

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Colorado State Forest Service Success Story

High Priority Forest Restoration and Fuels Mitigation Grant

Forest Industry Retention



Rio Grande County offers stunning mountain views from the floor of the San Luis Valley. It also offers diverse outdoor adventures and is a stopover for thousands of migrating sandhill cranes every spring. The county lies within the upper Rio Grande River watershed. Most of the forested land in the county is part of the Rio Grande National Forest. Major employers include the county and the school district, but many smaller businesses make their living from the land. One such business is Rocky Mountain Timber Products, Inc.

Richard and Cassandra Doyon, owners of Rocky Mountain Timber Products, Inc., have been in the logging business for 25 years. Richard, a Cortez, Colo., native originally came to the Del Norte area to work on a logging crew. In 1985, he and his wife, Cassandra, started their own logging business.

Much has changed since Richard started logging. Timber sale volumes have decreased. The average log size has dropped. The large sawmill in South Fork, a major employer in Rio Grande County, closed and the buildings and infrastructure were removed. Adaptation and innovation were required in order to utilize the changing wood supply.

Seven years ago, the Doyons started a new business, Rocky Mountain Timber Products, Inc. As Cassandra explained, "We used to log for the sawmill in South Fork and they closed it. Then we went to work for a sawmill in Espanola, N.M., and it closed. After that, we went to work for Louisiana Pacific in Saratoga, Wyo., and it closed. So we were forced either to quit logging or open our own sawmill."

When the Doyons purchased the sawmill site between Del Norte and South Fork, it was undeveloped land. Richard and his logging crew constructed the buildings to house the saws, generator and planer. On a much smaller scale than the landmark mill in South Fork, Rocky Mountain Timber Products provides customers with building products, many sawn to order.

The mill sells everything from house logs to sawdust, but building products generate the most income for the business. All-time high fuel prices in 2008 raised the mill's operating expenses to similar heights. Yet as fuel expenses dropped, so did the housing market — and demand for the products that paid the bills. The Doyons were forced to lay off most of their employees.

The outlook was less than favorable when Rocky Mountain Timber Products responded to the Request for Proposals for an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant through the Colorado State Forest Service.



The Doyons will use the grant funds to create 14 jobs that can be sustained beyond the 2-year grant period. “If I can find people who have experience operating a circular saw, and band saw, that will free up more of my time to focus on selling the products,” says Richard. To date, the business has five employees and is saving Engelmann spruce killed by the spruce beetle.



Chris Jenner is Rocky Mountain Timber Products’ newest employee. He moved his family to Del Norte because he heard the sawmill may be hiring, and he wanted to be positioned to get a job. He was hired at the beginning of February and is stacking lumber and cants. As a former roofer, Jenner is no stranger to physically demanding jobs. When asked about his new job, Jenner said, “Richard takes a genuine concern of people. He picks up the crew every morning to carpool, asks for my opinion and sometimes uses it. I’m really enjoying the job.”

Brett Schillinger, who has worked for the Doyons for 22 years as an equipment operator in the woods and currently works at the sawmill, echoed Jenner’s remarks. “The Doyons are really good people to work for. They bend over backwards. The best part of the job is working for Richard. The second part is the diversity of the job.”



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