



## **HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES**

### **Gunnison Basin HPP Committee**

**300 W. New York Ave, Gunnison CO 81230**

**July 25, 2019**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Gunnison Basin HPP Members Present:** Paul Mowery, Livestock Grower; Steve Guerrieri, Livestock Grower; Nick Gallowich, CPW; Matt Vasquez, USFS; Kathy Brodhead, BLM; Navid Navidi, Sportsman

**Guests:** Jim Barry, Dayle Funka, Aleshia Rummel, Kevin Blecha, Brandon Diamond

**Tour:** Jim Barry conducted a field tour with the committee and Dayle Funka (USFS) to demonstrate multiple years of HPP-USFS weed control efforts throughout the Soap Creek drainage. Private lands at lower elevations were an early source of infestation, and recreational/agricultural traffic dispersed noxious weeds along the rest of the drainage. Many of the original hotspots have been eradicated, or are at an easy level of maintenance. The wet winter in 2018-2019 resulted in a flush of weeds this summer, but since control efforts had been ongoing for so long, the operators had a head start on preventing infestations from spreading. Annual control efforts are sometimes complicated by access roads being intermittently closed down, and by annually changing hotspots and vectors due to illegal campgrounds and user-created routes. Additionally, different operators have different priorities for weed control; and there are many different entities involved including public resource agencies, absentee landowners, recreationists, outfitters, ski resorts, etc - so coordinating plans can be challenging. The committee was pleased with the progress that has been made in controlling weeds in this area, and looks forward to continuing this type of work.

### **Business Meeting:**

#### **Introductions & Budget:**

1. Committee members and guests were introduced. The ending budget from FY19 was reviewed. The remaining FY20 budget at the start of the meeting was \$53,109.32.

### **New Business:**

#### **Project Application Proposals and Reviews**

1. The committee briefly discussed the annual USFS weed control project for Alkali Basin. The project was approved for \$3,000.

2. Brandon Diamond presented an exclusionary fence project for Bob Robbins. The property is located in Steuben Creek with BLM and SWA on both sides, and includes 1600 acres of important winter range that is heavily used by big game. The landowner has tolerated significant elk use of the hayfields and stacked hay during the winter and has not filed Game Damage claims; however during the 2016-2017 winter, a bull elk killed a high-value mare at a feed site. The property is a critical wintering site for big game and it is important that elk continue to use the area, however the landowner needs to prevent direct conflicts between his livestock and big game at feed sites. The project involves constructing a feedlot that is adjacent to the existing hay barn to create a safe winter feeding place for cattle and horses. Elk will likely continue to use the property for winter range and forage, and may also utilize the surrounding public lands more heavily for additional forage. The committee noted that the requested HPP funding is less than the cost of the damage claim that was filed on the mare, and would be less than the potential damage claims that could be filed on the lost hay. The project was approved for \$5,000 for labor or materials, pending any Game Damage contributions to the project.
  - a. Update 11/7/2019: Game Damage will provide \$3,940.82 in materials. HPP funds will be used for labor costs.
3. Kevin Blecha informed the committee that he will be seeking HPP funding at a later date to re-deploy elk collars. An abnormally high number of collared elk were harvested during the previous year, and data on elk movement within the Basin is still being collected to help inform herd management plans. The collar data is also being used to examine recreational pressure on elk and deer, with some new focal areas in summer range.
4. The committee also reviewed a seeding application from Hannah Cranor. The application was not received before the deadline and was therefore not listed on the agenda. The project includes treating weed encroachment by reseeding with native meadow grasses. The committee requested that the application be revised to include more effective weed treatment, and to have the application resubmitted for the next meeting.
5. The committee reviewed the current Habitat Management Plan and discussed updates, with particular focus on updating conflict areas, eligibility rules and management strategies. Katie will continue to work with the DMP and produce a draft for the next meeting.

**Roundtable:**

1. The committee has received 25 rolls of high visibility wire from the State Council. Wire rolls may be supplied for fence projects as needed, and will be required for fence projects taking place in Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat.
2. The Statewide HPP meeting will be held in Grand Junction from December 3-5, 2019.

**Next Meeting: TBD**