



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

San Juan Basin HPP Committee

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

April 22nd, 2019

6:00 p.m.

San Juan Basin HPP Members Present: Adrian Archuleta, CPW; Phil Craig, Livestock Grower; Anthony Garcia, USFS; Aran Johnson, SUIT; Jesse Montoya, Livestock Grower; Dan Huntington, Livestock Grower; John Gardner, Sportsman

Guests: Pamela Glasco, Dave Cundiff, Chris Tipton, USFS; Skip Fischer, USFS

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$18,654.85.

Old Business:

1. The committee had previously reviewed pond and seed projects from Pamela Glasco and denied them due to questions about hunting access and the benefit to wildlife. Ms. Glasco attended the meeting to provide clarification that hunting was allowed on the property. The pond project is to improve and clean an existing pond, and install a pump to irrigate the pasture and keep it in grass during drought periods. The pasture is used by horses and big game. The seed project will overseed the pasture with native grasses to improve forage production. The committee is supportive of the project, however they requested NRCS involvement for further direction on the timing and application of bentonite and seed, as well as input on weed control after the disturbance. NRCS funding may also be available. The project was tabled for the next meeting.

New Business:

1. The committee reviewed seed and fence projects from Jean Etzler. However, the seed project is a better fit for the annual fertilizer project, and the fence repair is better suited to a fence voucher. The projects were denied.
2. David Cundiff presented another phase of pipe fence construction. Mr. Cundiff has

completed several sections of old fence removal and new fence construction. The fence is wildlife-friendly with a pipe top tail and 3 high-tensile strands. This project includes another 1500-feet of fence. The project was approved for \$3,535.00.

3. Chris Tipton and Skip Fischer presented a USFS burn project for 8,500 acres in an area adjacent to the previous Yellowjacket and Sauls Creek burns. The project area is located in big game transitional and winter range, and contains multiple migration corridors. The understory is primarily dominated by oakbrush, which has reduced the availability and quality of forage. Over-accumulation of leaf and pine litter further inhibits forage production in the area, which results in big game utilizing nearby agricultural operations and causing damage to fences and forage meant for livestock. The project involves treating the area with low-intensity prescribed fire, which will reduce the density and continuity of oak brush and reduce the ground litter. This will open the understory and regenerate more valuable forage species, while leaving the larger oakbrush intact to provide cover. Improving forage availability and quality will help hold deer and elk on USFS land for longer periods of time, especially during winter when big game use of private lands and agricultural operations tends to increase and result in game damage. The project was approved for FY2020 for \$150,000.00.
4. The committee approved Steve Pargin's previously-reviewed pond project for \$15,234.00. This is a continuation of multiple pond cleanouts on USFS allotments, and involves cleaning and treating ponds to improve water storage capacity on public lands for livestock and big game use.
5. Jesse Montoya presented a habitat improvement project for Bo Pitman. The project area includes approximately 1500 acres of dryland, and the landowner has been completing clearing, seeding, and weed spraying work for the past several years. The property is located in important winter range for big game, and experiences year-round use by deer. Currently, a 50-acre pasture is infested with weeds and is not productive, which reduces the amount of forage available to deer and elk and causes big game to utilize nearby irrigated fields, resulting in damage to fences and crops. This project includes treating the pasture with herbicide, then discing and seeding to improve forage production for big game and livestock. The project was approved for \$3,476.00.

Roundtable:

1. The committee reviewed post-hunt population surveys, as well as updates from the State Council.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting TBD