

# HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

January 2021

## I. Organization

- a. Authorized in Colorado Statutes (33-1-110 and 33-1-112)
- b. Program oversight provided for by State Council.
- c. Program intent is to be a responsive and fast effort to resolve big game problems without "normal" government oversight and restrictions.
- d. 19 local committees with 3 members from livestock growers and 1 member from the federal land managing agencies, sportsmen and CPW in the area.
- e. Local committees operate by authority of a Wildlife Commission plan. All committee plans are valid for 10 years.
- f. Committees have authority to solicit, review, approve, fund, implement and evaluate projects.
- g. 1 full time CPW person assigned as program coordinator, 1 program assistant and 3 administrative assistants for the local committees.

## II. Purpose

- a. Original purpose was to resolve fence and forage conflicts that game damage laws existing at the time were unable to do.
- b. In 2002, statute was changed to "resolve wildlife conflicts, particularly those associated with fence and forage, and to assist the Division in meeting game management objectives, through duties deemed appropriate by the Director."
- c. Focus remains on conflicts caused by big game ungulates (deer, elk, moose, pronghorn) to agricultural operators but assistance with game management objectives is also done.
- d. Ensures private landowner consideration in big game herd sizes and management.
- e. HPP provides an opportunity for dialogue between landowners, land managers, sportsmen and CPW. Relationships have been greatly improved.

## III. Funding

- a. Statutes provide for 5% of big game licenses (deer, elk, pronghorn, moose) used in HPP committee areas to be transferred to the HPP program each year.
- b. HPP State Council allocates that money to the 19 committees.
- c. HPP is allowed to carry over money each year but amount is capped at the 5% total the program received in the beginning of the year.
  - i. This money is a combination of both money obligated for in progress projects and unobligated money available for new opportunities or issues that arise.
  - ii. Intent was/is to provide for larger scale projects that cost more and which couldn't be done in a single year.
- d. Funding has stabilized in recent years. Annual amount is now between \$2.5-\$2.7 million dollars
- e. Statutes pertaining to the 5% funding level and carryover ability were extended until June 2023.
- f. Partnerships are usually a requirement for projects to be approved and results in the leveraging of HPP money to get more accomplished at a lower cost to everyone. Level and type of partnership is at the approving committee's discretion.

## IV. Projects

- a. Committees have flexibility to approve projects which accomplish the HPP purpose in II b above.
- b. Main project categories are habitat manipulation, fencing, game damage, information/education, monitoring/research, equipment, conservation easement transaction costs and administrative necessities.

- c. Committees have both an immediate, short term focus on problems as well as projects that will solve a conflict for a longer term.
- d. Short term projects are usually designed to solve an immediate conflict, ie. fence materials, stackyards.
- e. Long term habitat treatment projects, despite the cost, planning time and longer time for results be achieved, have become a priority with all HPP committees.
- f. Projects can be done on both public lands and private property.
- g. Game management projects include research and habitat efforts.

**V. Benefits**

- a. Landowners get a responsive and quick way to resolve conflicts; financial assistance for needed projects; improvement of both public and private range resources and structures.
- b. Sportsmen get larger big game herds due to the higher tolerance for those herds by private landowners; less political conflicts; hunting opportunities when identified by the local committees.
- c. Federal agencies are able to leverage limited/shrinking funds; work towards meeting agency targets; help in resolving resource and resource user problems; overall improvement of range conditions.
- d. Better management information gained for biologists to manage herds.
- e. Colorado Parks and Wildlife gets improved relationships among all interested parties; increased tolerance for big game herds; political acceptance and support; decreased game damage claims for fence and forage damages; habitat projects that benefit many wildlife species.

**VI. Challenges**

- a. Funding - minor changes in funding aren't a problem but sharper declines as previously experienced can be. Appears to be stable/increasing currently. Partner funding, especially USFS and BLM, declining.
- b. Habitat projects are recognized as a key tool and critical for wildlife but they are expensive and require much planning on the scale needed to be done to be effective.
- c. Administrative - internal purchasing and accounting rules continue to change and have impacted HPP. HPP hired 3 administrative assistants which has greatly helped local committees and the program.
- d. Capacity - probably at limit as to scale and scope of projects able to be undertaken due to staff constraints, partner funding, planning time and other priorities.

HPP Website: <http://cpw.state.co.us/hpp>