would conduct 2,600 structure assessments per year, conduct defensible space/home hardening on 2,600 structures a year, and treat 4,000 acres with strategic fuel breaks as part of the fire adapted community leg of the Cohesive Strategy. Regarding the fire response leg of the Cohesive Strategy, the goal was to have partners collect new fire pre-planning data, increase fire agencies' fire qualifications, utilize local prescribed fires for training, support fuel treatment targets, and develop agreements with water suppliers.

## **2021 Project Accomplishments**

- The USPP identified five focus areas to collaboratively develop projects. The focus areas included Oehlmann Park, Elk Creek, Dee Creek/Harris Park, Upper Bear Creek, and McArthur Gulch. Projects in these focus areas have primarily focused on achieving resilient landscape targets, but they have also helped create fire adapted communities and improve fire response. They also connect to the three emphases of Shared Stewardship and four RMRI values.
- In 2021, the USPP closed out its National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Program grant. Using the funding, partners engaged in a range of activities, including treating the landscape, working with communities, building capacity for wildland fire response, and supporting monitoring and outreach efforts to achieve the overall goals of partners. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) provided a final report that summarizes the accomplishments of the USPP over the past six years.
- Jefferson Conservation District has a robust treatment program. They also maintain a Google Map that highlights the location of ongoing and planned projects. This map is a best practice that partners want to grow and build in 2022.
- The South Platte Ranger District's GNA Agreement to implement the Deer Creek vegetation management project is the first one in the district since 2003. The USFS used the GNA Agreement to increase the footprint and scale of treatments to include private lands. As part of the GNA Agreement, the USFS was allowed to use private roads to access public land. The USFS had to extend the timeline for the project because contractor bids were too costly. One of the takeaways from the GNA Deer Creek project is that partners will need to think of creative solutions to address the high price of operators in the area. The USFS plans to implement three or four new GNA projects as funding becomes available.
- In the winter of 2021, the USFS conducted a broadcast burn next to the Harris Park community. The project goals were to reduce overall fuel loading and improve bighorn sheep habitat. The USFS burned 40 acres, an order of magnitudes higher than previous burns. Many cooperators were interested in joining the prescribed fire. This prescribed fire allowed partners to build relationships and train new implementers.
- Other partner accomplishments include:
  - The Colorado State Forest Service completed four fuels treatment projects and is planning several projects to occur in 2022.
  - The USFS conducted tree re-planting. They also used fuelwood permits to remove from project areas. The USFS is also working with a collaborative partnership in a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to assess 250,000 acres for future restoration.
  - Jefferson Conservation District completed over 400 acres worth of work and continues to secure funding for the next phase of projects.
  - Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) has purchased new equipment to increase its capacity to treat. They have also worked with the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) to develop the Jefferson County Forest Health Plan, which lays out a long-term prioritization plan for the county.
  - Denver Water and the USFS worked with the Mile High Youth Corps to train a diverse group of recent graduates in pile burning. There is a 90% placement rate of Mile High Youth Corps volunteers into federal jobs. Denver Water also provides letters of support to pursue grants and additional sources.
  - TNC continues to fund projects, including community assistant projects to implement community wildlife protection projects in the Evergreen Area.

- Aurora Water provided funding to improve recreation access and reduce soil erosion. They also completed their Source Water Protection Plan.
- Denver Mountain Parks treated over 300 acres in 2021.
- Genesee Foundation organized a wildfire prepared home assessment training for residences and restored 50 acres on Genesee Open Space.
- Intercanyon Fire Protection District completed its Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and continues to increase its capacity to conduct wildfire mitigation projects. They implemented a chipping program that reached 700 homes and resulted in the chipping of over 7,000 piles.
- CFRI is conducting a wildfire risk assessment with the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest (ARP) and the South Platte collaborative pre-NEPA analysis project. They also are collecting monitoring data on USPP projects. They have developed a plan to inform adaptive management discussions among the partners.
- The Ember Alliance is a new organization helping develop new Community Wildfire Protection Plans in the watershed.

### ***Leadership Team Member Questions***

Leadership Team members asked questions about the Upper South Platte landscape. Their questions are indicated below, with the corresponding responses in plain text.

*How has the South Platte Ranger District built up the social license for prescribed fire over time?*

The USFS and partners have taken a multi-pronged approach. They have hosted several public meetings to explain the process and reasoning for prescribed fire. Additionally, the USFS slowly introduced community members to forest treatment concepts, starting with talking about mechanical treatment, moving on to pile burning, and finally talking about broadcast burning. As community members learn about prescribed fire, they share that message on social media platforms like Facebook and Next Door.

### **UPPER ARKANSAS LANDSCAPE 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENT PRESENTATION**

Cindy Williams (Envision Chaffee County), Greg Felt (Chaffee County Commissioner), Sarah Mudge (Lake County Commissioner), Patt Mercer (USFS), Adam Moore (CSFS), and Emily Olsen (National Forest Foundation) presented the 2021 update and accomplishment roll-up. Their presentation is summarized below.

#### ***Overview***

- Envision Chaffee County aims to inspire a wildfire ready future by:
  - Expanding bang-for-the-buck priorities
  - Accelerating action
  - Completing an All-Lands Recreation Plan
  - Developing a funding model

#### ***Bang-For-The-Buck Priorities***

- CFRI worked with Envision Chaffee County Forest Health Council to create a Chaffee Wildfire Protection Plan map. The map prioritizes treatments based on the impact a treatment would have on shared values, such as wildlife, water, and recreation. The map identifies where partners will get the most bang for their buck based on each treatment's expected return on investment. Homeowners and community members recognize this map in Chaffee County.
- Lake County conducted a similar treatment prioritization analysis. They identified areas of high, higher, and highest priority for treatment. The map will help build social license for

forest restoration treatments in Lake County. Lake County plans on treating 20,000 acres by 2032 to half the risk wildfire poses to communities. Partners are currently working on building an action plan to achieve their goals.

### ***Accelerating Action***

- Over the past two years, Chaffee and Lake County have made tangible steps towards achieving the goals they set out in their original RMRI proposal. Between Chaffee County and Lake County, partners set the goal of treating 30,000 acres of public land and 10,000 acres of private land by 2030.
- Partners have collected about a third of the total funding needed to treat 30,000 acres. Additionally, two-thirds of the targeted number of acres are in the planning pipeline. Partners are currently implementing two large fuel breaks south of Salida and north of Buena Vista. These fuel breaks tie into the Restoration and Stewardship of Outdoor Resources and Environment (RESTORE) grant project.
- Since 2020, 44 partners on the Envision Forest Health Council have treated more than 3,000 acres of public and private forest land. They have 21,000 acres in the planning pipeline. Around 1,600 private landowners are taking action to improve community wildfire resiliency. Partners have raised over \$19 million for forest planning and treatment projects. Chaffee County now has five designated Firewise USA sites.
- The Envision Forest Health Council has built community through wildfire resilience.
- Chaffee County administered the Chaffee Treats Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation Program. The driving goal of the program is to create connected, cross-boundary treatments in targeted areas. Partners have engaged with private landowners to connect their treatments to public and state lands.
- With help from American Forest Foundation, partners put three new forests on the ground to engage with landowners. Partners have secured millions in funding to accelerate treatments on private lands, including \$5.7 million from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- The Envision Chaffee County Forest Health Council is in a position to treat 5,000 acres of private land in top priority areas by 2026.
- Chaffee County is ready to treat nearly 8,000 more acres than a year ago because partners and the community have coalesced around the 10-year Wildfire Plan.
- Landowners are participating in the Chaffee Chips Program, a county-provided slash removal service. Lake County is looking to create similar programs in their collaborative action plan. Neighborhoods are also gaining Firewise designations with help from the Colorado State Forest Service and County fire department.
- The Methodist Front Project will protect communities and improve wildlife habitat, with several wildlife experts providing feedback on the project. Partners have begun implementing the Methodist Front by treating 135 acres on the property of a long-time (fifth generation) rancher. They have also treated 180 acres on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. Funding for the project comes from the RESTORE grant, City of Poncha Springs, City of Salida, and Chaffee Common Ground. Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) crews are also implementing some treatments. A majority of the landowners in two different subdivisions adjacent to the Methodist Front Project have agreed to treat their properties.
- Partners on the Envision Chaffee County Forest Health Council are engaging communities to encourage them to create Firewise communities. One subdivision recently gained Firewise USA designation.

- Partners have several other projects focused on other values beyond fire reduction, such as wildlife and water. The Railroad Bridge Project was designed with wildlife in mind. Bighorn sheep use the project area as winter range during the winter and then migrate across eight counties in the summer. The project also protects the Arkansas River – the most rafted river in the West and gold medal fishery.
- The RESTORE funding program has invested \$820,000 in two years in the county.
- Lake County is creating an early win project and accelerating action in Lake County. Partners have an opportunity to work in high-priority lands around the City of Leadville, including lands owned by Lake County, Colorado Mountain Club, and Newmont Mining. There are also several subdivisions west of Leadville that the CSFS has long-standing relationships with. Partners aim to engage these subdivisions to implement treatments on private lands to protect primary evacuation routes and heavily traveled visitor routes.
- Community engagement efforts have inspired 1,600 people to act, moved 21,000 acres into the treatment pipeline, generated \$19 million in funding, and treated over 3,000 acres.

### ***Completing an All-Lands Recreation Plan***

- When Envision Chaffee County conducted their Chaffee County wildlife survey, they asked respondents what the biggest threat to wildlife is. The number one response was wildfire, but the second most popular response was the negative impacts of recreation (e.g., human waste, trash, and human ignitions). Dispersed camping sites have a high risk of human ignition.
- After engaging 64 groups and over 4,000 citizens, Envision Chaffee County partners have created the Chaffee County All-Lands Recreation Management Plan. The plan includes strategies to address the impacts of outdoor recreation growth on the health of the watershed so that Chaffee County can sustain clean, fun, and wild recreation for this and future generations.

### ***Developing a Funding Model***

The National Forest Foundation has partnered with the Envision Chaffee County Forest Health Council to develop the Upper Arkansas Forest Fund. The fund was seeded with a 5-year, \$1.64 million commitment from the Common Ground local sales tax program. The Upper Arkansas Forest Fund will leverage this funding to secure \$5.7 million from the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The National Forest Foundation will use this funding to bring in funding from other sources, such as utilities, corporations, and municipalities.

### ***Final Thoughts and Moving Forward***

The Envision Forest Health Council faces several challenges in the future. The first involves developing clarity around future desired conditions. Additionally, partners require additional capacity to ramp up the Lake County Program and build upon Chaffee County's ongoing work. Lastly, partners want to continue to increase capacity for contractors to treat on private lands.

### ***Leadership Team Member Questions***

Leadership Team members asked questions about the Upper Arkansas landscape. Their questions are indicated below, with the corresponding responses in plain text.

*How can RMRI partners promote the model and success of Envision Chaffee County to other areas across the state? Does Envision Chaffee County have resources to share with partners?*

- Envision Chaffee County has documented and provided many of its reports and processes on its website. For example, partners can easily access the wildfire and recreation surveys.

- One goal of Envision Chaffee County was to make the project scalable and replicable. Envision Chaffee County wants to jump-start these efforts in other communities.
- Mapping is an extremely helpful tool as a community outreach tool.

*How can RMRI amplify the landscape stories across the state and the West?*

Each landscape must tell its story. However, community voices and values also need to drive the discussion. Having someone focused specifically on media and storytelling is a tremendous advantage. The Upper Arkansas has someone focused on working with the media to tell the Upper Arkansas story and reach out to the public.

**SOUTHWEST COLORADO LANDSCAPE 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENT PRESENTATION**

Jason Lawhon (USFS), Kara Chadwick (USFS), and Mark Loveall (CSFS) presented the 2021 update and accomplishment roll-up. Their presentation is summarized below.

***Overview***

- The RMRI Southwest Colorado Steering Committee is composed of representatives from USFS, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), CSFS, NRCS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), as well as representatives for water, community, and recreation values. The Steering Committee is representative of the stakeholders and interests in Southwest Colorado.
- Southwest Colorado partners completed 53 projects on federal lands, resulting in 12,000 acres treated. They also completed 37 state, private, and tribal land projects, resulting in 2,317 acres treated.
- The goals in Southwest Colorado's original RMRI proposal were to treat 20,000 acres of non-federal lands and 290,000 acres of National Forest land. They also planned on identifying and implementing key recreation projects.
- Southwest Colorado partners are trying to put Shared Stewardship into action. Shared Stewardship has four components: joint prioritization, cross-boundary strategy, investments and actions, and outcomes at scale.

***Joint Prioritization***

- The RMRI Southwest Colorado landscape is large and contains many different ownerships. Partners also had a lot of existing quantitative data from previous analyses. Partners had to identify how to bring together different datasets and data layers to prioritize work on the RMRI Southwest Colorado landscape.
- The RMRI Southwest Colorado Steering Committee developed a strategic map by breaking the landscape into potential operational delineations (PODs). PODs are fire response tool that identifies the most optimal places to contain a fire based on certain characteristics (e.g., changes in topography, vegetation fuel type, roads, etc.).
- The RMRI Southwest Colorado Steering Committee then had stakeholders and subject matter experts provide input on the values associated with each POD. The RMRI Southwest Colorado Steering Committee reached out to over 100 stakeholders. Many stakeholders provided input on the PODs map, representing 46 different organizations. Partners used the stakeholder input to identify which PODs were high and low priorities for each RMRI value (forests and wildlife, recreation, communities, and water).
- The RMRI Southwest Colorado Steering Committee then distributed the PODs map to a broader audience and received over 1,800 comments.

### ***Cross-Boundary Strategy***

- The Steering Committee took the information provided by the stakeholders and the broader public to prioritize each POD by each RMRI value. The Steering Committee also prioritized each POD using opportunity characteristics (e.g., probability of success, funding, social license, partnership catalyst, etc.) to determine which PODs were in a better position for project implementation.
- The Steering Committee used the combined results for each POD to prioritize each POD for treatment. The highest-ranked PODs were high priority by value and high priority by opportunity. This analysis also allowed partners to identify PODs with a high opportunity rating but a lower value rating. They also identified PODs for future planning (PODs with a low opportunity rating but a high value rating).
- The prioritization assessment also allowed partners to identify the specific outcomes and measures for treatments in each POD. For example, a high water ranking POD means that partners were interested in focusing treatments on protecting water supplies. Partners are currently developing specific strategies for the highest-ranking PODs.

### ***Investments and Actions***

- Many partners in Southwest Colorado were working together before RMRI selected Southwest Colorado as its marquee landscape. RMRI was a catalyst that brought partners together to focus on shared priorities. Partners have been discussing how to align investments for future planning and projects.
- The San Juan National Forest (SJNF) and Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) are working with the American Forest Foundation and Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) to apply a new landscape-scale fire risk model to the Southwest Colorado PODs.
- The City of Durango has a collaborative partnership, known as the Durango Area Trails Alliance, to implement trail stewardship and maintenance projects. Through this partnership, Durango has acquired two trail stewardship and maintenance grants and 245 acres of additional open space land around the city. BLM is helping construct trails.
- Partners have developed the Wildfire Watershed Protection Funding (originally known as the Southwest Wildfire Impact Fund), a funding mechanism that has secured \$500,00 for private lands treatment.
- La Plata County, the City of Durango, and the Durango Fire Protection District entered into an intergovernmental agreement to form a wildfire protection fund. They will be hiring a coordinator to manage that fund.
- A large portion of the SJNF has existing NEPA for mechanical treatment and prescribed fire. The Dolores Watershed Resilient Forests (DWRWF) Collaborative and the Four Rivers Resilient Forest Collaborative are developing desired conditions for upcoming NEPA analyses on the landscape. The desired conditions will help inform the development of monitoring protocols and policies.
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership has a neighborhood assessment program. Through that program, they have conducted 200 home risk assessments for landowners. The NRCS has also completed planning for 455 acres.
- There are currently over 1,100 acres planned for out-years.
- The American Forest Foundation, NRCS, Southwest Conservation Corps, and Fort Lewis College continue to make headway on training forestry technicians.
- Many partners have spoken at numerous conferences, including Colorado Water Congress.
- MSI engaged over 150 people through a fire-learning series they organized. Many local collaboratives continue to lead field tours on adaptive management and monitoring.

- The USFS, NFF, and Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) are working together to conduct an all-land recreation and industry assessment on the Columbine District
- There is a strong industry presence in Southwest Colorado. Timber Age secured a grant to establish a cross-laminated timber operation in Southwest Colorado. Table-to-Farm Composition Program is taking sawdust from sawmills to incorporate into their compost.
- There is a strong tribal interest in Southwest Colorado. Representatives from the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Southern Ute Tribe are on the RMRI Southwest Colorado advisory network. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is also working with the CSFS to implement forest treatment projects on their property. Lastly, the NFF is working with the tribes to launch a Wood for Life Program.

### ***Outcomes at Scale***

- In total, partners have invested \$4.2 million on federal lands and over \$3 million on state, private, and tribal lands.
- The NWTF has committed staff and leadership to the Southwest Colorado efforts.
- The SJNF completed 41 projects, resulting in 8,300 acres treated. Some of that treatment includes GNA projects with the CSFS. The SJNF also completed 11 recreation-focused projects, resulting in the maintenance of over 200 miles. In total, the SJNF invested \$3.7 million in the RMRI landscape.
- The BLM completed 12 projects totaling 4,325 acres treated in the RMRI landscape. They also created five miles of new trails and improved signage and kiosks. They invested over \$500,000 in 2021.
- The NRCS has invested Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding into private land planning. This funding has led to the assessment of 233 acres in priority PODs and 412 acres overall.
- The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) completed six projects, covering 270 acres, including 38 acres under a GNA Agreement and 182 acres on Ute Mountain Ute Tribal lands. The CSFS invested \$552,000 from state and private sources.
- CPW completed two projects, covering 1,300 acres. The projects have benefited wildlife, water, and community values. The investment from CPW, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the Mule Deer Foundation totaled \$400,000.
- The City of Durango and Fire Adapted Durango Partnership completed a wildland-urban interface project, treating 84 acres to protect 284 homes. The City of Durango also improved recreation infrastructure and trails around priority water-related recreation sites.
- The San Juan Mountain Association (SJMA) launched the RMRI forest ambassador program, which provided trained staff to expand outreach and communication to the public in high-use recreation areas. The program resulted in over 3,600 interactions with trail users. The SJMA also maintained over 200 miles of trail.
- Montrose Forest Products implemented three projects, resulting in the treatment of 405 acres. Around 100 acres of that treatment occurred in priority PODs.
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership managed nine projects, totaling 135 acres and covering 85 homes. Much of their work was focused on creating defensible space around La Plata, Montezuma, and Archuleta County homes. They have invested \$300,000 in state and private funding in a 60% cost-share with partners/landowners.
- Over the past two years, the Southwest Colorado partners have treated 4,431 acres on private lands, setting them slightly ahead of schedule to achieve their 10-year goal of 20,000

acres. They have also treated 36,454 acres of public lands to date; their 10-year goal is to treat 290,000 acres of lands on the SJNF.

- Around 29,267 acres of treatment have benefitted communities; 15,440 acres of treatment have benefitted water resources; 27,163 acres of treatment have benefitted wildlife and forest health.

### ***Leadership Team Member Questions***

Leadership Team members asked questions about the Southwest Colorado landscape. Their questions are indicated below, with the corresponding responses in plain text.

*How do the Southwest Colorado partners avoid double-counting when they assign the number of acres of treatment by value?*

Southwest Colorado partners are double and triple counting acres in their total number of acres treated by value assessment. Many projects address multiple values, so Southwest Colorado partners are counting acres by the multiple values they address, which leads to double and triple counting at times.

### **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER UPDATES**

Leadership Team members provided updates. Their updates are organized by agency/partner below and summarized below.

#### ***USFS***

- The USFS will be allocating \$3 billion from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The goal is to use that funding to treat 20 million acres of National Forest Service land and 30 million acres of state, private, and tribal lands. Considering those numbers assume the cost of \$60/acre, the intent of the funding is not necessarily to complete all the work. The goal of the funding is for the USFS and partners to demonstrate that they can reduce fire risk and increase the resiliency of the landscape when given the funding.
- The Front Range of Colorado was identified as one of four national priority areas for forest restoration and wildfire mitigation. Additionally, the USFS' recently published national strategy for protecting communities and improving resilience identified firesheds along the Front Range and in Southwest Colorado as high-risk firesheds. These firesheds align closely with the RMRI landscapes.
- The USFS is working with the NFF to host roundtables for each USFS region. The purpose of the roundtables is for partners to provide input on the USFS's 10-Year Strategic Implementation Plan.
- Given the additional funding coming to the USFS, the agency should be in a stronger position to allocate funding beyond their normally appropriated budget. They are planning on hiring 200 to 300 new staff members to increase internal capacity.
- The USFS continues to work with the CSFS and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to align priorities and develop strategies.

#### ***DNR***

- In 2021, the Colorado State Legislature allocated \$7.5 million for wildfire risk reduction projects to protect life, property, and infrastructure. DNR worked with CSFS, the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), and federal partners to develop the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP). Under COSWAP, partners conducted a joint risk evaluation of Colorado to identify the counties at the highest risk of wildfire. They identified

strategic focal areas to receive the majority of COSWAP funding. The ten focal areas include seven counties and the three RMRI landscapes.

- DNR staff is currently meeting with each focal area to share information on the COSWAP landscape fuels reduction program. Each RMRI landscape has the opportunity to apply for up to \$1 million to implement a cross-boundary project on the landscape. There is a 25% match component. Only government entities are eligible to receive funding. All of the funding must be obligated by June 2023.
- The COSWAP program also includes a workforce development grant. Partners in the ten focal areas can apply to have CYCA or State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crews conduct project work. The workforce development grant was released on February 1. This grant program is open to federal, tribal, state, county, public utilities, homeowner associations, non-profits, and forest collaboratives. Partners can also apply up to \$100,000 to have a non-CYCA crew conduct work or administer a training program. These grants require a 25% in-kind or cash match.

### ***OREC***

- OREC Director Nathan Fey has recently taken another job. OREC has hired Connor Hall, formerly a Trust for Public Lands employee, to fill the director position. He will begin in two weeks.
- The Economic Development Agency (EDA) has provided Colorado \$10 million for tourism and outdoor recreation projects. OREC will be administering a competitive grant program to allocate funding for infrastructure development and technical planning and assistance. They plan to roll out that program in the late spring.

### ***NWTF***

- The NWTF has been engaged in the wildfire crisis strategy discussion at the national level.
- The NWTF will be presenting on RMRI at the NWTF convention during the week of February 14. Frank Beum, USFS Region 2 Forester, and Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director, will be part of that session.
- The NWTF has recently hired Liz Dowling, who supports fundraising efforts in Colorado and Montana. The plan is for her and Kate McIntire, RMRI, to stand up a fundraising committee to raise private funding for RMRI.

### ***DFPC***

- DFPC is currently hiring additional staff members at the field level. They would like to get more modules out into the field to support prescribed fire efforts.
- DFPC is tracking bills during the Colorado State Legislative Session. There should be several bills related to wildfire mitigation this session.

### **COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

Nathan Van Schaik (USFS) and Kate McIntire (NWTF) presented an update on the Communications Subcommittee. Their presentation is summarized below.

- In 2021, the Communications Subcommittee had discussions on how to balance helping RMRI partners with communications at the local level while also telling the broader RMRI story.
- In 2022, the Communications Subcommittee has four goals:
  - **Information Exchange:** Build understanding among partners and provide a mechanism for effective decision-making

- **Public Buy-In:** Share stories among the public to generate their buy-in and inspire in them a call-to-action
- **Mobilize Support:** Steer support, resources, and funding toward RMRI landscapes
- **RMRI Effect:** Share stories and inspire and catalyze projects in the RMRI landscapes as well as other parts of Colorado and the West
- The Communications Subcommittee currently uses six tools to distribute information:
  - The RMRI website
  - The Source newsletter
  - Ambassadors
  - Email updates through Constant Contact
  - Social media
  - Traditional media
- In 2022, the RMRI Communications Subcommittee aims to grow its presence on social media by 100%. Other social media pages focused on forest health topics have over five times the number of followers as the RMRI social media pages, indicating that communities are interested in these stories.
- The RMRI Communications Subcommittee wants to tell the RMRI landscapes' stories to generate support for projects and partners. Telling the RMRI landscapes' stories requires better communication between landscape partners and the RMRI Communications Subcommittee. In 2022, the Communications Subcommittee wants to create a network of communication professionals to help share and tell the stories of RMRI. The RMRI Communications Subcommittee intends to not create more work for partners but to leverage existing stories at a larger platform.