



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES
Uncompahgre HPP Committee
2300 S. Townsend, Montrose
October 4th, 2017
6:30 p.m.

Uncompahgre HPP Members Present: Mike Surber, USFS; Kelly Crane, CPW; Bobby Gray, Sportsman; Todd Stewart, Livestock Grower; Bob Black, Livestock Grower; Angela LoSasso, BLM

Guests: Paul Warner, Jim Guire, Roseanne Guire, Bruce Irvine, Tony Bonacquista, Mark Caddy, Steve Woodis, Elizabeth Nava

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. The current remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$123,600.10.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews:

1. The Osborne fence project application did not have the required maps and the landowner was not present. The project was tabled for the next meeting.
2. Bruce Irvine presented an application for a fencing project on his USFS allotment. The existing fence is old and in disrepair, and experiences heavy elk use as it is located near a major water source for the area. The fence does not properly contain livestock, and presents entanglement/injury risks to big game. The proposal is for materials, with the landowner providing labor to repair or rebuild the fence where necessary. The new fence will be wildlife-friendly to HPP specifications, and will include high visibility top wire. The committee approved the project for \$252.00, and will provide 5 rolls of high visibility wire.
3. Paul Warner presented an application for a fencing project on his property in Cimarron. The ranch is primarily a sheep operation, as well as producing some of the only irrigated forage in the area. It is located in a major big game migration corridor, and experiences year round use by elk and deer. The property has internal and external old woven wire sheep fencing, which frequently catches deer and elk, especially fawns and calves. Additionally, the sagebrush has completely grown through the fence in most areas, making it a major barrier to wildlife movement. The proposal includes removing all of the old fencing (approximately 4.6 miles) and constructing new wildlife-friendly sheep fencing, which consists of 5 smooth wires with spacing

according to CPW specs. Gates will also be incorporated at heavy traffic areas and will be left open when livestock are not present to serve as crossings.

The committee supported removing the old sheep wire and the sagebrush overgrowth, but noted that the project represented a very large portion of the annual budget. Partial funding and spacing the project out over multiple fiscal years was considered, but the landowner preferred to get everything done at once, especially since multiple neighboring landowners were involved as cooperators. The committee noted that if approved, the use of high visibility top wire would be required, and due to the length of the fence, the committee would not be able to provide the wire or any additional materials. Mr. Warner accepted these stipulations, and the project was approved for \$61,400.00.

4. The Abel fence project application was incomplete and tabled for the next meeting.

5. Jim Guire presented the second phase of a continuing pipeline project that was funded and completed in FY17. The property experiences use by deer and elk year-round, and the irrigated hayfields are heavily utilized for forage. The Guires are tolerant of big game on the property, but need to increase hay production to offset the losses to grazing by deer and elk. This part of the project includes installing approximately 1.06 miles of pipeline to carry water from existing ponds on the property to the new hay production areas, as the existing irrigated fields have already been fully utilized for hay production. The committee toured the first phase of the project last summer, and feel that this is a highly worthwhile project in a critical area for big game. The project was approved for \$11,862.50.

6. The A Bar D Ranch fence application was incomplete and tabled for the next meeting.

7. Steve Woodis presented a proposal for fencing on the Orme-Cerro ranches. Currently livestock range across multiple family parcels, with sections of old fencing in complete disrepair and on the ground. New wildlife-friendly internal fencing would better contain the cattle and allow for better grazing rotation and management, while still allowing big game to utilize the area for forage. However, the committee felt that this fence project did not have sufficient big game benefits, primarily because the project included constructing all new fencing rather than removing hazardous old fence and replacing it with wildlife-friendly fencing. Additionally, the local DWM did not feel that this area tends to suffer from a lack of forage in the first place, or that constructing the fence would result in fewer big game conflicts or game damage claims. The project was denied.

Other Business/Roundtable:

1. The Statewide HPP Meeting will be held in Grand Junction Dec. 5th – 7th.

2. The committee discussed elk populations on the Uncompahgre Plateau. Research is ongoing in the area to help determine the cause of declining populations. Brad Banulis will attend an HPP meeting in the spring to give updates and initial data.

3. The committee may be interested in opportunities for ag conversion projects, which returns dryland agricultural fields into high quality seasonal forage for big game. These projects are common in the northwest, and the committee feels they may be applicable to properties in the west end. Katie will get more information from the other HPP admins and share projects with the DWMs.

Next Meeting: December 6th, 6:30pm – Montrose CPW Office