



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

### San Juan Basin HPP Committee

San Juan Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Ct., Durango

August 15th, 2018

6:00 p.m.

**San Juan Basin HPP Members Present:** Adrian Archuleta, CPW; Mike Schmidt, BLM; Dan Huntington, Livestock Grower; Phil Craig, Livestock Grower, George Malarsie, Sportsman

**Guests:** Pat Tucker, Scott Piccoli

**Introduction:** Committee members and guests were introduced. The June meeting minutes and current project updates were reviewed. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$47,190.00.

#### **New Business:**

1. Scott Piccoli presented a fencing proposal for his property outside of Bayfield. The current fence is old barbed wire and is in severe disrepair such that it does not properly contain livestock, and presents entanglement risks for big game. The property contains irrigated hayfields, which are used year round by deer. There is also potential for elk use in the fall. Mr. Piccoli has already completed a new section of wildlife-friendly fencing on the eastern border of the property, and is proposing to fence the rest of the property with wildlife-friendly high tensile smooth poly wire and an electric topwire, which is more appropriate for horses. The committee discussed whether the project represented a sufficient game damage/ag conflict to be appropriate for HPP funding, especially since the property is not large enough to realistically allow hunting. However, the committee did note that this area receives intense big game use especially in the winter, and that removing hazardous fencing was a significant benefit for deer and elk. The committee requested that Mr. Piccoli work on securing additional cooperator funds with his neighbors to reduce HPP's cost, and the project was tabled for the next meeting.
2. The committee discussed a potential elk monitoring project with the Southern Ute Indian

Tribe. Aran Johnson is working on a collaring project, and will likely seek HPP funding for helicopter costs related to elk capture. The committee thoroughly discussed whether HPP funding should be used for monitoring elk that spend large amounts of time on tribal land, especially during hunting seasons. However, these elk frequently spend time in the spring, summer, and fall on public lands. It is also anticipated that the data gathered from this monitoring effort will be applicable to the management of elk within the rest of the San Juan Basin HPP area. Previous projects, including a CDOT project aimed at reducing vehicle collisions with big game, were implemented on public lands because of data collected by Aran and the SUIT.

The primary focus of the anticipated project will be to identify bottlenecks/high traffic corridors on transition range, where elk migration movements are very narrowly funneled. Once these pinch points are identified, game cameras can be used to classify elk. Recent studies have shown that using game cameras to inventory elk in this manner can be statistically valid, and may offer benefits over aerial flight surveys including reduced costs and higher success of observation (especially in mild/dry winters when elk are at higher elevations and more difficult to locate).

The committee also discussed how to ensure that the data is disseminated to the committee, CPW, and other agencies that are involved with habitat and elk management. The data will be very useful in driving management decisions on habitat treatments, competing priority areas, and recreation/access issues. The data may also allow wildlife managers to evaluate elk response to habitat treatments and changes in pressure. The application for this project is expected for the next meeting.

3. The committee approved \$4884 for a Kencove order to replenish the ponyrail inventory in FY18; however the vendor was backordered and only 9 rolls were purchased. The committee will need to place a new order in FY19. Katie will obtain a quote from Kencove for the next meeting.

#### **Other Business:**

1. The committee set meeting dates for FY19. Meetings will be held on 9/17/18, 11/26/18, 2/25/19 (fertilizer meeting), 4/22/19, and 6/17/19.
2. The committee reviewed highlights from the recent State Council meeting. It is unlikely that the committee will receive any requests for fencing or seed due to the 416 fire as that area was a relatively low-conflict zone previously; however in the event that the committee does receive requests they may provide high visibility wire or consider funding reseeding efforts. The committee also discussed hemp operations and affirmed that if the crop is not considered by Game Damage to have damage potential from deer and elk, the committee would not participate in projects where the conflict involves hemp crops.
3. The committee discussed the impacts of burns on grazing permits and hunting access,.

**Meeting adjourned. Next meeting September 17th @ 6pm**