



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

September 23rd, 2020
Zoom Video Conference
6:00 PM-7:30 PM

Committee members Present:

- Ron Garcia, *USFWS Representative*
- Alvin Kunugi, *Livestock Growers Representative*
- Roy Oliver, *Livestock Growers Representative*
- Shane Lancaster, *Livestock Growers Representative*
- Mike Maldonado, *Sportsperson Representative*
- Scott Nilson, *BLM Representative*
- Brian Bechaver, *CPW Representative*

Administrators: Hanna Cook

Guests: Leon Martinez (CPW DWM), Pam Rice (NPS), Caitlyn Kelly (TNC), Duke Phillips (Medano Zapata Ranch), Anya Byers (TNC), Christopher Pague (TNC)

Budget Report

The 2021 budget report was reviewed.

New Business

Project Application Proposals and Reviews

Medano Zapata Preserve Fencing Project

The Nature Conservancy and Duke Phillips are asking HPP for \$20,000 to repair and replace a significant portion of the bison fence on the Medano Ranch. Elk frequently cross the fence and cause damage, which allows the bison to escape. They regularly have to make repairs to the fences. They plan to put in large elk crossings at various points (5 total, each about 30 ft wide) in an attempt to funnel elk through those points instead of crossing fences. 10 miles of fence will be replaced and repaired in an attempt to keep elk from causing damage. They hope that the new fence will reduce the occurrence of bison escaping their areas, which will be advantageous for the neighboring Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The fence will not be electrified, but will be approximately 5 ft high to keep bison in.

Ron Garcia has offered help from the Baca Refuge with the expense of adding white vinyl wire to the fence to help make it more wildlife friendly. However, the 5ft fence is still taller than the maximum height for wildlife friendly fences (42"). The committee has specified in their

Distribution Management Plan that they will only fund wildlife friendly fences, so this would go against their plan.

The committee has suggested that they look into paying for the elk crossings only so that they aren't putting any funding towards a non-wildlife friendly fence. They also suggest trying out crossings much wider than the originally planned 30ft. The committee and TNC are interested in trying crossings at different lengths and heights to see what will work best. The applicants will need to revise their application with new budgeting information and specifications for the location and design of the elk crossings that HPP would be asked to pay for. Ron Garcia has offered to help with the application, and he, Leon Martinez, the applicants, and anyone else who would like to be involved will go out to the project site to determine the most effective place for elk crossings.

The committee is currently over budget, so funding for this project would need to come from Pat Tucker and/or the State Council. Anything that is \$20,000 or over will need to be approved by the State Council first. The committee is not sure whether building a non-wildlife friendly fence can count as the matching portion for this project, even if the committee is only paying for the crossings. Pat will discuss this and some other questions with the State Council.

This project will be tabled until a new application is ready and the committee has some guidance from Pat and the State Council. The next meeting will be scheduled when the new information/application is available.

Next meeting: TBD

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