COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Economic Restoration Institute

WORKING WATERSHEDS PROGRAM
LOCATION (FORT COLLINS/ STATE-WIDE)

Learn more and stay informed

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The Working Watersheds Project

A statewide initiative focused on restoring Colorado's timber and forest products industry to a sustainable and productive condition while improving watershed health. (removed space)

The Economic Restoration Institute (ERI) is managing this effort along with state, local, and private entities to strengthen Colorado's Timber Industry. More details and program goals: www.EconomicRestoration.org/projects.

Program Deliverables

1. State-wide Timber and Forest Products Industry Restoration Plan
2. Industry Investment Strategy, Market Creation, and Policy Shifts
3. Demonstration Projects in Priority Watersheds.

Phase#1 Highlights

Gap analysis: compared forest biomass to industry capacity to sustainably remove and utilize that material.

Outreach: meeting with and interviewed stakeholders from the wood products industry across Colorado throughout 25 and 26. 65 participants

Industry barrier analysis: identified the most common challenges limiting industry growth and capacity

Results

- **The Upper Colorado watershed**: Largest gap between biomass accumulation and existing timber industry capacity (figure 1.). Key Barriers (figure 2): Cost of equipment, State and Federal Policy, Timber Quality: Size, and Haul Distance
- **South Platte Watershed**: Moderate industry gap (figure 1.). Key Barriers (Figure 3.): Cost of Equipment, Timber Quality: Size, Haul Distance, and Skilled labor
- Further analysis is being conducted at county level to help identify local challenges and opportunities.

Table 1.

Timber industry barrier scores across watersheds in Colorado

	Financial				Govt. / Fiber Supply				Labor		
Watersheds	Cost of finance	Financial value of end products	Cost of equipment	Bidding and Contracting	State and Federal Policy	size	Haul Distance	CDL Divers	Equipment operators	skilled labor	unskilled labor
Upper Colorado	2.8	2.9	4.3	2.6	4.0	4.0	3.5	2.8	2.9	3.3	1.9
South Platte	2.7	2.9	4.3	3.2	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.7	1.8
Rio Grande	2.3	3.9	4.6	2.5	2.6	4.0	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.0	2.6
Yampa-White	3.0	2.8	4.0	2.6	2.4	3.4	3.8	3.4	3.6	4.0	1.0
Arkansas	3.7	3.3	4.3	2.2	2.7	2.8	3.8	1.9	2.6	3.2	3.2
Upper Colorado	2.8	2.9	4.3	2.6	4.0	4.0	3.5	2.8	2.9	3.3	1.9
North Platte	1.0	2.5	4.0	1.5	2.8	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5	5.0	2.0
Dolores-Animas	2.9	3.0	4.7	3.2	3.3	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.2	1.8

Table 1. Timber industry barriers survey responses summarized by averaging responses in each watershed for each barrier. Based on a 1-5 scale (1 meaning low impact and 5 meaning high impact). The most severe barriers are displayed on this table along with barriers that were expected to have greater impact but resulted in low scores.

Figure 1.

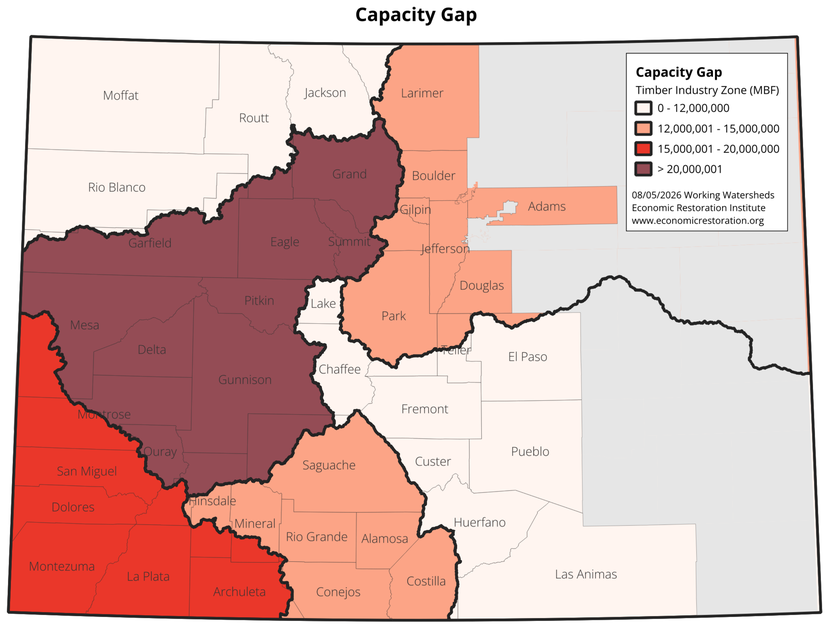


Figure 1. Map depicting the processing capacity of existing timber companies compared to the existing biomass in each of Colorado's six major watersheds. Units in MBF (thousands of board feet), ranging from 0 – to 20,000,001 MBF.

Figure 2.

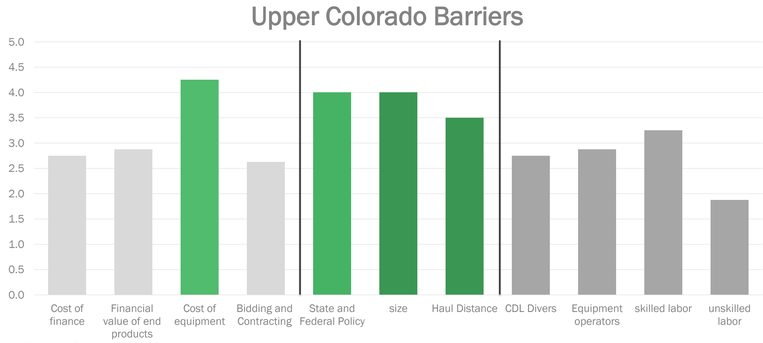


Figure 2. In the Upper Colorado watershed, the most severe barriers facing the industry (highest rating among participants) are cost of equipment, state and federal policy, tree size, and haul distance. Barriers that were less severe than anticipated are cost of finance and financial value of end product.

Figure 3.

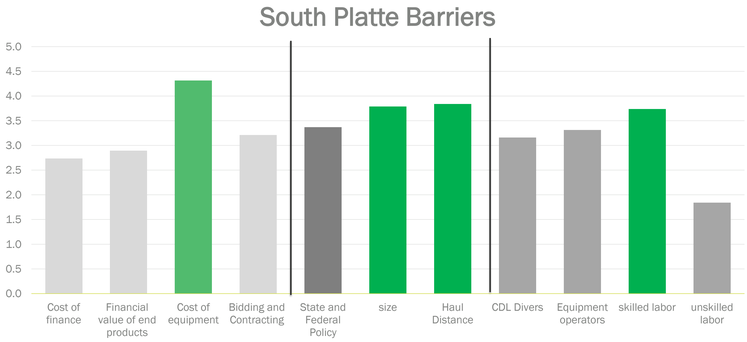


Figure 3. In the South Platte watershed, the most severe barriers facing the industry (highest rating among participants) are cost of equipment, tree size, haul distance, and skilled labor. Barriers that were less severe than anticipated are cost of finance, financial value of end product, and state and federal policy.

NEXT STEPS (Phase 2 and 3)

- ✓ Data analysis will be used to support a state-wide **industry restoration plan** during phases 2 (e.g., industry investment strategy, market value and policy strategies) in 2027.
- ✓ Industry restoration projects in priority watersheds anticipated in 2027/2028.
- ✓ Evaluation of policy levers at state and local levels to increase competitive dynamics and financial support in favor of a thriving timber and forest products industry in Colorado.