



**HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM STATE COUNCIL MEETING
April 4 & 5, Buena Vista, CO**

State Council Members: Mick Davis, Hunter Seim, Terry Everhart, Paul Crespin, Gary Visintainer, Robbie LeValley, Ken Morgan. Absent: John Hardwick, Greg Jungman

CPW Attendees: Pat Tucker, Teri Polley, Hanna Cook, Katie Richman, Samantha Sorensen, Kevin Duckett DWM, Jim Aragon AWM, Dean Riggs ARM, Ron Velarde Northwest Regional Manager, Chris Kloster Game Damage, Nick Gallowich DWM Area 16

Guests: Stephanie Shively FS Wildlife Biologist, Eric Freels Wildlife Biologist FS, Lisa Corbin FS, Jim Pitts FS District Ranger, Brett McMurry Arkansas River Livestock Growers Rep, Stan Baker Mule Deer Foundation

AGENDA:

April 4: 1pm

Introductions: Pat recognized the one year anniversary of the administrative assistants.

Habitat Grant Presentations/Requests

Grand Valley RD/GMUG NF Habitat Grant Application – Eric Freels Requesting \$100,000.

The project is part of a multi-year effort to improve and enhance wildlife habitat at a landscape level, particularly mapped big game parturition and winter habitat on the Uncompahgre plateau. This project will improve palatable forage and the overall year-round habitat for big game and livestock on public lands and will reduce the ongoing threat of catastrophic wildfires on these lands. By providing and improving adequate year-round habitat for big game species, the big game herds will be less likely to move on to nearby private lands and may consequently reduce potential damages to these adjacent private lands. The elk and deer herds that utilize the north Uncompahgre plateau are known to move down on to private lands that are located in Unweep canyon, most notably the private lands in and around the Gateway area. There is a history of big game damage in Unweep canyon, particularly the hay fields located along

the canyon bottom. Historic damage in Gateway on irrigated hay fields may be alleviated by increasing the quality of available forage on nearby public lands for big game species. The council approved the North Uncompahgre Habitat Improvement and Seeding Project for \$92,144. The requested amount was reduced by the contribution from the Uncompahgre HPP committee. The Council also requested pictures of the project.

Salida RD/Pike San Isabel NR/Herring Park IM Ridge – Habitat Grant Application – Stephanie Shiveley Requesting \$100,000. The Herring Park Project began in 2008 and is an ongoing, landscape scale effort covering approximately 7,000 acres of forested federal land which surrounds 6,000 acres of private grassland meadow. Over 2,000 acres of forest thinning and aspen enhancement treatments have already been accomplished on the San Isabel National Forest since it began. The Forest Service is proposing to continue the effort with the IM Ridge Habitat Project located within Herring Park. The proposed treatment is designed to improve forest and watershed health, big game winter range, and reduce elk utilization on private property by implementing forest thinning treatments on 460 acres of National Forest System Lands. This final phase is located in an elk winter concentration area and adjacent to an elk calving and rearing area. The purpose of the Herring Park IM Ridge Habitat Project is to provide improved wildlife and big game habitat and improved watershed conditions. The resulting forest will be less dense and more fire adapted with a greatly reduced probability of insect and disease outbreaks and a reduced risk of catastrophic wildfire. Forest products will be provided to private industry and the public. Big game hunting opportunities on public land will improve. Improvements in livestock and big game water accessibility will promote grazing in areas where decadent grasses and over stocked forests have gradually taken over. The council approved the project and awarded the Forest Service \$100,000.

Special Project Requests

Flynn Ranch – Dean Stindt Manager; Requesting \$46,731 for 250 total acres (122.4 acres mastication PJ, 127.6 acres sagebrush, 187.9 acres seeding, 1 big game guzzler) The tree/shrub control, seeding and water development will relieve big game elk & mule deer pressure on adjacent irrigated fields and improve hunting opportunities on upland area. The council approved the project for a contribution of \$29,844 to match the landowner's contribution.

Dry Mesa Mechanical Treatment – Stan Baker Mule Deer Foundation; Requesting \$21,350 for 566 acres across 6 treatment units on the southern end of Dry Mesa. The primary need for this project is to improve the overall forage conditions on Dry Mesa. This area provides significant winter habitat for big game, as well as important summer and fall livestock range for the permittee. PJ encroachment within old chaining is currently suppressing the grass/forb understory. This project was approved and awarded the Mule Deer Foundation \$21,350 for FY2017 to be completed 6-30-2017.

BLM Landscape Burn Proposal – Toni Toelle NW Colorado Fire Management Unit BLM;

Requesting \$63,000 for Prescribed burning on six or more project located within three Field Offices of the BLM in Northwest Colorado. The treatments covered under this programmatic proposal are the Seven Springs and Teepee Prescribed Burns (Little Snake Field Office, Craig, CO), Little Dry Gulch and Pinto Gulch Prescribed Burns (White River Field Office, Meeker, CO), Dry Gulch and Inspiration Prescribed Burns (Kremmling Field Office, Kremmling, CO). By bundling these projects under one proposal they feel they can better utilize the funding to do important habitat enhancement work to benefit big game species across the Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit. The local committees have supported this project. The project was approved and awarded \$63,000 with a two year committed Task Order.

HPP Projects and Program Purposes Discussion/Decision/Direction

Adjourn/Dinner

April 5: 8 am

Local Committee Updates – Hanna, Katie and Samantha gave brief updates on their committee projects.

Budget Report – Pending projects, no numbers available

DNR Update – Pat informed the council on the Modernization of the Procurement Code Bill. Without the current HPP exemption, about fifteen projects will be affected by having purchase orders out for bid delaying the projects. (10,000 goods/\$25,000 services) This does not apply to Forest Service Task Orders. Unknown how this will all shake out but since amendments to the bill aren't being considered, we are pushing to remain at status quo – still exempt but not entirely supported in statute.

Wild Horse Mgmt and HPP – The White River committee had been contacted by the BLM asking about HPP providing fencing for wild horse management. Before the committee, Pat made the decision that this was outside of HPP and we wouldn't be involved.

HPP Purpose and Projects Discussion: Ron Velarde, Northwest Regional Manager attended the morning session and shared the discussion he had with the Leadership Team regarding the submitted white paper. After reading the statute, the LT felt that in addition to fencing and forage, wildlife management and wildlife populations needs to be a part of HPP. After reading the statute, the director would like the state council to expand their scope on funding projects. The director still feels that HPP is a valuable program and he understands what it is all about and would like to make HPP work for today's big game issues.

The research in the Southwest & Southeast is different than what is happening in the Roaring Fork. The next five years are going to be interesting for the elk populations. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a rule has a large role to play in research projects.

HPP funding can be easy, but other money is available to be utilized for these projects. Ron encouraged the council to remain a partner, not necessarily fund an entire project. Without landowner support, Colorado Parks and Wildlife would not have the current elk populations.

Committees need to understand what the statute says and what the director has stated. Pat will share this with the AWM's next week.

How do the committees maintain their current projects and open themselves up to participating in this requested change? There was discussion and agreement that the big game parameters will remain deer, elk, antelope and moose – the wildlife conflict, fencing and forage. No other species are recognized for conflict. HPP will maintain a positive relationship with landowners in the state of Colorado. The committees have budgets and the state council has additional funding available. Keep the current model; Pat has state council approval to approve up to \$20,000 over set committee budgets. Local committees need to look at projects first before going to the state council. It is imperative to the program that the projects stay at the grass roots approval. Reemphasis at the committee level they have discretion and projects need to be approved by the local committee.

2017 State Meeting Ideas and Discussion–

- ✓ Ken suggested add NRCS – there is money in the farm bill and Partners in Fish and Wildlife.
- ✓ Paul challenging the players what lies ahead – the landscape is going to change and will affect the program
- ✓ Ron relevant as an agency and program; Habitat Stamp Program at state level (Colorado Habitat Protection or Conservation)
- ✓ Agency breakout sessions – longer than just over lunch
- ✓ Ken Logan – results of mountain lion research project
- ✓ FS projections on climate change and aspen/spruce changes, overall high level state view
- ✓ CSFS state of the forest report
- ✓ Michelle Cowardin – Hwy 9 project
- ✓ Tim Monahan - open meetings, etc
- ✓ Western State Study - how much treatment to do - Jonathan Coop and Pat McGee
- ✓ Scientist Sarah Reed has been studying the issue for 15 years and, along with research colleague Sarah Thomas, will present two talks on the subject this week in the Roaring Fork Valley. The title of the presentation is “Balancing Outdoor Recreation with Wildlife Conservation in Protected Lands.” Reed is an associate conservation scientist with the North America Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society. She is also an affiliate faculty member in the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

- ✓ Robin Brown, owner of Brown House Public Relations & Events, which promotes western Colorado as an incredible place to live, work, and play. She can be reached at robin@brownhousepr.com. we can have it all if we willing to compromise - gjsentinel - 2/19
- ✓ Luis Benitez – Director, Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office
- ✓ Overview of CPW Ongoing Habitat Work
- ✓ Danielle Johnston
- ✓ GOCO – role in habitat and recreation issues
- ✓ Director Opening Talk – feeling of where we will be in the future
- ✓ Director Agency Updates, Hot Topics, etc.
- ✓ CCA and FB Updates, Issues, etc.
- ✓ Pat Tucker – HPP Updates and Changes to Projects
- ✓ Pat Tucker - How HPP's Funding and Budget Works
- ✓ Chuck Anderson – Responses to Habitat Treatments
- ✓ Hanna, Katie, Sam - Committee Updates, highlights of big projects, problems
- ✓ Tom Theobald - bees

Next Meeting – July 11th & 12th Tuesday & Wednesday Field Trip Salida

Roundtable:

Teri
 Ron
 Ken
 Dean
 Gary –
 Nick – Thank you
 Chris - Good meeting
 Paul – Setting up to be another active fire season, there are potential cuts and changes
 Terry – Good meeting!
 Hunter – Nice to have a good steady stream, yesterday with presentations?
 Mick - Good meeting!
 Samantha – Thanks!
 Katie – Appreciate being here and helpful
 Hanna – Hearing this discussion is helpful
 Jim – Thank you for the invite – you are always welcome in Salida
 Pat – Notice sent to recipients sent out this morning

Adjourn at 12 noon