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Transcription of Colorado's wood products industry: essential to long-term forest health

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Creator: Mike Hooker, narrator; Joe Duda, speaker; Mike Lester, speaker; Kent Grant, speaker; J. R. Ford, speaker; Matt Cudmore, speaker; Randy Fischer, speaker
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BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

00:00:11:12 - 00:00:37:14

Unknown

A century ago, wildland fire periodically burned through Colorado's forests, naturally helping thin and regenerate them. The trees that survived were healthier because they had less competition for sun, water and available nutrients. But as more people have moved into the state's wildland urban interface, fires are being suppressed to protect human lives and property. The timber industry once helped thin these forests, removing excess fuel for wildfires.

00:00:37:14 - 00:01:03:13

Unknown

But a diminished forest products industry has hampered these efforts. Reviving markets for Colorado wood is vital to the ongoing management of our forests. If we want to set our forests up to provide all the commodity and amenity values, we need to think carefully about the actions we take. We can have the best mix of active working lands and wilderness landscape across Colorado.

00:01:03:14 - 00:01:24:22

Unknown

As long as we understand that that some action is necessary, one of the reasons why the timber products entry is so important in this state is they provide a market for all those products we're trying to move off of landowners land. If you're trying to produce a healthier force, mitigate against against wildfire that involves removing trees from your property.

00:01:24:28 - 00:01:34:18

Unknown

If those trees have value, it's much easier for you to, as a landowner, to engage in that mitigation.

00:01:34:21 - 00:02:01:28

Unknown

Over the past few decades, Colorado has experienced a significant decline in the number of businesses that harvest or manufacture wood products. But there's hope. Despite a decline in the forest products industry all around Colorado, small businesses are finding ways to create value for wood products from the forest and creating jobs in the process. In Pagosa Springs, one company is finding a new market for woody biomass made from shrubs and small trees.

00:02:02:01 - 00:02:30:00

Unknown

We have an entrepreneur down here that has really been getting serious about developing a business over in Archuleta County, to the east of us here. He has a ten year stewardship contract with the San Juan National Forest, so that pretty much guarantees him a ten year supply of raw material to using this forest biomass business. And what we do here is we use a point of harvest poultry chipping operation.

00:02:30:00 - 00:02:50:28

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And we bring a feather muncher comes up with a hot sore. And basically 96% of these wood chips are going to be converted to a gas. That gas will run, a gas turbine will make one third of the power for the county. So it's a it's a, it's a technology that's just now it's in this baby stage. It's coming along and it's very, very clean.

00:02:51:00 - 00:03:13:01

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While the smaller material is cut and shipped on site to ultimately produce clean energy, the larger logs are hauled to the sawmill and turned into quality lumber. We're creating about eight jobs in the woods around our small community. We're also creating a small sawmill, and then we're also making the power in our community. So we're creating about 30 jobs in our town.

00:03:13:03 - 00:03:36:17

Unknown

A similar approach is being taken on the campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins. A woody biomass burner supplies energy to the campus and demonstrates how what often is considered a low value forest product can actually be of significant value. The woody biomass that you see here, the chips are a renewable product, so we're using them from forest treatments.

00:03:36:17 - 00:04:07:04

Unknown

Those forests are continue to grow. And so there will be an endless supply of this material available for this facility and for other facilities across the state. This can use anything from fresh standing green timber all the way to beetle kill tree. Some of what you see here is beetle killed. Some of it can come from burn areas, so it's fairly flexible in the fuel supply that it can use.

00:04:07:06 - 00:04:37:06

Unknown

Many Coloradans don't own private forest lands, but still have positive impacts on Colorado's forest products industry in Carbondale. A small business is turning beetle pine into skis and snowboards. Our ski business is pretty unique in the fact that we utilize as many local products as we can. We really are using all Colorado wood for our skis. We use Colorado wood mainly because it is almost easier for me to get.

00:04:37:06 - 00:04:59:19

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And I actually found my first beetle kill pine suppliers eight miles right behind us here. Yeah, the rest is kind of history. It really builds on our story, and we love the fact that we are able to use local materials. Meyer skis don't use a large amount of beetle kill pine, but they provide a good example of how beetle kill wood is a high quality and sturdy material.

00:04:59:24 - 00:05:20:15

Unknown

We're definitely a small a small company, and we probably don't put a dent in what's available. You know, what's being milled and things like that. I think the bigger picture is people see what we're doing, they hear what we're doing. We're the, you know, we're on the leading edge and the front lines where people see the beetle kill being used.

00:05:20:15 - 00:05:56:12

Unknown

And I think that's probably more important. Matt Cudmore and many other small business owners benefit from the Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing Program, or Co wood Code, assist Colorado's forest products manufacturers, and educates consumers and forest users by providing forest products, information, service, education and outreach for us to effectively manage Colorado's forests. We need outlets for those products we we can't continue to pay every time we have a treatment, because there's way more demand on the landscape than there is money to do the treatments.

00:05:56:12 - 00:06:24:08

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So by developing outlets for the forest products, we can supply things with local wood from Colorado and achieve our forest management needs on the landscape. The selective cutting of trees plays a key role in natural resources management. It's one of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risks, improve forest health, and protect watersheds and wildlife habitat. Trees removed for biofuel also represent a form of green energy.

00:06:24:08 - 00:06:56:01

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But to effectively manage our forests, adequate infrastructure is necessary to convert raw timber into products available for consumers. We need to find better ways to utilize our the biomass and the forest products that we have a huge abundance of. We've seen over the years that the timber products and companies have really left the state. We only have really one large, large scale operating sawmill in Colorado.

00:06:56:03 - 00:07:23:04

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There's not enough money available at the government level to solve all these problems. Without partners and industry to help the health of our forests are at a critical stage. In a healthy forest. Products industry is an important tool that we need to affect the health of our forests. Colorado's force has some significant health issues, but by working together, we can ensure the health and sustainability of our force for present generations and for the future.

END TRANSCRIPTION