



**HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
STATE COUNCIL MEETING
March 19 and 20, 2019, Colorado Springs, CO**

Attendees: Pat Tucker, Dean Riggs, Samantha Sorensen, Hanna Cook, Katie Richman, Hunter Seim, Ken Morgan, Mick Davis, John Hardwick, Terry Everhart, Greg Jungman, Sheila Lamb, Gary Visintainer

Absent: Robbie LeValley

Guests: Justin Rutter (CPW CFO), JT Romatzke (Northwest Regional Manager), Jamie Nogle (National Wild Turkey Federation), Emily Orbanek (GOCO), Chris Yuan-Farrell (GOCO)

March 19- 1 PM to 5 PM

Introductions

Approval of FY20 HPP Program Budget

The council has chosen to continue the current level of funding for local committees. The State Council can award additional funds to committees if they need more money for approved projects above their allocated budget. Many committees aren't spending their allocated budgets each year so the council does not see a need to change them. The budget was approved.

Budget Info/Discussion/Questions-FY 18 and FY 19 and Beyond

Justin Rutter-HPP receives statutory money from big game license sales and is currently in a good position financially. The future generation bill has passed, and it is likely that this will create an increase in HPP funding. Personal services charged to HPP include any staff time coded to HPP activities. If, because of HPP paying for staff time, the council spends their entire budget and needs more, then additional money can come from game cash if needed. The HPP fund can only be used for HPP specific activities and projects, so there are no other expenses that can be taken from that fund without a change to the definition in statute. The game cash fund is less restrictive than the HPP funds, so it makes sense to use the restrictive HPP fund for all HPP activities, including personnel costs) before moving into the less restrictive game cash fund. Justin was not aware of any additional costs that would be getting charged to HPP.

HPP Grant Program

There is a possibility that HPP may be labeled a grant program in the future. Procurement rules have changed and the procurement exemption that HPP had previously is no longer recognized by DNR purchasing and consequently will have to follow procurement rules. Purchases of goods/services to any vendor either in one purchase or cumulatively will now have to go out for bid. Reimbursements regardless of amount and tasks orders with the FS and BLM do not have to go out for bid.

Discussion with JT Romatzke, Northwest Regional Manager

Predator (Bobcats, Bears, Mountain Lions, Wolves, etc.) management is a big topic in the state right now. CPW's DAU plans for Mountain Lions haven't been updated in a while, so they will be looked at and updated soon. CPW does not support the reintroduction of wolves into Colorado, although they are aware that Northern Grey Wolves have been coming in and out of the state naturally. Wolves are currently managed by the USFWS.

The Future Generation Bill has passed, and the new fees are being implemented. Qualifying licenses for big game applications are being introduced. Anyone applying for the big game draw will be required to purchase a qualifying license (turkey, small game, or combination fishing/small game) in order to be eligible. Qualifying licenses are not required to purchase leftover or OTC tags. This will help to increase funding for CPW through increased license sales and increased federal funding (Pittman Robertson Act).

Chronic Wasting disease is being actively researched and monitored using mandatory checks. CWD prevalence has been increasing in many areas. CPW has formed a CWD working committee and they used guidance documents from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to create a guidance document specific to Colorado. That document was approved by the commission and it outlines a more rigorous plan for managing CWD. Any area that is above the 5% threshold for CWD prevalence will be actively managed. CPW will still be seeking involvement from local communities and local interests to help research and manage CWD around the state. Management may involve reducing the number of mature bucks, looking at local hotspots with high prevalence rates and figuring out how to get more harvest from those areas and comparing areas with high and low prevalence rates to see what is working and what isn't. They will be focusing on harvest objectives, so hunters will be an important resource.

DNR/CPW/Commission Leadership Changes

The state is in a transition period right now since a new governor has been elected. Dan Gibbs has been selected as the DNR Executive Director. Bob Broscheid has left his position as the Director of CPW. He has done a lot of good things for the agency in his 5 year career. There has not been a replacement yet, but Jeffrey Ver Steeg has been selected as the acting director. Patt Dorsey has left her position as the Southwest Regional Manager and is now the Director of Conservation Operations of the Western Region for the National Wild Turkey Federation. Heath Kehm is the deputy regional manager for the Southwest Region, and is currently the acting regional manager. The regional manager position will not be filled until a new director is appointed. Finally, there are three new commissioners. They are working to get oriented with the commission and CPW.

BLM/USFS/HPP Habitat Project Update and Discussion

Pat is still working with the USFS and BLM on implementing this project. The biggest concern for both agencies is staff capacity to take on such a big project, but the availability of matching funds should not be an issue. HPP would be interested in helping to pay for a position dedicated to this large scale project. The BLM has approval to hire someone for this position, but Pat has not heard from USFS yet. The Northwest area would serve as a pilot area for this program before they move on to other parts of the state. The State Council would like to continue to move forward with this project with the tentative amount of \$250,000 per agency per year for 5 years being discussed. Pat will continue to have discussions with both agencies.

High Visibility Wire Purchase

The State Council is still interested in purchasing white vinyl wire to be distributed to committees. Each committee will be allowed a maximum of \$5,000 of wire. Local committees can decide to provide clips for installation if they would like, but the state council will only be providing the wire.

CPW/SLB HydroAxe Project

Jamie Nogle-CPW is working with the National Wild Turkey Federation to carry out hydroaxe projects with the

new machine purchased jointly by SLB and CPW. NWTF is paying for the operator of the hydroaxe, and projects are being carried out on SLB and CPW property. The hydroaxe is currently in the Southeast Region, but will be moved to the Northwest Region in the next month or so. The Grand Mesa Committee has been approached for additional funding for treatment in the committee area. The Nature Conservancy has contributed some funding, and CPW is looking into additional ways to increase funding for these projects. Starting on July 1st, they anticipate additional funds from SLB and CPW. They now have a better idea of what the cost per acre is and how much different types of treatments cost, so it will be easier to plan funding for future projects. They have treated approximately 1,700 acres so far through this program and they are averaging approximately 40 acres per week. SLB and CPW are conducting their own monitoring activities (i.e. surveys, collaring, photo points, etc.) to determine effectiveness of treatments.

GOCO Habitat Stewardship Discussion/Decision

GOCO is calling this program “The Restore Colorado Fund”. It was modeled after the watershed restoration initiative in Utah. They have been having conversations with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the Gates Family Foundation regarding funding and implementation of this project. They aim to complete large scale habitat restoration work through a grant program. NFWF would be responsible for distributing grant funds to landowners. They are designing the program so that every project would have a built in match, and that way landowners wouldn’t necessarily need to come up with matching funds in order to get a project done. They would like to form a committee with a representative from each funding source, who would help them decide where their money would go. Funds would ideally be awarded in December so that landowners have enough time to get projects planned out and implemented in the field season. Emily and Chris have also met with the CPW leadership team to determine other funding sources and input from CPW as a whole. The GOCO board has committed to \$1 million, and NFWF will likely commit to a similar amount. The HPP State Council is still interested in being a partner for this program and would like to see more information when it is available.

Committee 2019 DMP Updates

The DMPs for the Sangre de Cristo and Upper Yampa River committees were discussed and the Council recommended approval of them to go to the P/W Commission for the May meeting for approval for the next 10 years.

Legal Update

Katie caught a landowner falsifying fertilizer receipts and submitting them for reimbursements from the Uncompahgre Committee. Law enforcement was notified, and he has been charged with 11 felonies for fraud and filing false claims. HPP is asking for full restitution and a prohibition from future HPP applications.

March 20th 8 AM-12PM

Title 33 HPP Statutes

The HPP statute has a sunset date in June of 2023, so they will need to have it renewed. It’s unknown exactly when DNR will approve HPP/CPW going forward with this so the Council wants to be prepared with desired changes. In 2016 when HPP last was reauthorized, we were not permitted to make any changes but hope to be able to this time. The State Council is interested in adding language that would allow an NRCS representative to be a voting member for the council and for local committees. NRCS works closely with agricultural producers, so it would make sense to have a representative working with HPP. The proposed language also includes clarifications to procurement rules and funding caps. Pat will continue to work on this and it will be discussed further at the next meeting.

State Wildlife Area Discussion/Decision for FY20

Weed Control, fencing, etc

Due to long standing concerns about HPP money being used on SWA's, participation in SWA projects was very limited. However, the State Council feels that landowner concerns have been/are being taken care of and money exists within HPP to expand our participation with SWAs while remaining within the statutes. The Council decided to offer \$50,000 in FY19 and \$250,000 in FY20 to CPW for weed control and fencing needs for either materials or contractors. Regional managers will decide how to split the money as well as which requested projects they fund. A match is still required.

Appropriate HPP Research Projects

HPP needs to make sure that any funding requests for research projects are within the program's statutory purpose. It is easy to make connections for almost anything to this but the Council wants to limit HPP participation to those directly involved w/big game, ie. the elk recruitment study. HPP was considered for a recreation study and even though recreation is one of the biggest challenges right now, felt that it wasn't appropriate for HPP.

Committee Updates

Hanna-

- **Arkansas River:** Approximately \$13,000 remains unallocated. Tyrel Woodward is the new sportsman representative. The committee will start on DMP revisions soon. The current DMP expires in March 2020. 1 large habitat project is not getting done because of a hold up with BLM funding.
- **Mount Blanca:** Approximately \$19,000 remains unallocated. Paul Minnow has retired from the BLM, so a new BLM representative will be appointed soon.
- **Larimer County:** The committee is currently \$1,200 over budget. There will likely be funds leftover from the voucher program because there have not been many voucher requests so far, so that may cover the overage. The committee is having discussions regarding "after the fact" project requests.
- **Republican Rivers:** It has been a busy year and the committee is approximately \$20,000 over budget. It has been mostly habitat and water projects, and they have ordered a shipment of guzzlers to give out to landowners that are willing to install and maintain them. Clayt Cooper is the new livestock grower representative. The committee is currently working on their DMP revision, the DMP expires in November 2019.
- **San Luis Valley:** Approximately \$52,000 remains unallocated, but there is a meeting in April so they should have some new projects. They will be starting on their DMP revisions soon. The current DMP expires in March 2020.
- **Sangre de Cristo:** Approximately \$13,700 remains unallocated. Arlie Riggs has stepped down from the committee. She was the 4th livestock grower representative, so her vacant position does not need to be filled. They also had a habitat project stopped because of issues with BLM funding. Their DMP revision has been completed pending state council and commission approval.
- **South Park:** Approximately \$53,000 remains unallocated. The meeting scheduled for March was cancelled due to weather and is being rescheduled for April. There should be some new projects at the April meeting so some more funds will likely be used.

Katie-

- **Grand Mesa:** Approximately \$40,000 remains unallocated. They have a meeting coming up, so some of the remaining funds will likely be used, especially on the SLB/CPW hydroaxe work. They

are working on annual pond cleanouts and fertilizer vouchers and some small fence projects. They have started a high visibility wire program this year and it has been popular. There will be upcoming DMP and DAU plan revisions.

- **Gunnison Basin:** Approximately \$117,000 remains unallocated. There is a burn and multiple weed projects on the upcoming agenda, and they have already completed a large fencing project. Dayle Funka is now in the area with the USFS, so she may be bringing some new projects to the committee.
- **Montelores:** Approximately \$61,000 remains unallocated. They have been doing smaller fence, pond, and weed projects. A large USFS thinning and burn project is in the works.
- **North Fork:** Approximately \$13,000 remains unallocated. They will likely spend the rest of their budget before the year ends. They have been doing primarily annual projects (weed, fence, fertilizer) and larger seed projects.
- **San Juan Basin:** Approximately \$19,000 remains unallocated. They have been paying a contractor to clean out ponds, which has been going very well. Funds have been used for fence and fertilizer vouchers, burn project, elk capture, and pond cleanouts. Sandy Young has passed away, and the committee has selected Jesse Montoya as the new livestock grower representative.
- **Uncompahgre:** Approximately \$76,000 remains unallocated. They are trying to implement pond cleanouts with USFS and BLM but they may have different range con/enforcement issues than other committees. There are two possible large fence projects coming up, otherwise funds have gone to annual fertilizer, fence, and pond projects.
- **Almost all committees have DMP revisions coming up.**

Samantha-

- **Lower Colorado River:** Approximately \$84,000 remains unallocated. They have helped fund re-seeding after the Lake Christine Fire along with fence and herbicide vouchers, habitat, water, weed management, fence, and fertilizer projects.
- **Middle Park:** Approximately \$70,000 remains unallocated. They have funded weed treatments, seeding projects, hunt coordinator, conservation easement, and fence projects.
- **North Park:** Approximately \$74,000 remains unallocated. This committee used to fully fund stackyards without any partnership, but beginning in 2020 they will require a 25/75 match from landowners building stackyards.
- **Northwest Colorado:** Approximately \$56,000 remains unallocated. They have funded mechanical treatments, weed projects, seeding projects, water projects, and fence projects/vouchers. The BLM representative Mark Lowry was replaced by Toni Toelle who was the former USFS representative. The DMP expires in November of 2019 so they are working on revisions.
- **Upper Yampa River:** Approximately \$43,000 remains unallocated. White wire has been popular there. They have funded habitat improvements, fence/herbicide vouchers, white wire purchases (2), fertilizer, fence, and pond projects. Kathy McKinstry (BLM) is stepping down due to family commitments. There is no replacement yet. Tom Rossi is also stepping down and the livestock grower vacancy has been advertised. Their DMP expires in May of 2019.
- **White River:** Approximately \$29,000 remains unallocated. They have funded seeding, water, and noxious weed projects, as well as an order of white wire. Their DMP expires in November 2019.

2019 State Meeting Update

The HPP annual meeting is still being planned for December. The topic will be water. Mesa University, CSU, and DU all have water programs that could potentially present at the meeting. This will be discussed more at future meetings.

Roundtable:

Gary-Good things were discussed at this meeting and we are moving in the right direction to get rid of the

leftover money that is sitting in the bank every year.

Terry- There are lots of changes but I am a terrified optimist. This was a good meeting.

John- We are doing a good job trying to get money out where it needs to be.

Hunter- I like the broader arc to re-emphasize broader purpose, and expanding projects to find better ways to spend money.

Dean- Thank you, I'm glad that JT could be here. It is always good to be here and have these discussions.

Katie – I am optimistic, and I appreciate being able to interface with the state council at these meetings.

Ken – There is a wildlife subcommittee meeting for NRCS. They will be covering the need for NRCS to coordinate with HPP, and will be increasing water project opportunities. The forestry subcommittee will be talking about hydroaxing and canopy thinning, watershed development projects and opportunities to get involved with HPP. The state conservationist is supportive of HPP.

Mick- Our biggest problem right now is the availability of an archaeologist to complete archaeological clearances. There are lots of projects getting backed up because of arch clearances. In the San Luis Valley beetle kill is the top priority for USFS. There have not been a lot of projects from the private sector.

Greg- I enjoyed the meeting, very impressed with the pond cleanouts in Katie's areas (i.e. San Juan Basin). It's an exciting time with CPW budget changes and it's good to CPW less strained with their funds. I appreciate the discussion.

Hanna- Good meeting. I appreciate opportunity to be here.

Samantha- Good meeting.

Next meeting- Summer field trip in Middle Park- July 30th-31st.