



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES San Juan Basin HPP Committee

Zoom Videoconference

July 13th, 2020

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; Dan Huntington, Livestock Grower; Anthony Garcia, USFS, Jesse Montoya, Livestock Grower

Guests: Pat Tucker, CPW

Introduction: The committee budget increase for FY21 was discussed. After annual budget allocations for fence and fertilizer budgets were entered, the remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$97,512.00.

Old Business:

1. The committee discussed the Valley View Prescribed Grazing project. The entire project area was burned in the East Canyon fire, so grazing will not be implemented this fall. Treatment in the spring or summer after the burn will be highly beneficial, so the committee will leave the funding allocation in place for anticipated grazing late this fiscal year or early next year. Sarah Bangert, the project coordinator, will update the committee on project plans in the spring before grazing is implemented.
2. The committee discussed Rodrigo Lebrija's water development proposal that was approved for FY20. The project was not able to be implemented due to COVID-related shutdowns of federal offices and delays with obtaining required paperwork for the purchase order. The committee reapproved 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.
3. The committee resumed discussion of the Shepherdson pipe fence project. The project would replace an existing 800-ft section of barbed wire fence with a pipe fence. The proposed fence would have a top rail at 48" high with two lower rails spaced to allow wildlife to pass through. HPP specifications set a maximum height at 42". The committee discussed variances to wildlife-friendly fence designs and noted that while the proposed fence design would likely allow wildlife to pass through without entanglement, they did not want to establish a precedent for

funding fence projects that do not meet CPW and HPP wildlife-friendly specs. If the landowners are willing to agree to a 42” maximum height, the committee will approve \$2,092.32; however if the landowners will not agree to the maximum height, the project will be denied.

New Business:

1. The committee approved \$18,000 for the annual fence voucher program and \$35,000 for the fertilizer voucher program. The final fertilizer amount may change depending on the number of applications received in the spring.
2. The committee reviewed an annual pond proposal from Steve Pargin. This project continues work on Mr. Pargin’s USFS allotments in which ponds are cleaned out and treated with salt, bentonite, and/or liners as needed. This project has been successful in previous years, with a large number of ponds receiving improvements that have increased water storage capacity and subsequent big game utilization across the area. The work is complementary to other ongoing habitat improvement projects, and the committee approved \$15,730.00 for materials and labor.
3. Adrian Archuleta presented a proposal for guzzlers on CPW’s Bodo SWA. Bodo SWA provides important winter and transition range for mule deer and elk, and provides habitat near the urban interface with Durango. Water is a limiting factor in this area and Bodo SWA does not provide reliable water sources. This causes big game to use the adjacent private lands for water, which increases conflicts with livestock and damage to fences. The project involves installing two 1,000-gallon guzzlers with water catchments to capture snowmelt and precipitation. Increasing water availability on the SWA should help reduce big game pressure on nearby private agricultural operations, and will improve overall habitat and distribution throughout the area. The project was approved for \$6772 for the guzzler purchase, and CPW staff will provide labor and materials to install the guzzlers and construct the catchments.

Roundtable

1. Photos from Bo Pitman’s recent habitat treatments were shared with the committee. The recent East Canyon fire burned parts of Mr. Pitman’s property and much of the surrounding area, and the new guzzlers are receiving particularly heavy use from wildlife in the aftermath.
2. Pat Tucker gave CPW updates including HPP work during COVID-19 restrictions.
3. Aran Johnson briefed the committee on a recent rangeland restoration workshop and discussed promising methods for Cheatgrass control. Aran will send out links to the materials for the committee.
4. Adrian reminded the committee that the Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting will be held at the end of the week, and Herd Management Plan revisions for deer and elk herds in the committee area will be reviewed. Interested members can attend via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting TBD