



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Gunnison Basin HPP Committee

300 W. New York Ave, Gunnison CO 81230

January 24th, 2017

11:00 a.m.

Gunnison Basin HPP Members Present: Navid Navidi, Sportsman; Nick Gallowich, CPW; Steve Guerrieri, Ag Producer; Matt Vasquez, USFS; Paul Mowery, Ag Producer

Guests: J. Wenum, CPW; Brandon Diamond, CPW; Nathan Seward, CPW; Shane Cox; Steve Snyder; Dan Perez, USFS; Brooke Vasquez, NRCS; Pat Medina, USFS

Introductions, Budget, & Old Business:

1. Committee members and guests were introduced. Paul Mowery was introduced as the new livestock representative. Katie reviewed the budget and gave an update on current projects.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews

1. Dan Perez presented a proposal for installation of a trick tank on the USFS Dome grazing allotment with permittees Shane Cox and Steve Snyder. The current water storage system was installed in the 1980s and consists of a 75' x 100' plastic liner with a large berm directing meltwater onto the liner. Snowmelt and other precipitation is caught on the liner and directed into a holding pond, from which two water tanks are filled and distribute water to dry pasture. The project area is located in winter range for big game, and the tanks experience heavy use by big game and livestock. However, the liner is old and in disrepair with many large holes, and large volumes of water are being lost into the ground. The holes have been repaired many times with tar, but continued weed growth and animal damage has made this inefficient. The project proposes to install new rubber liners in the catchment area to drastically increase water capture. An additional berm will also be constructed to direct more water onto the catchment area. The committee noted that water availability is a very limiting factor for wildlife in this area. The project was approved for \$16,466.75.

2. Brooke Vasquez presented a project for the NRCS to test virtual fence lines with shock collared cattle. The NRCS is interested in testing this technology in the Gunnison Basin for potential future applications in protecting riparian areas, improving grazing management, and maintaining wildlife buffer zones. The proposed trial would involve one landowner with collars on every heifer for three years, during which time the landowner would pick alternating watering areas and exclude the cattle from other areas with the virtual fence. The NRCS would evaluate how well the virtual fence contains cattle, as well as monitoring range conditions where cattle have been excluded from to determine if restricting livestock improves conditions for wildlife. The committee expressed interest in future applications of this technology, especially in areas where domestic sheep might be kept away from buffer zones for bighorn sheep or where livestock might be excluded from habitat improvements intended for wildlife. The committee also noted that proper livestock distribution is highly beneficial for wildlife, especially in high-conflict areas, and could help prevent and reduce conflict. However, the committee questioned whether this project would fall within the scope of HPP's mission. The committee supported the project but will follow up with Pat Tucker and the State Council for clarification.

Roundtable:

1. J Wenum gave a review of the recent baiting efforts in the Gunnison Basin. Heavy and prolonged snowfall throughout the area has concentrated deer and elk into low elevations where they present a danger to vehicles on Hwy 50. Additionally, with both species of big game concentrated into the same areas, elk tend to outcompete deer for food resources, leaving very little available for deer. CPW has instituted emergency baiting operations to help pull these animals away from the highway and improve public safety. This is currently not a feeding operation; however if conditions persist or worsen the agency is poised to initiate emergency feeding operations. Temporary emergency closures have also been issued for shed hunting to help reduce public pressure on the animals. Other public recreation closures (such as snow mobiling or cross country skiing) are not in the purview of CPW to institute. CPW will continue to closely monitor the situation.
2. Matt Vasquez and Pat Medina gave updates on the Gunnison Ranger District burn projects, noting anticipated burn windows in the fall.

Next Meeting: March 28th, 11:00am Gunnison CPW