

Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Habitat Partnership Program  
Sangre de Cristo



## DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT PLAN



Approved- Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission May 10, 2019  
This plan is valid for 10 years from approval date.

**2019-2029**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The plan is the basic framework for the Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee for the next ten years - 2019 to 2029. The updated plan drafted by Sangre de Cristo Committee is centered on four key aspects including; conflicts, communication, stewardship and habitat development.

The Sangre de Cristo committee area has seen many changes to wildlife habitat as a result of population growth, expansion of recreation, and subsequent habitat fragmentation. The committee will continue to monitor and adapt to these changes, and projects will be implemented wherever the committee believes that they will effectively reduce or eliminate big game conflicts and assist CPW in achieving game management objectives. Operating guidelines have been established to help inform funding decisions and prioritization of projects. Budget guidelines show likely allocations of funds based on past projects. Budget allocations may change as new opportunities arise. The committee has identified current and foreseeable issues for the area and has specified project types and management strategies that are aimed at adapting to these issues in order to continue reducing wildlife conflicts and helping CPW in achieving game management objectives.

Impact areas have remained essentially the same and are distributed throughout the committee's area. Impact areas around Hillside, Upper Purgatoire, Wet Mountain Front and Apishapa have remained but the committee continues focusing on habitat manipulation projects to help resolve the issues.

The Committee membership has seen a few changes within the past couple of years. A new Forest Service representative was appointed in 2018 and the NRCS position is no longer active due to the retirement of the NRCS representative. The committee had four livestock growers at one point, but one has retired from the committee and the committee now has three livestock growers as per statute. Two of the current members have continuously served the Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee since 1991.

The committee continues to focus on the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. This includes identification and mitigation of forage conflicts, developing and maintaining communication links, enhancing stewardship opportunities, and supporting habitat enhancement projects.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. John Stroh II, Livestock Grower Representative, Chairman  | Started HPP Term: May 1991  |
| 2. Terry Everhart, Livestock Grower Representative           | Started HPP Term: May 1991  |
| 3. Kenn Lutz, Livestock Grower Representative                | Started HPP Term: Nov. 2002 |
| 4. Dwaine Robey, Sportsperson Representative                 | Started HPP Term: Oct. 2006 |
| 5. Mike Trujillo, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Representative | Started HPP Term: Aug. 2007 |
| 6. Dave Gilbert, Bureau of Land Management Representative    | Started HPP Term: Sep. 2007 |
| 7. Jeff Outhier, United States Forest Service Representative | Started HPP Term: Nov. 2018 |

# INTRODUCTION

The Sangre de Cristo Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) Committee was established in 1991. The committee consists of seven members including three agricultural landowners, one sportsperson representative, and representatives from the USDA Forest Service, USDOJ - Bureau of Land Management, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Historically, lands in the SDCHPP area have been used for agricultural production, natural resource management and recreation. Like much of the Front Range, the area has experienced growth in human population and subsequent development. Development in some rural areas is likely to change the character of the land use in the area, impacting traditional farming, ranching, and recreational activities. Increased traffic, transition of agricultural operations to rural subdivisions, increased demand for limited local water resources, and increased use and diversity of recreational resources on public and private lands may impact wildlife populations and the habitat upon which they depend. The long term result may be loss of habitat quality, herd vigor, and proliferation of diseases including chronic wasting disease.

## SANGRE de CRISTO COMMITTEE VISION

To establish habitat management strategies to resolve immediate fence and forage conflicts caused by big game; and to identify adaptive and long-term collaborative strategies that clearly define, evaluate, and resolve conflicts by perpetuating responsible stewardship in the establishment of healthy and sustainable landscapes. We encourage maintaining wildlife population levels and will assist CPW in achieving game management objectives to help ensure healthy wildlife for the future.

Future impacts to Colorado's wildlife are unknown. However it is certain that changes in Colorado will affect wildlife habitat and management issues for many years to come. It is essential that adequate wildlife habitat be preserved and enhanced in order to maintain healthy wildlife populations in Colorado.

Our collective Committee Vision can be summed up as follows:

Identify the Problem or Conflict  
Search for and Determine a Solution  
Take Action to Alleviate or Resolve the Issue

## HPP ORIENTATION

HPP was initially started to resolve fence and forage conflicts caused to agricultural operators by deer, elk, pronghorn and moose. While the law governing HPP was broadened in 2002 ("...reduce wildlife conflicts...game management objectives") in 2017 the State Council and the NW Region Manager reaffirmed the intent and focus of HPP.

This direction provides for HPP participation, whether by local committees or the State Council, to be limited to those conflict resolution projects or game management objective projects that involve deer, elk, pronghorn and moose.

## HPP STATUTE - (C.R.S. 33-1-110)

(8) (a) The habitat partnership program is hereby created to assist the division of parks and wildlife by working with private land managers, public land management agencies, sports persons, and other interested parties to reduce wildlife conflicts, particularly those associated with forage and fence issues, and to assist the division of parks and wildlife in meeting game management objectives through duties as deemed appropriate by the director.

(b) The director, with the approval of the commission, shall have the authority to appoint a "habitat partnership committee", referred to in this section as a "committee", in any area of the state where conflicts between wildlife and private land owners and managers engaged in the management of public and private land exist.

(c) A committee shall consist of the following members: One sports person who purchases big game licenses on a regular basis in Colorado; three persons representing livestock growers in the area of the state in which the committee is being established; one person from each of the federal agencies that has land management responsibilities in such area of the state; and one person from the Colorado division of parks and wildlife. All persons on any such committee shall be residents of the state of Colorado.

(d) The duties of a committee are the following:

(I) To develop big game distribution management plans to resolve rangeland forage, growing hay crop, harvested crop aftermath grazing, and fence conflicts subject to commission approval;

(II) To monitor program effectiveness and to propose to the council changes in guidelines and land acquisition planning and review as appropriate;

(III) To request for the committee, on an annual basis, funds from the council consistent with the distribution management plan developed by any such committee;

(IV) To expend funds allocated by the council or acquired from other sources as necessary to implement distribution management plans;

(V) To make an annual report of expenditures and accomplishments of the committee to the council by August 15 of each year;

(VI) To nominate a person to act as a representative of agricultural livestock growers or crop producers to the habitat partnership council for the area of the state where such committee is organized;

(VII) To reduce wildlife and land management conflicts as the conflicts relate to big game forage and fence issues and other management objectives.

(e) The committee shall be authorized to procure from land owners, land managers, or other providers, materials or services necessary for carrying out activities identified in the distribution management plans pursuant to subparagraph (IV) of paragraph (d) of this subsection (8); except that all such procurements shall be certified as within the scope of the activities and funding levels authorized in such distribution management plans before any such procurement may be authorized.

# COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee is concerned with mitigating agricultural conflicts with big game species in an area that contains a wide diversity of big game wildlife species (elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, and pronghorn).

**Objective 1: Resolving Conflicts and Minimizing game damage on private and public lands-** Identify and mitigate forage and fence conflicts and impacts through a range of prescriptions on private and public lands to affect distribution and increase big game harvest.

Strategy:

- Use habitat manipulation, dispersal hunts and other methods to improve herd distribution.
- Reduce conflict by attempting to move animals away from private agricultural lands and onto public lands by improving habitat on public lands. Habitat manipulation priorities will be balanced among federal lands, State Wildlife Areas and private lands.
- Make recommendations to CPW with possible harvest strategies.
- Work with landowners who harbor elk during hunting season to improve hunting opportunities and elk dispersal.
- Provide technical information, materials and/or financial aid to landowners experiencing fence damages caused by big game.

**Objective 2: Communication-** Improve opportunities for dialogue with identified groups including sportspersons, landowners, industry, agencies, and conservation groups; make the committee available to hear all conflicts and facilitate solutions; develop and maintain communication links between private agricultural producers, sportspersons, energy development industries, and natural resource management agencies.

Strategy:

- Host habitat and resource management training, write articles and publications as needed for media distribution, and conduct Holistic Resource Management workshops and tours.
- Host public meetings to promote the message of HPP and to obtain public input.
- Schedule Committee meetings in the various communities throughout the Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee area.
- Offer education on the management of wildlife resources to interested parties, and do so in cooperation with partners (BLM, Forest Service, NRCS, ranching community, local governments, and other private parties).

**Objective 3: Stewardship-** Support the agricultural community for persistence of healthy traditional agricultural operations; provide guidance to landowners to encourage comprehensive land management plans and a community-based collaborative effort; assist private landowners with technical and financial support in the development of conservation plans and habitat enhancements including the use of conservation easements, management plans, and community-based collaborative projects.

Strategies:

- Develop methods to “showcase” good stewardship that benefits wildlife habitat.
- Avoid contributing to management practices detrimental to wildlife and agriculture.

**Objective 4: Habitat Development-** Develop and implement habitat improvement projects designed to resolve wildlife conflicts; foster relationships with agencies and organizations that will allow productive and frequent discussions dedicated to the benefit of wildlife habitat; establish cooperative projects with natural resource management agencies and private landowners on habitat improvement(s), which provide direct and positive conservation outcomes on private and public lands; integrate resources from the wide array of other conservation groups willing to partner with HPP projects.

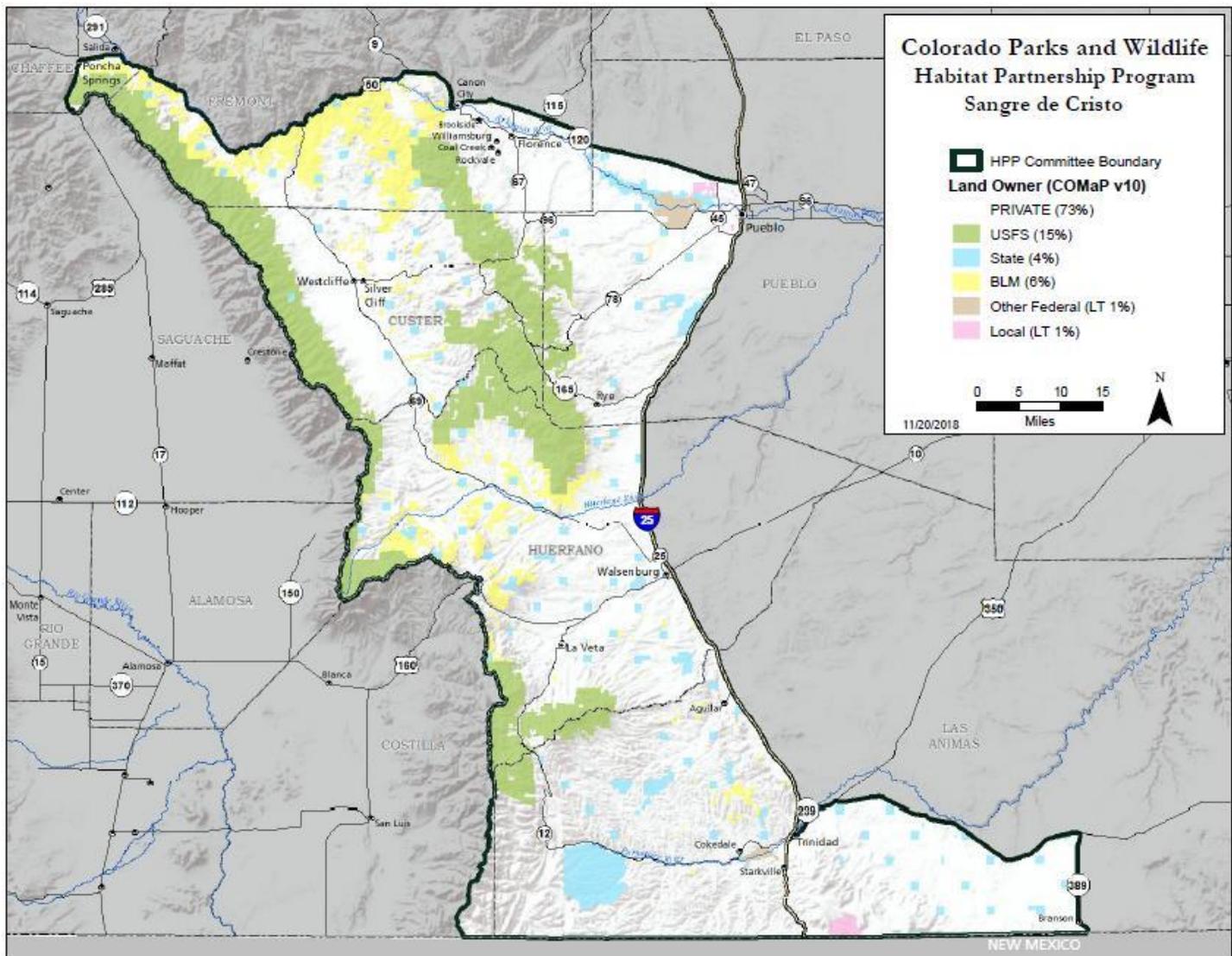
Strategy:

- Prioritize projects that will leverage multiple benefits to the wildlife resource by using established criteria to evaluate proposals.
- Maintain a strong positive relationship with natural resource managers.
- Leverage funding from a variety of partnerships.
- Develop and enhance habitat on public lands to support resource management objectives.
- The Committee will give a high priority to forage enhancement and improvements on public lands when conservation partners and/or organizations demonstrate a significant cost share.

## **SANGRE DE CRISTO HPP AREA DESCRIPTION**

The Sangre de Cristo Habitat Partnership Program committee area includes Pueblo, Custer, Huerfano, and parts of Las Animas, Fremont and Costilla counties. The committee area encompasses 4,054 square miles and ranges in elevation from 4500' to over 14,000 feet above sea level.

The area contains several plant communities as diverse as low elevation riparian to alpine. One dominant mountain range, the Sangre de Cristos, and a lesser range, the Wet Mountains, constitute the major geo-physical aspects of the program area. The HPP area includes Colorado Division of Wildlife Area 11 and a part of Area 13. It includes GMU's (Game Management Units) 69, 691, 84, 85, 140, 851, 86, and 861.



## HABITAT DESCRIPTION

The Sangre de Cristo HPP area extends from approximately 4,640 feet in elevation where the Arkansas River flows under I-25 to over 14,435 feet at the top of Blanca Peak. It is dominated by the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range, with the Wet Mountains east of the Sangres. Elevations generally increase the further west you go in the area, and are always greatest on the western edge.

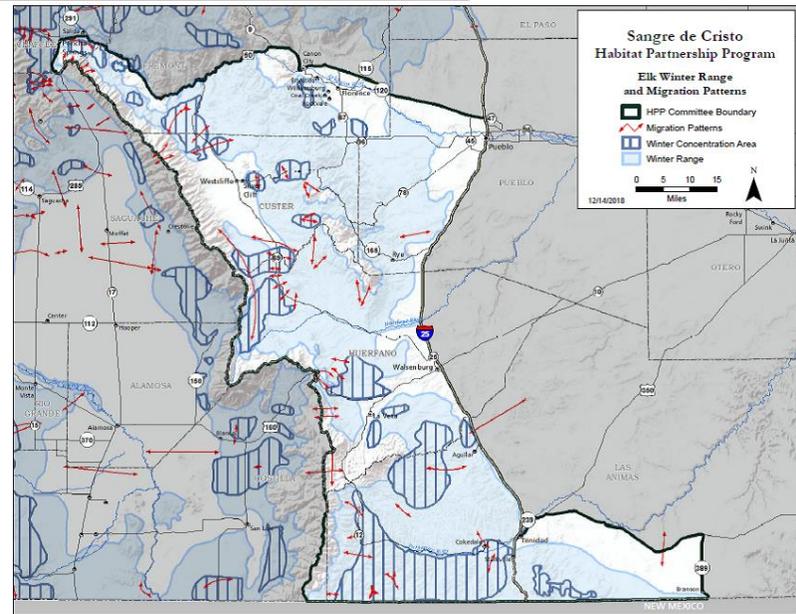
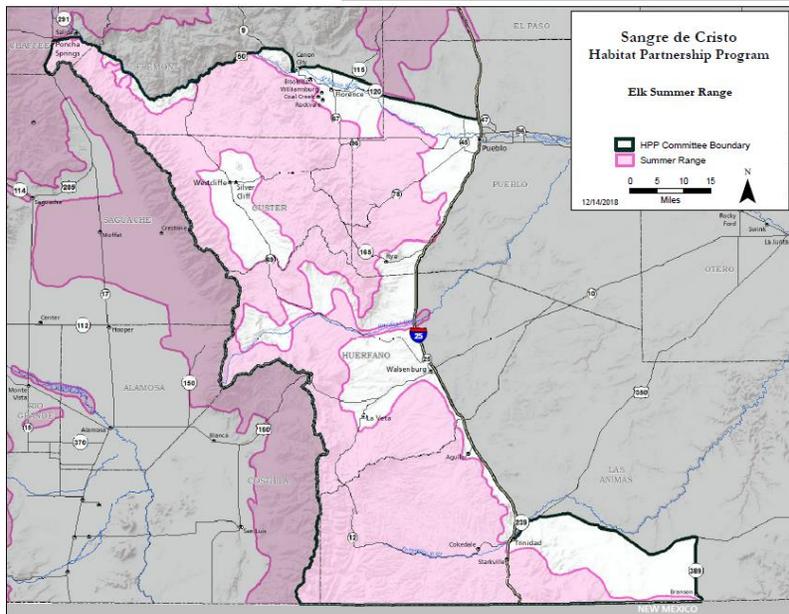
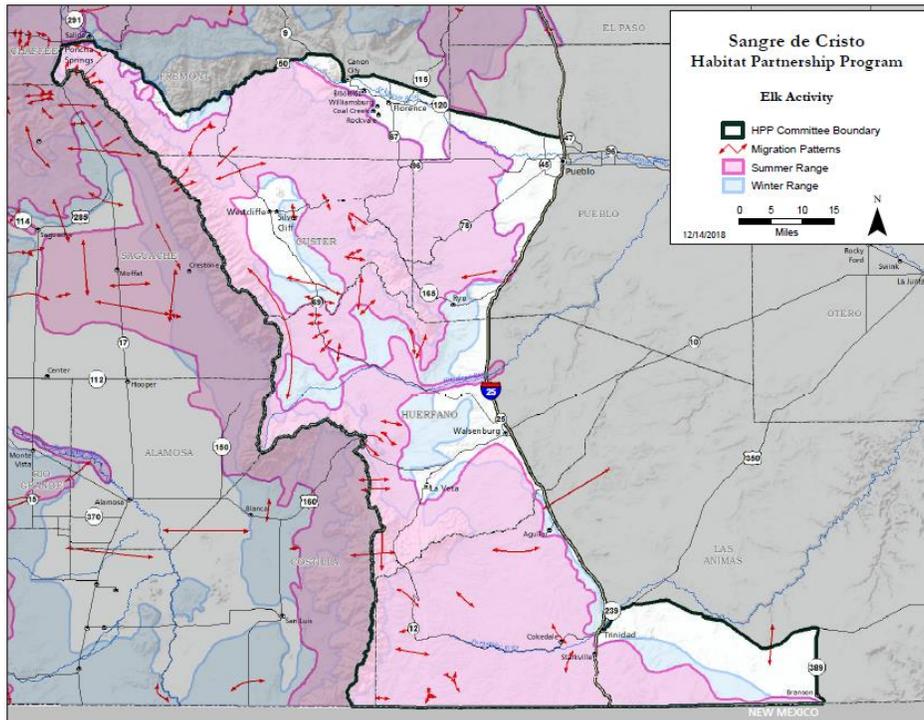
Principal biotic communities include short-grass prairie grassland, montane shrub, montane conifer, montane grassland, sub-alpine conifer, and alpine. The wide variety of habitat types provides for varied animal densities and, therefore, varied conflicts. Biotic communities are driven both by elevation and rainfall. The higher elevations generally receive an upwards of 20 inches annually while lower elevations may receive less than 6 inches. Agriculture is the most predominant land use in the SDCHPP area, with livestock grazing occurring on both private and public lands. There are several alternative livestock operations in the area such as elk and bison breeding, small sheep hobby flocks, and llama or alpaca farms. Irrigated hay and alfalfa are found

along many river courses, while the majority of the row crops are confined to small farms. Truck farms, nurseries and orchards are in operation near the town of Penrose. In 2012, the legalization of marijuana passed allowing individuals the ability to use and cultivate marijuana legally across the state. Since the passing of the amendment, numerous facilities and farms have been erected in the area to cultivate the plant.

The major drainages include the Purgatoire River, Apishapa River, Grape Creek, Huerfano River and various other tributaries that all flow into the Arkansas River. Trinchera Creek is the only river that drains south into the Rio Grande River.

# BIG GAME POPULATION SUMMARY

## ELK RANGE MAPS



**ELK** - The Sangre de Cristo HPP includes three different elk populations.

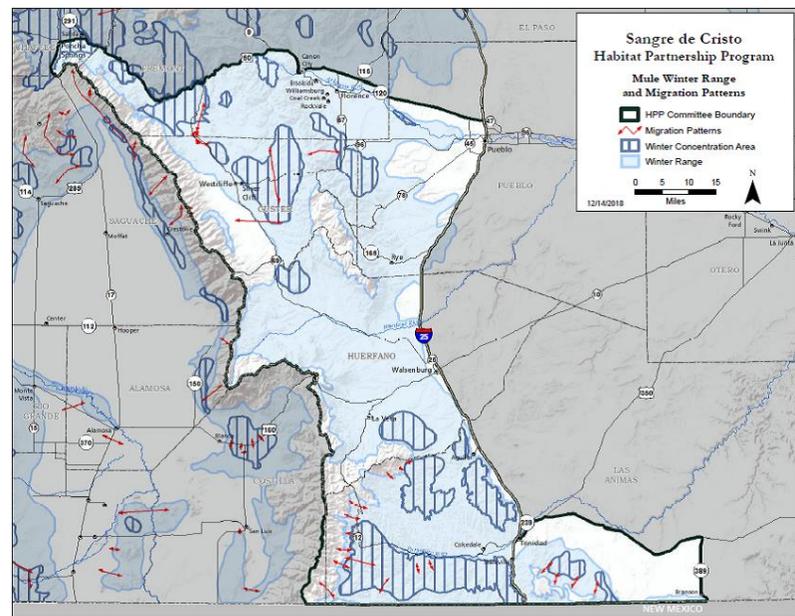
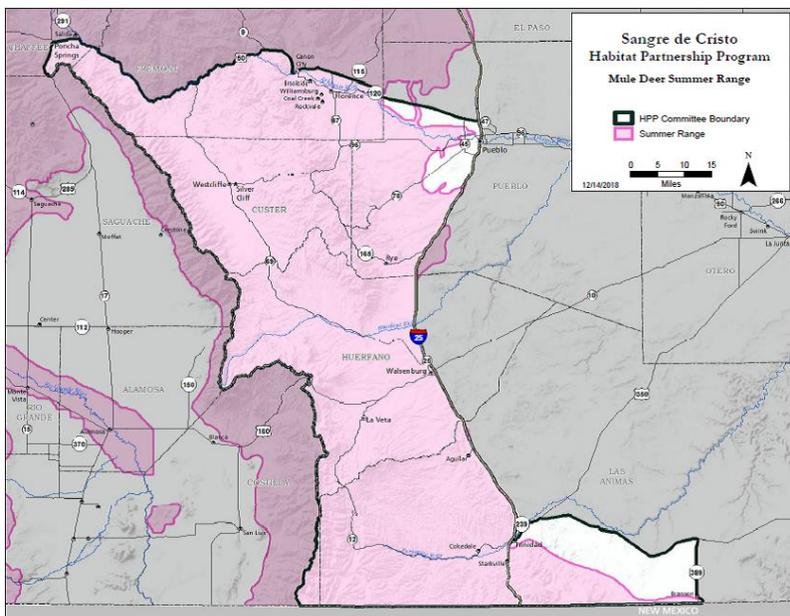
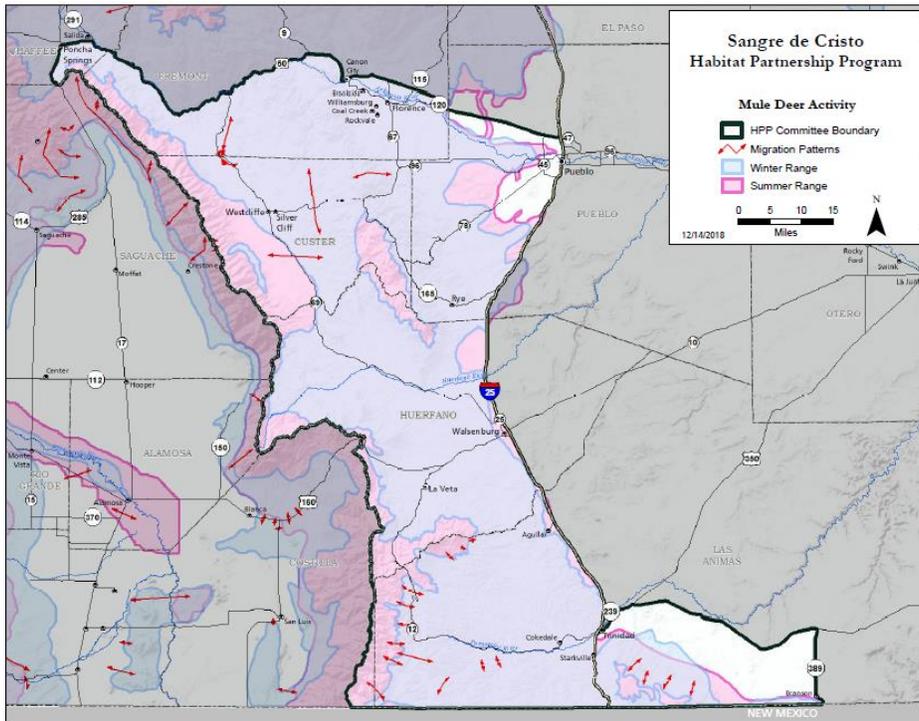
The Sangre de Cristo elk herd (E-27) includes GMU's 86, 691 and 861. It is located in portions of Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, and Huerfano counties; and encompasses the area along the Sangre de Cristo Mountains from Salida to Redwing. Elk conflicts with this herd are generally springtime herd use of pastures and winter fence damage. CPW has been bringing the population closer to objective to address some of these issues but the population remains about 200 animals over objective as of post-season 2018 population models. The herd management plan for this

population is currently being updated with expected completion and approval of the CPW wildlife commission by November 2019.

The Wet Mountain elk herd (E-28) includes GMU's 69 and 84. It is located in portions of Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, and Pueblo counties; and encompasses the area from Texas Creek to Walsenburg along the Wet Mountains. Elk conflicts in this area generally focus on fence damage and yearlong grazing pressure on hayfields and pastures. CPW has been bringing the population closer to objective to address some of these issues, but the population remains about 200 animals above objective as of post-season 2018 population models. The herd management plan for this population is currently being updated with possible changes to population objectives, the expected completion and approval for this plan being in early 2020.

The Trinchera elk herd (E-33) includes GMU's 83, 85, 140 and 851. It is located in portions of Alamosa, Costilla, Huerfano, and Las Animas counties. The Sangre de Cristo HPP area of responsibility only includes those portions of this herd found in GMU's 85, 140 and 851. This area encompasses those locations east of the top of the Culebra Mountains from the town of La Veta to the Town of Branson, east of Interstate 25. Elk Conflicts in this area are often related to fence damage and yearlong grazing pressure to hayfields and pastureland. CPW is in the initial stages of a calf survival study to examine why cow calf ratios are so low along Colorado's southern border when compared with the rest of the state. This herd has been reduced and is approaching the population objective as of the post-season 2018 population models.

# DEER RANGE MAPS

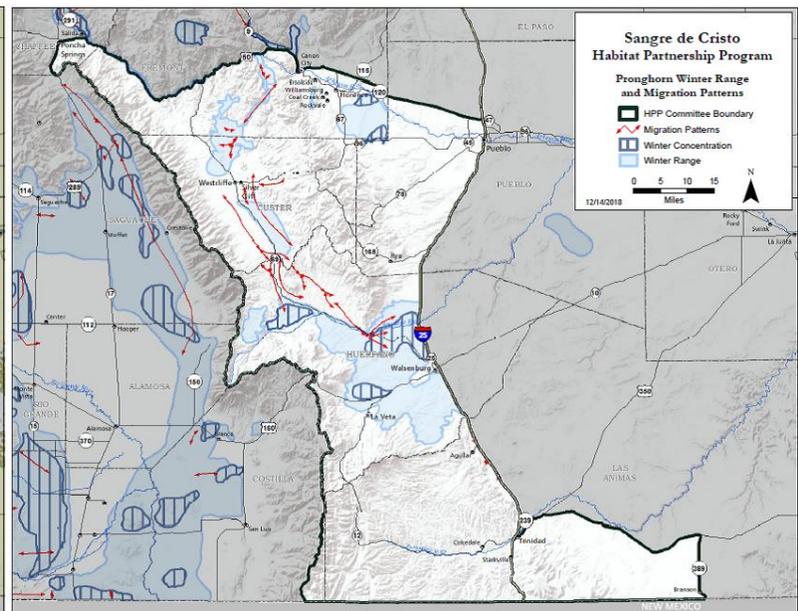
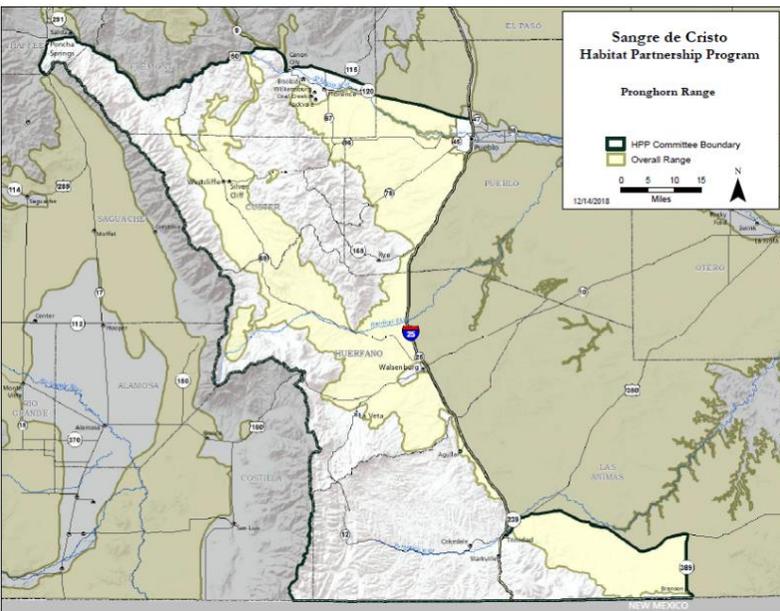
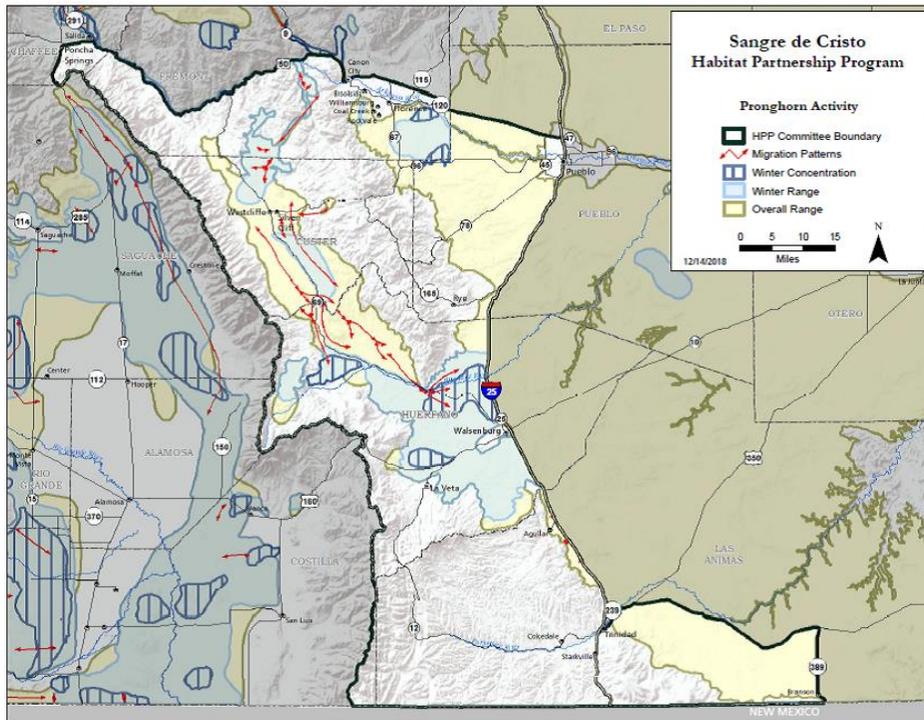


**DEER-** The Sangre de Cristo HPP area includes two different deer Populations.

The Wet Mountain deer herd (D-34) includes GMU's 69, 84, 86, 691 and 861. It is located in portions of Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano and Pueblo counties and extends from Salida to Walsenburg. Deer conflicts in this area are generally related to town deer, damage to fences and grazing and high densities associated with alfalfa fields. This population has been increasing, but remains below its population objective as of the 2018 post-season population models. CPW has initiated a deer survival study in this area to examine the relationship between puma density and deer survival.

The Trinidad deer herd (D-32) includes GMU's 85, 140 and 851. It is located in portions of Costilla, Huerfano and Las Animas counties and extends from the town of La Veta to Branson, east of Interstate 25. Deer conflicts in this area are generally related to town deer and higher deer densities along alfalfa hay fields. This population has been increasing, but remains below its population objective as of the 2018 post-season population models.

## PRONGHORN RANGE MAPS



**PRONGHORN-** The Sangre de Cristo HPP area includes two different pronghorn herds.

The Wet Mountain (PH-20) pronghorn population includes GMU's 69, 84, 85, 86, 140, 691 and 861. It is located in portions of Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Huerfano and Pueblo counties and extends from

Salida to Walsenburg. Pronghorn conflicts in this area are generally related to high densities in pastureland. The herd is currently above objective and efforts have been made to reduce the population, but due to the limited public land within the herd management area, it has been difficult to achieve harvest goals.

The Thatcher (PH-07) pronghorn population includes GMU's 128, 129, 133, 134, 135, 140, 141, 142 and 147. It is located in portions of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, and Pueblo counties. The Sangre de Cristo HPP area of responsibility only includes GMU 140, basically from Interstate 25 to the town of Branson. In this area we rarely have pronghorn conflicts, but if we do, they are largely related to high pronghorn densities on rangelands or hayfields.

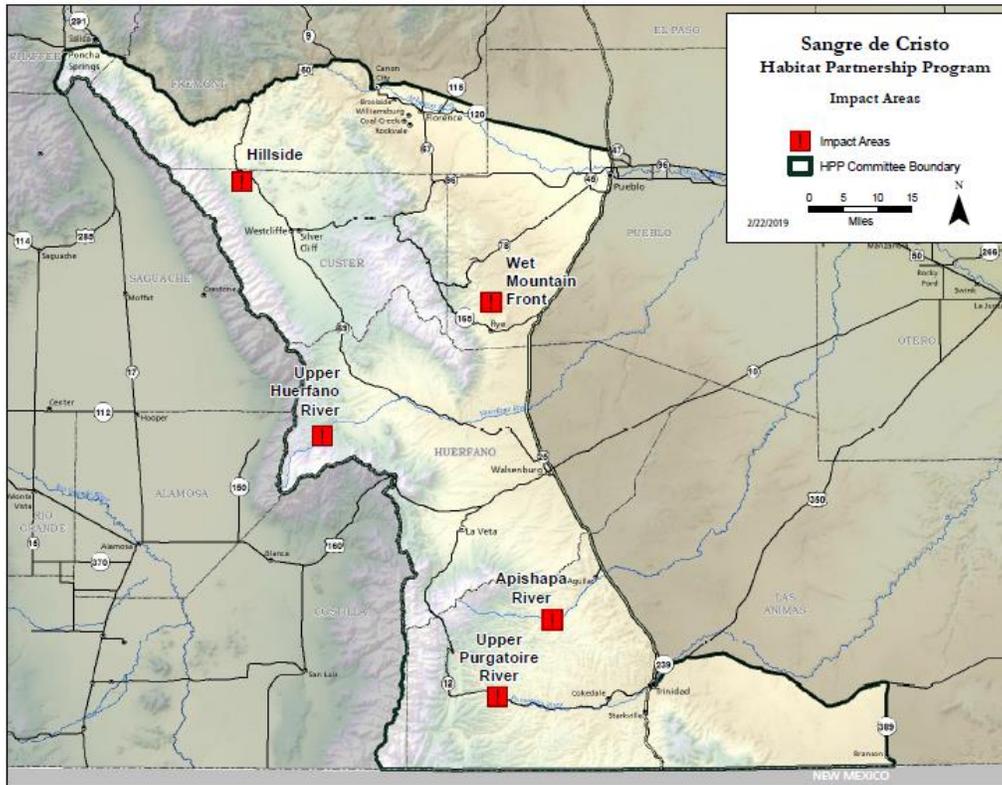
Table 1. Data Analysis Unit Summary for Sangre de Cristo HPP Area

Management Herd	1990s Population Avg	2000s Population Avg	2010 - 2018 Population Avg	Current Population Management Objective
Elk - Sangre de Cristo E-27	2,700	3,000	2,500	1,450-1,650*
<i>Game Management Units: 86, 861, 691</i>				
Elk - Grape Creek E-28	+	2,900	2,700	1,400-1,600*
<i>Game Management Units: 69,84</i>				
Elk - Trinchera E-33	16,400	18,000	16,100	14,000-16,000
<i>Game Management Units: 85, 140, 851</i>				
Deer - Trinidad D-32	6,500	5,000	5,900	9,800-10,800
<i>Game Management Units: 85, 140, 851</i>				
Deer - Wet Mountains D-34	+	13,200	11,700	16,500-17,500
<i>Game Management Units: 69, 84, 86, 691, 861</i>				
Pronghorn - Wet Mountain PH-20	900	2,200	2,550	2,200-2,600
<i>Game Management Units: 69, 84, 85, 86, 691, 851, 861</i>				

+ Not enough information to model population

\*DAU plan being rewritten in 2018 or 2019-Obejective may change

# IMPACT AREAS



Impact areas primarily include private land where large concentrations of big game animals cause a problem with the management of those lands with respect to forage, growing crops, fences and/or general agricultural use. Additional conflict areas are “artificial refuges”, which are parcels of land where restrictions on hunting result in a reduction in harvest of big game animals, and as a result create a significant concentration of animals. The decrease in harvest creates large and concentrated herds, which can cause significant conflicts with fence and forage to other landowners in the area.

It’s also important to note that changes in the timing and amount of rainfall/snowfall events has changed over the last several decades. Within the SDCHPP area, the most notable change is local herds of deer and elk have established residency on and around irrigated green hay fields and meadows. This situation has also contributed to conflicts within impact areas that didn’t exist at this level in previous wetter years.

The Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee’s focus is to resolve conflicts through the implementation of habitat prescriptions within an identified “Intensive Management Area”. This is reflected by the allocation of funds to those areas where the conflict can be addressed. Recently the importance of planning projects well in advance has become apparent, and money has been earmarked to spend in those areas.

## HILLSIDE

The Hillside conflict area extends from the town of Salida south along the slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to just south of the town of Hillside. Most of the conflicts in this area have historically been with elk use on pastures and hay fields, especially in the spring growing season. However, as the elk population has been reduced conflicts and complaints about the number of deer have increased. CPW has an annual meeting with the local landowners within this

area to discuss elk management and how management actions have been working to alleviate their problems. An additional factor in reducing the conflicts within this area is the benefits of fires within the adjacent national forest. The Duckett Creek and the Hayden Creek Fires have significantly changed the forest composition within this area to benefit elk. Large numbers of elk have been wintering along the forest boundary and not spending as much time on the agricultural lands.

### **UPPER PURGATOIRE**

The Upper Purgatoire conflict area extends from the town of Stonewall to the town of Trinidad. Most of the conflicts are centered among the hayfields along the Purgatoire River. Most of the conflicts arise between large ranches that are generating significant revenue from the sale of hunting access and want to hold large numbers of elk and the smaller landowners adjacent to those ranches having to deal with those elk foraging within their fields.

### **WET MOUNTAIN FRONT**

The Wet Mountain front is located from the town of Wetmore along the east side of the Wet Mountains south to the Huerfano River and west to the area around Gardner. Conflicts in this area are caused by concentrations of both deer and elk on hayfields. These conflicts are being handled by the issuance of damage tags in those areas that are open to hunting.

### **APISHAPA**

The Apishapa Conflict area is along the Apishapa River west of the town of Aguilar. Most of the conflicts within this area are from elk on hayfields and fence damage.

### **UPPER HUERFANO**

The Upper Huerfano Conflict Area extends along the Huerfano River from west of the town of Redwing to the town of Gardner. Most of the conflicts within this area are caused by deer utilizing hayfields with the occasional complaints of large numbers of elk utilizing those hayfields and pastureland.

### **PAST AND FUTURE BURN SCARS**

The Sangre de Cristo HPP area has been modified by several wildfires and a couple of naturally ignited managed fires over the last two decades. While the effect of these fires is not immediately apparent, the long term benefits to deer and elk populations and distribution can help mediate some of our conflicts. Deer and elk use of the resulting burn scar drastically increases two years post fire because of the increase of early succession forage and increased palatability of the new forage.

Still, the loss of forage and cover immediately following a burn can push big game onto private lands to find food and shelter, and this can cause an increase in conflicts immediately following a fire. The committee understands the need for and remains open to requests for seeding and other habitat manipulation strategies to help ease any conflicts that may arise in the immediate aftermath of a wildfire. It is very difficult to predict where the next large scale burn will occur, but the committee will continue to stay involved and address needs as they arise. Some of the fires that have occurred over the last two decades:

Trinidad Fire Complex: Spring Fire and James John Fire- 2002

Duckett Creek Fire- 2011

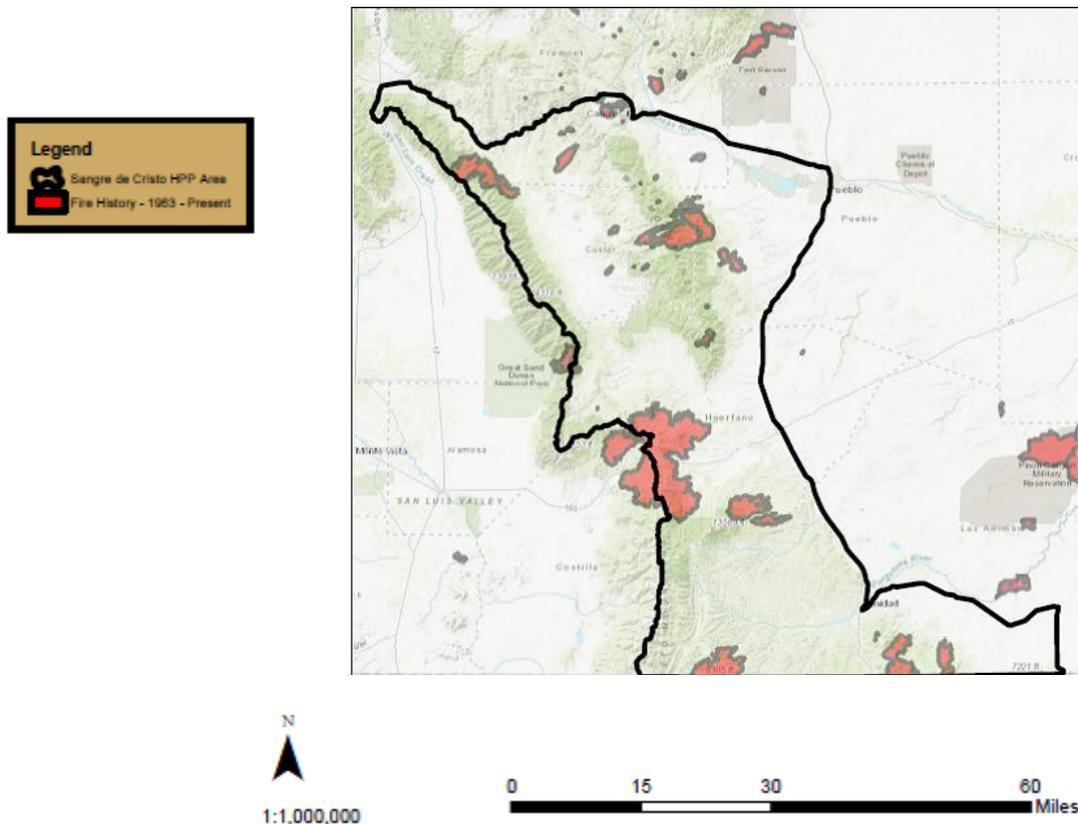
Sand Dunes/Medano Pass fire- 2010

Hayden Pass Fire- 2016

Mason Gulch Fire- 2005

Spring Creek fire- 2018  
Junkins Park Fire- 2017  
Track Fire- 2011  
Along with several fires around the town of Greenwood...

## Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee Fire History Map



The committee understands that changing land use patterns, recreational pressures on wildlife habitat, and other new challenges may affect these impact areas as well as create new impact areas in the future. These issues may also create the need for projects intended to achieve/maintain desired management objectives.

## GAME MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

In addition to resolving wildlife conflicts, HPP is also statutorily directed to “assist the division in meeting game management objectives....” This assistance will be directed towards a) maintaining/increasing the population in a given area primarily by habitat manipulation projects; b) maintaining/decreasing the population in a given area primarily by habitat manipulation projects and/or pursuing hunting opportunities; and c) participating in research activities aimed at habitat, population, disease, and/or movement factors that influence big game populations.

# PROJECT TYPES & PRIORITIES

## Habitat Manipulation: (including but not limited to)

- Prescribed burning
- Water developments
- Weed control
- Herbicide Vouchers
- Fertilization
- Seeding
- Hand thinning
- Mechanical treatment (chaining, roller chopping, hydro axing, etc.)

## Fencing Projects: (including but not limited to)

- Fence vouchers for fence repair materials
- Construction of new fences (usually > ¼ mile in length)
- Landowner reimbursement for purchased fencing materials
- Prototype or experimental fence designs
- Wildlife crossings or retrofitting fences to be more wildlife-friendly

## Game Damage Projects: (including but not limited to)

- Stackyards- materials and/or labor
- Distribution hunts
- Hunt coordinators for distribution hunts, youth hunts, etc.
- Forage purchases
- Baiting

## Information/Education Projects: (including but not limited to)

- Seminars
- Workshops
- Brochures
- Electronic media: websites, etc.
- Comment letters
- Travel management: signage, temporary fencing, etc.

## Research/Monitoring Projects: (including but not limited to)

- Habitat
- Population
- Inventory
- Movement

## Conservation Easements (transaction costs only)

## Archaeological Clearances (and other NEPA required clearances)

HPP projects may be undertaken on public lands, private lands or a combination of both as needed wherever the local committee believes the project has the best chance to effectively reduce, minimize or eliminate the big game/livestock conflict or assist CPW in meeting big game management objectives.

# OPERATING GUIDELINES

In order to accomplish the goals and objectives of this plan, the Sangre de Cristo HPP committee will utilize the project types listed above in accordance with the following operating guidelines.

1. All projects should be reviewed by the local DWM before being presented to the committee. DWM support is very important to the committee when deciding on funding a project.
2. HPP is funded by the sale of big game hunting licenses, and the committee recognizes the necessity of supporting hunting as a big game management practice. The committee strongly recommends that project applicants allow a reasonable amount of hunting on their properties if they are requesting funding from HPP. They understand that there can be extenuating circumstances, so if the applicant does not allow hunting they should come prepared to explain their reasoning and it will be factored into the decision making. Applicants that allow hunting will generally be given preference over those that do not.
3. This is a partnership program, so the committee encourages applicants to have a 50/50 match for funding requests. This can be a cash match or an in-kind match.
4. Fences built using committee funds should be wildlife friendly.
5. The HPP project application is required for all projects.
6. The HPP project evaluation is required at the completion of all projects. The committee and/or its representatives will, as necessary, make site inspections to monitor progress and success of projects.
7. Applicants are expected to practice good land stewardship surrounding the proposed project.
8. The SDCHPP Committee requires that the landowner must be engaged in agricultural production or livestock operations.
9. Project applicants are strongly encouraged to attend meetings to assist in presentation of the project. If project applicants are unable to attend the meeting to present their project to the committee, the committee may table the project until the applicant can attend.

In an effort to be consistent and fair to all applicants, the committee has established operating guidelines that detail priorities, eligibility requirements, project rules and limits, and other policies. The committee retains the authority to review and update these guidelines as necessary to meet the changing needs of the area; however, these standard rules should apply to most HPP projects and will be enforced by the committee with few exceptions.

Monitoring projects are critical for the long term sustainability of the HPP program. To provide documentation, determine treatment effectiveness, and be able to convey results, monitoring will be done on all projects. Specific monitoring methodology shall be matched to the treatment. Monitoring data will be submitted to the HPP local committee and admins.

# MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Management strategies were developed to achieve the committee's objectives. Strategies primarily involve resolving big game conflicts through habitat manipulation, fencing, and game damage projects; or achieving big game management objectives through information and education, research and monitoring, or conservation easements. Most HPP projects will fall into one of the following management strategy categories.

1. HABITAT MANIPULATION: Improving habitat on private, public, and tribal lands draws big game away from impact areas; improves big game distribution; holds big game for longer periods of time on public lands; or improves forage abundance, availability, or palatability such that it reduces competition between big game and livestock.
2. FENCING PROJECTS: Repair of existing fences and/or construction of new fences help alleviate ongoing big game damage, and offset the financial burden to landowners. Fences will be wildlife-friendly built to HPP specifications. The committee may decline to participate in new fence construction. Maintenance of fences will be the responsibility of the landowner.
3. GAME DAMAGE PROJECTS: Providing stack yards for landowners otherwise ineligible for them and using hunt coordinators and forage purchases address pending damage problems that CPW may be financially liable for.
4. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION: Producing and distributing informative materials helps public land agencies and private land managers educate the public and provides information about the programs, agencies, conflicts and user responsibilities. Travel management may include signage or education on closures or activities that will benefit big game.
5. RESEARCH & MONITORING: Projects will include, but not be limited to, those focusing on habitat condition, populations, inventory, and movement patterns. While these types of projects may be funded, the committee's primary focus will be on conflict resolution between big game and livestock.
6. CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: Conservation easements help to protect a property's conservation values, particularly agricultural productivity, wildlife habitat, and hunting access.

# BUDGET GUIDELINES

The base-operating budget for the State HPP program is based on 5% of total annual revenues for big game license sales in Colorado. The HPP State Council then allocates funding to the individual HPP committees. The Sangre de Cristo HPP budget was developed to best meet the goals and objectives outlined earlier in the plan, while maintaining the flexibility to deal with emergencies and take advantage of opportunities.

Within certain parameters, the statewide HPP financial system allows local HPP committees to carry specific project dollars over from year to year if the project is ongoing or the funds have been committed. This allows us to better address long-term management and larger, more complicated projects as well as giving us the flexibility to more efficiently prioritize our projects.

Additional funds are also available through the HPP State Council for special projects or unforeseen opportunities outside of the capacity of the committee. These dollars supplement our existing budget and allow us to take on special projects from time to time.

The Sangre de Cristo HPP Committee has developed a budget allocation in line with our vision, which allows for short-term strategies to deal with immediate fence and forage conflicts caused by big game, but concentrates on adaptive, long-term management strategies leading to the establishment of healthy and sustainable rangelands. Our budget for the ten-year period has been broken down as follows:

## BASE BUDGET ALLOCATION:

Habitat Manipulation	60%
Fencing & Game Damage	10%
Research/Monitoring	10%
Conservation Easements & NEPA Related Activities	10%
Information & Education	5%
Administration	5%

TOTAL ALLOCATION: 100%

It is important to acknowledge that the budget allocation is based on past projects, future projects that are likely to be proposed as well as committee emphasis in funding certain project types. While these are desired and/or likely allocations, the committee retains the ability to shift funds as needed between categories as projects and opportunities arise or as situations dictate.

# CURRENT & FORESEEABLE ISSUES

The Sangre de Cristo HPP recognizes that land ownership, land use, and social policies will continue to change. This will result in new conflicts and challenges, but the SDCHPP intends to remain flexible and seek out creative solutions to continue to reduce wildlife conflicts and assist CPW in achieving game management objectives. Current and foreseeable issues for the committee include, but are not limited to:

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Chronic wasting disease continues to be a concern throughout Colorado and has the potential to cause population level effects if prevalence within the population rises above 5%. In 2019, CPW will increase its monitoring efforts to determine prevalence rates within the deer population in the SDCHPP area. CPW will continue to monitor CWD and SDCHPP will continue to support projects that assist CPW in keeping CWD prevalence low.

## ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Energy development often causes habitat fragmentation, increased human activity and road development. Large amounts of the SDCHPP area have already been developed for coal bed methane and CO2 gas production. The SDCHPP will assist CPW where ever possible to mitigate future development and the resulting loss of habitat. Currently energy pressures within the SDCHPP area include but are not limited to: Coal bed Methane wells, CO2 gas wells, Oil wells and exploration, windmill placement and solar array development.

## SAN LUIS VALLEY ELK DISTRIBUTION

Elk are highly intelligent and mobile animals that react to hunting and disturbance pressures by moving to safer environments. Management changes in one area may cause movements to other areas, which can increase the impacts of elk on both private and public lands. Recent changes to elk management within the San Luis Valley may cause changes in big game distribution in the Sangre de Cristo committee area, and could result in increased conflict with private lands. With the adoption of the Great Sand Dunes Elk Management Plan allowing elk culling within the boundaries of the Park, it is expected that elk movements across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains will increase. This action will further inflate elk population numbers within the Sangre de Cristo herd, and therefore may increase conflicts in the Upper Huerfano drainage conflict area.

## DEVELOPMENT and RECREATION

The SDCHPP area presents room for growth by new residents and, as throughout Colorado, development of private lands and open spaces leads to the fragmentation of quality big game habitat and subsequent redistribution of wildlife. This places additional pressures on the remaining undeveloped public lands and remaining agricultural lands.

The SDCHPP's location and climate also makes it highly desirable for recreational opportunities. As is currently occurring throughout much of Colorado, recreation influences big game distribution and tends to drive big game from easily accessed public lands into areas that are less suitable or onto private lands.

As a result of both of these activities, big game conflicts may become more common or amplified in such areas as La Veta and Westcliff.