



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES
February 15th, 2017
Royal Gorge Field Office

Committee Members present:

- Jim Aragon, Colorado Parks and Wildlife AWM
- Aaron Atwood, Livestock Grower
- Joe Moore, Livestock Grower
- Ted Grover, Sportsman
- Jeff Williams, BLM Rangeland Management Specialist
- Stephanie Shively, USFS Wildlife Biologist
- Brett McMurry, Livestock Grower

Administrative Assistant:

- Hanna Cook

Guests: Kim Woodruff (CPW-DWM), Sean Shepherd (CPW-DWM), Frank Polzin (Volunteer Archaeologist)

Meeting called to order at 10:08 AM

Introductions

General Public Comments

None.

Budget Report

The 2017 budget report was reviewed

Old Business

When issuing vouchers for fencing materials to landowners, we need to make sure that landowners are filling out forms and W9s completely. Hanna has received several incomplete or blank forms and W9s, and reimbursements cannot be made unless both forms are filled out completely and an itemized receipt is attached. This delays payments and takes a lot of time on the part of Hanna and the DWMs. Committee members can help by relaying the information when talking to landowners who are interested in using the voucher program. Hanna is available to help and answer questions for anyone who is having trouble filling the forms out.

New Business

Update on License Fee Increase Discussion

There have been no license fee increases yet, but CPW has held public meetings and discussions involving the possibility of a license fee increase to cover the rising cost of operations. The topic has made the Governor's agenda for legislation this year. CPW is still in the process of finding a sponsor for the bill. License fees have not been increased since 2005. The committee raised the question about whether the agency can charge or tax non-consumptive users (i.e. hikers, bikers, etc.) to help with operation costs. This has been tried before with the Habitat Stamp, but it ended up being a wash because some federal funding was taken away as a result. Part of the discussion is whether or not the bill should include a change to the process of adjusting license fees. Currently this can only be done through legislation, but it may be more beneficial to allow the wildlife commission to make the decision to increase or decrease a license fee. The decision on whether or not to increase fees and how much to increase them will be up to the legislature, not CPW.

Water Development Project-Jeff Pridemore, Jim Aragon

Jeff Pridemore is asking HPP for \$5,000 for materials needed to install a water development on leased State Land Board property. This property has had a habitat treatment done on it in the past, but there is no water source in the area so the habitat treatment has not been very useful for wildlife or livestock. Game damage claims are filed every year for deer and elk on both growing crops and harvested forage. The lessee across the highway has no water and hauls in water trucks to fill stock tanks. The proposed water development would be funded by HPP and State Land Board, and the lessee, Jeff Pridemore, will provide labor for installation. SLB will pay for drilling and HPP will pay for materials (solar panels, pump, pipeline, etc.). This water development and distribution would cover 597 acres, which includes an adjacent private parcel of land that currently has game damage claims. The committee would like to increase the project amount to ensure that the landowner has enough for materials to construct the water development so that it reaches as much acreage as possible.

The project was approved for \$7,000 and tire tanks from ARHPP stockpile, as needed.

Big Hole Vegetation Treatment Maintenance-Jeff Williams

Jeff Williams is asking HPP for up to \$2,500 to pay a contractor to complete hand thinning on BLM land. The Arkansas River HPP committee paid for a habitat treatment in the Big Hole area in 2003. 515 acres were treated with a roller chopper and seeded to promote growth of herbaceous and woody browse vegetation that improved soil stability and improved forage production for wildlife and livestock. There is currently a good stand of grass, mountain mahogany, and currant, but Pinion Juniper is starting to encroach back into the treated area. In order to ensure long term success of the project they will need to do maintenance on the project area. The contractor will complete hand thinning for approximately \$60/acre. BLM will match the \$2,500 from HPP which altogether will treat a minimum of 80 acres. The property is hard to get to, but the contractor has a grazing permit in the area and therefore has easy access and will be able to get in and complete work quicker than other contractors. The contractor has confirmed that he will be able to treat more than 80 acres if funding is available, but Jeff was not able to commit more than \$2,500 from BLM, and did not want to ask HPP to pay for more than 50% of the project. The committee thinks it is very important to maintain past projects when needed, rather than completing a project and walking away from it. They are willing to pay more than BLM on this project if the contractor can complete more hand thinning before the end of the fiscal year.

The project was approved for up to \$4,000.

BLM Inmate Hand-Thinning Project-Kim Woodruff

Kim Woodruff is asking HPP for \$4,800 to hire the SWIFT crew to complete hand thinning in the Wellsville area. Free Inmate crews are currently working in the area, but they do not have the appropriate vehicles to get into certain locations, and the treatments are not as effective as they could be. The SWIFT crew charges \$1600 per day, and the crew will be out for 3 days. They should complete 12-15 acres of hand thinning. The SWIFT crew will be able to get into the area easier and work faster than the free inmate crews, so the hand thinning treatment will be more effective. The treatment should help keep wildlife off of the highway by creating more favorable habitat on BLM land. Kim Woodruff and Jeff Williams will have photo points set up for monitoring.

The project was approved for \$4,800.

Adventure Unlimited Fencing Project-Jim Aragon

Jim Aragon does not have a project proposal ready yet, but would like to discuss it with the committee to see if there would be any interest in funding this in the future. This is a youth camp and deer and elk have been staying in the area during winter months rather than moving lower into the valley as they normally do. Deer and elk have been entering the feed area where the camp's horses are kept. They have been seen pushing horses away from their feed trough and this is causing the horses to be underfed. Jim Aragon is considering the possibility of putting up tall fences around the feeding areas only to protect the horse feed. If feed wasn't readily available for big game, then they may move to lower elevation to find food and the camp would not have these conflicts during the winter months. Jim will discuss this with the camp to see if they have any interest in the project and will return to the committee when he has more information from the camp. The committee would like to hear more information on the project before deciding if it is a good fit for HPP.

Remaining committee business

Vickie Russo was unable to attend this meeting, and Hanna will move her agenda items (Antelope Ridge Water project, Noxious Weed presentation) over to the agenda for the next meeting.

Joe Moore said that he may have some landowners that need to request some tire tanks from the ARHPP stockpile. Joe will get with Aaron Atwood to get voucher forms for those landowners and arrange to pick up tire tanks.

Kim Woodruff showed the committee some maps of Tom Grette's work so far. His work should help with the urban deer populations in cities by creating more suitable wildlife habitat on public lands.

Kim also let the committee know that the Swissvale hydro axe project is taking place now, and she or Jeff will be happy to take committee members out to see the project if they would like.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 PM

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 26th at 10:00 AM at the Royal Gorge Field Office

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