



Colorado Timber Industry Association

720-290-1424

cotimberindustry@gmail.com

<https://coloradotimber.org/>

Bridging the Gap: Partnering with the Timber Industry for Implementation

The Opportunity: From Planning to Action

Forest health and community resilience depend on our ability to move projects from the drawing board to the ground. The timber industry is not just a stakeholder; it is a critical partner in this transition. By integrating industry expertise early and meaningfully, collaboratives can bridge the gap between ecological goals and operational reality, ensuring projects are both ambitious and executable.

The DWC & CTIA Partnership: A Model for Success

The relationship between the Dolores Watershed Collaborative (DWC) and the Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) serves as a blueprint for collaboration. By centering the industry voice in the planning phase, we have moved beyond transactional interactions toward a shared commitment to landscape-scale health.

- **Meaningful Inclusion:** Industry partners are now "in the room" from the start. This means their operational knowledge—what is practical, what is scalable, and what is economically viable—informs strategy and planning, rather than being an afterthought.
- **Building Trust through Fieldwork:** Moving beyond meeting rooms and virtual engagement to the field has been transformative. Site visits allow collaboratives to see the forest through the eyes of the operators, helping us align our forest health goals with the practical realities of timber harvest and removal.
- **Shared Outcomes:** Our collaboration has helped us look at the "bigger picture." When we understand the economic and logistical drivers of the timber industry, we

can design projects that support markets and operational realities, which in turn support the restoration work we all value.

Practical Tips for Engaging Your Local Industry

Building these relationships takes time, intentionality, and a willingness to listen. To start:

- **Invite Early, Invite Often:** Bring industry representatives into the planning process before projects are set. Their input on accessibility and operational feasibility can save significant time and resources later.
- **Prioritize Field-Based Dialogue:** Host field trips that focus on the "how" of forest management. Facilitating direct, on-the-ground conversations between stakeholders and operators builds mutual respect and shared understanding.
- **Create Space for Feedback:** Actively seek feedback on project designs. If a plan isn't working for the people doing the work, it likely won't get implemented.
- **Understand the "Why":** Learn about the challenges your local industry faces—labor, equipment costs, market volatility, transportation and mobilization costs, etc. When you understand their constraints, you become a partner in finding solutions rather than just another voice in the planning process.

Looking Ahead: Barriers and Opportunities

While partnerships are vital, they are not without challenges. We must continue to address:

- **Misconceptions:** Breaking down historical barriers and stereotypes between the multiple stakeholders and forest management and the need for the timber industry as a tool in achieving forest and watershed health goals.
- **Capacity:** Ensuring that both small collaboratives and local timber operators have the time and resources to dedicate to meaningful engagement.
- **Scale:** Connecting local, place-based work to broader regional and statewide forest product markets.