



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

San Juan Basin HPP Committee

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

May 10th, 2018

6:00 p.m.

San Juan Basin HPP Members Present: Anthony Garcia, USFS; Aran Johnson, Southern Ute Tribe; Mike Schmidt, BLM; Sandy Young, Livestock Grower; Dan Huntington, Livestock Grower; Adrian Archuleta, CPW; John Gardener, Sportsman

Guests: Steve Pargin, Landowner; Skip Fischer, USFS; Hon Schlapfer, USFS

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced, and current project updates were reviewed. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$62,261.08.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews

1. Hon Schlapfer and Skip Fischer presented a proposal for return interval burning on Fosset Gulch. The original burn was a low intensity fire, which targeted overgrown oak brush. The fire was successful in killing the oak, however the reburn is needed to remove the standing dead oak and further regenerate vegetation. 6,240 acres on Sauls Creek will be burned in this project, which will also bring the oak brush and pine on the same retreatment schedule. Follow-up seeding is unlikely as it has not been shown to be very successful for the cost of the treatment. The committee discussed some of the recent USFS decisions relating to recreation, and the impact of developing recreation in big game habitat. Some committee members expressed concern about implementing HPP funding for habitat improvement projects in areas where future recreation expansions may occur. However, this project is located in an area where the potential for increased recreation is fairly low. Additionally, the project complements several recent HPP projects in the area. The project was approved for \$35,000 beginning in FY19.

2. Adrian Archuleta presented a proposal for GPS elk collars for monitoring in the Valle Seco area near Pagosa Springs. HPP funds have been used to help implement numerous habitat improvement projects around Pagosa Springs, and the USFS is in the planning stages for a large habitat treatment initiative in this area. GPS data on elk movements and habitat use, including identifying summer, winter, and transitional ranges, as well as migration corridors and timing is needed to help inform land managers, CPW, and HPPs decision-making processes on treatment types and implementation. Data from the collars will allow CPW to create distribution maps and habitat utilization maps for the area. The data will further be used to help HPP, land managers, and wildlife managers target project locations and treatment types that will be the most beneficial to elk, as well as more accurately consider issues with land use, travel management, and overall herd management. The project was approved for up to \$25,000 for purchase of collars.
3. Steve Pargin attended the meeting to give the committee an update on his pond cleanout projects. 51 ponds were completed this year, 29 of which were also treated with salt, bentonite, and/or liners. Mr. Pargin has identified 22 more ponds for work in FY19. The committee briefly discussed the benefits of continuing this type of work in the area; however the project was not on the agenda for the meeting. The committee tabled the project until it could be properly noticed for the next meeting.

Other Business:

1. The previously approved purchase for ponyrail inventory was backordered with the vendor. Kencove was able to ship 9 rolls of ponyrail, and does not anticipate having more stock until after July 1st. The committee may place another order in FY19.
2. The committee expressed interest in inviting Gregory Hunt with Sweet Water Systems to give his presentation at a future meeting. There are a large number of dry areas within the San Juan Basin that would benefit from capturing and storing runoff water for wildlife use throughout the rest of the year.
3. Aran Johnson discussed a possible project using game cameras to monitor and classify elk on tribal lands. Previous collar data has helped to identify heavy migration corridors, which often experience very fast migration events. These can be difficult to accurately monitor with survey flights, so little data is available. Aran noted that there have been several studies suggesting that game cameras can be highly effective in remotely classifying big game animals and generating data on population size, timing of migration events, and cow/calf ratios in both the spring and fall. The committee expressed interest in this type of project as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting June 5th @ 6pm.