



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

### San Juan Basin HPP Committee

San Juan Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Ct., Durango  
November 4th, 2019  
6:00 p.m.

**San Juan Basin HPP Members Present:** Adrian Archuleta, CPW; Aran Johnson, SUIT; Phil Craig, Livestock Grower; George Malarsie, Sportsman; John Gardner, Sportsman; Mike Schmidt, BLM; Jesse Montoya, Livestock Grower

**Guests:** Jake Kay, CPW; Rodrigo Lebrija; Bo Pitman

**Introduction:** Committee members and guests were introduced. The August 2019 meeting minutes were approved. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$50,400.00.

#### **New Business:**

1. Rodrigo Lebrija presented a water development proposal for the old Sweetwater Ranch in Cherry Creek. The property has been abandoned for 10+ years, and has experienced trespass grazing and hunting. Mr. Lebrija is the new owner, and is planning multiple habitat improvements to bring the property back into production and offer quality habitat for wildlife. The first phase involves water development projects to bring water back into the area, which is very dry. There are some small ponds on the property, and trail cameras showed that wildlife were using the area until the ponds dried up. The area is located in an important migration corridor for deer and elk, and the property could support significant use if fully restored. Previous well drilling on the property has hit water, and the wells were reliable. The committee approved the project for 50% of the cost up to \$12,000 for the well infrastructure (solar pump, trough, etc) contingent upon hitting water. If the well does not produce water, the landowner will be responsible for the entire cost of the project and HPP will not contribute.
2. Bo Pitman presented a habitat improvement project involving guzzler installation and weed treatment. The committee participated in an herbicide and seeding project last year, and this phase of the continuing habitat improvement would

include replacing two old fiberglass guzzlers with galvanized metal tanks. The existing guzzlers are located near the previous habitat treatments, and offer some water for wildlife; however the design of the guzzlers allows for algae growth, freezing, and waste by bears. The proposed new tanks will be installed below ground to help prevent this issues, with above-ground troughs that resist freezing. Additionally, 50 acres would be treated with herbicide to reduce oak and rabbit brush, and the area will be reseeded with alfalfa.

The committee identified concerns with the project, including the removal of young oak and rabbit brush which offers some winter forage, and adding alfalfa. There is some limited hunting access allowed on the property; however the private land is surrounded by other private lands and by State Land Board lands that CPW does not have access to. This effectively renders the property as a private land/refuge situation, where big game are not accessible to public land hunters. The committee was interested in the project and felt that it might be beneficial for wildlife; however the project was tabled to give the local DWM an opportunity to review the project and provide feedback.

3. The committee approved Kristina Kline (NRCS) and Anthony Madrid (USFS) as invited attendees for the Statewide HPP meeting. Preferred alternates will be Skip Fischer or Chris Tipton (USFS), or Hannah Ertle (Ute Mtn Indian Tribe biologist).

**Meeting adjourned. Next meeting February 10<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00pm**