

**Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI)
February 25, 2022, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee
Meeting Summary – FINAL**

RMRI WORKFORCE CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE	
ATTENDANCE: Samantha Albert, Dana Coelho, Jason Lawhon, Molly Pitts, Tim Reader, Scott Segerstrom, Nathan Van Schaik	
ACTION ITEMS	
Molly Pitts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with Jason Lawhon to learn about Southwest Colorado’s efforts to develop a workforce development strategy. • Develop the 2022 work plan for review by the Subcommittee. • Contact Xcel Energy representatives to see if they need additional funding for planning, which may be eligible for the Colorado EDA outdoor recreation and tourism grant.
MEETING SUMMARY	
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Action Item Updates	
Discussion Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Reader, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), is planning to visit a sawmill with Heather Houk and Bethany Powell from Pueblo Community College to learn about the skills needed to work in the forestry mill. • Some of the Northern Arizona University (NAU) forestry operations program staff have recently left their positions. Tim Reader will connect Heather Houk to the NAU forestry operations program staff once they hire new people. • Tim Reader distributed the CSFS legislative update. He will continue to distribute the CSFS legislative update to the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee. 	Decision/Action Items: None.
Discussion Topic: Partner Updates	
Discussion Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molly Pitts, Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA), met with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) about their internship program. They are interested in partnering with the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee to add funding for a workforce apprenticeship program. • The US Forest Service (USFS) is ramping up to increase its hiring efforts. USFS regions and districts have received the approval to hire more staff, but the exact numbers are unclear. • The YS Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided funding to Colorado for tourism 	Decision/Action Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molly Pitts: Reach out to Xcel Energy representatives to see if they need additional funding for planning, which may be eligible for an EDA grant.

<p>and outdoor recreation. The Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) has put together a grant program awaiting final approval. Biomass projects may be eligible for technical and strategic planning funding if the project involves developing a biomass plan that complements an outdoor recreation strategic plan. Grantees cannot use the funding for capital purchases. Only non-profits and government agencies are eligible to receive funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xcel Energy is discussing constructing a biomass plant in Hayden, Colorado. They may need funding for strategic planning. 	
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DISCUSSION TOPIC: Legislative Updates

<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 1166-22 is under consideration. The bill would create a sales tax exemption for Colorado wood product manufacturers. Businesses could claim up to \$10,000 in sales tax credit. The bill is still under consideration. An amendment may be added to the bill to allocate funds for a forestry industry internship program through the CDA. It would be good for subcommittee members to show support for this bill. 	<p>Decision/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Reader: Distribute Carolyn Aspelin’s legislative update to the Workforce Capacity Subcommittee.
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PRESENTATION TOPIC: NAU Forestry Operations Program Update, presented by Nathan Van Schaik, USFS

<p>Presentation Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, the RMRI Workforce Capacity Subcommittee met with Dr. Han-Sup Han, who presented on NAU’s forestry operations program. As part of that presentation, he shared preliminary results from a questionnaire sent to forestry businesses. The study occurred in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado in 2020 and 2021. • The NAU Ecological Restoration Institute recently released the full study based on the questionnaire results. There were three takeaways from the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most surveyed business owners were over 50, and most employees were under 40. The age of the business owners could signal a potential wave of retirements. ○ The biggest challenge for respondents was finding skilled employees. ○ Surveyed business owners anticipate hiring 465 new employees by 2024 and beyond. Among those surveyed, 85% said they would have to train those employees internally. • NAU is going to open up its training operations center this summer. The operations center will focus on forestry equipment operation, heavy equipment repair and maintenance, and truck driving. An EDA grant funds the program.
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DISCUSSION TOPIC: NAU Forestry Operations Program

<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NAU Ecological Restoration Institute published a white paper with the survey results. Partners should use this white paper when talking 	<p>Decision/Action Items:</p> <p>None.</p>
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<p>to decision-makers and elected officials. The white paper lends credibility to some of the trends that forest business owners have known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workforce development needs are likely greater than the needs outlined in the white paper. Many contractors and forest business owners did not fill out the survey, likely due to survey exhaustion. • The average age of forest business owners in Colorado is likely higher than projected in the white paper. • The gap between the number of workers and the labor needed to increase the scale of treatments is wide. • The opening of the NAU forestry operations program will likely be delayed to the fall because several staff members have recently left NAU. 	
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Discussion Topic: 2022 Workforce Capacity Subcommittee Work Plan

<p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Workforce Capacity Subcommittee identified priorities to accomplish in 2022: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invite a speaker from the CalFire Workforce Program to learn about their workforce development grant program and what lessons can be applied in Colorado. ○ Track the infrastructure bill and other state and federal legislation to identify opportunities to address workforce development in Colorado ○ Track the workforce development strategy being developed in Southwest Colorado, and identify opportunities to support it ○ Obtain a forestry equipment simulator for use in Southwest Colorado, particularly in the training programs being developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Forest Foundation, and Southwest Conservation Corps ○ Continue to work with Pueblo Community College to scope out a forestry operations program ○ Generate and manage a centralized clearinghouse of internship opportunities on the RMRI website (have a standing agenda item about internship opportunities to add to the RMRI website) ○ Consider ways to engage and raise awareness among Colorado Youth Corps 	<p>Decision/Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molly Pitts: Connect with Jason Lawhon to learn about Southwest Colorado’s efforts to develop a workforce development strategy. • Molly Pitts: Develop the 2022 work plan for review by the Subcommittee.
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Association (CYCA) volunteers about for-profit jobs through summer field trips and other educational efforts	
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Next Steps

- Samuel Wallace will send out a Doodle to schedule the next Workforce Capacity Subcommittee meeting in April.