



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

### Grand Mesa HPP Committee

Zoom Videoconference  
August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
1:00 p.m.

**Grand Mesa HPP Members Present:** Kirk Oldham, CPW; Sylvia Ringer, BLM; Harley Metz, Sportsperson; John Walter, Livestock Grower

**Guests:** Scott Hoyer, CPW; Travis Bybee, CPW; Bob Morris, CPW; Michael Blanck, CPW; Marian Cole, Ty Bevan, Bruce Michaelsen, Ron Diemoz, Jim Toomer, Wayne McCray, Otis Latham, Devin Hagman, Christine Prins

**Introduction:** Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$63,637.50.

#### **Old Business:**

1. The committee resumed discussion on the Alessandri Pond Project. Three existing ponds have been an important source of water in previous years for big game, and the ponds have been repaired a number of times. Currently the ponds are in disrepair and do not hold water despite sufficient runoff to fill. Livestock and big game compete for water in the project area. Big game frequently move through the area and utilize private landowners irrigated fields and water supplies. The project consists of using heavy equipment to clean out and reconstruct ponds. Bentonite is not needed at this time since the clay soil compacts well. Increasing water storage capacity in the area will reduce competition between livestock and big game, improve big game distribution throughout the area, and decrease conflicts on nearby landowners. The project was approved for 50% of contractor costs up to \$3,750.00.

#### **New Business:**

1. The committee reviewed an oakbrush thinning project on 96 Ranch. The property is located in a major migration corridor, and the oak has become overgrown with little forage value. The project involves thinning 80 acres in a mosaic pattern to reduce stand thickness and improve understory vegetation. Improving habitat in this area

should help hold deer and elk for longer periods of time, reducing game damage complaints on lower private lands. The project was approved for \$5,000.00.

2. Wayne McCray and Jim Toomer presented the annual Alkali Creek and West Divide Cattle Association pond cleanout projects. The ponds have filled in with silt and fallen trees, and dams have washed out from spring runoff, reducing water storage capacity. Decreased water availability in the area causes competition between big game livestock on the grazing allotments. The match involves permittee time to plan machine travel routes and accompany the operator, as well as fuel costs, applying salt or bentonite as needed, and any additional reseeding, weed control, or other work on the disturbed ground around the ponds. USFS may also contribute some matching funding. The committee requested GPS coordinates, maps, and before-and-after photos to account for project accomplishments. Each project was approved for \$5,000.00 for contractor labor.
3. Otis Latham presented a fencing proposal. The property is located in important big game habitat and experiences year round use by elk and deer, with seasonal use by moose and heavy winter elk use. There is no interior fencing between two parcels which were previously combined into one operation, and pasture division fencing is needed for improved rotational grazing management. The project involves constructing .5 miles of new wildlife-friendly division fence including high visibility topwire. Better management of the available pasture will increase the amount of forage left for big game. The project was approved for \$4,978.73 for materials, and the committee will provide 2 rolls of high visibility wire.
4. Bruce Michaelsen presented a fencing project. The project area is used by big game during migration and summer, and supports large numbers of deer. The existing fence is old and in disrepair, and does not properly contain the landowners livestock or prevent livestock trespass from adjacent public lands. Overgrazing prevents grass reestablishment after the cattle are off the property, reducing the quantity of forage. The project consists of constructing .3 miles of new electric fence will be constructed. The fence will be turned on when livestock are present, and will be turned off and taken down once livestock have moved to winter ground. Electric fence does not present entanglement risks to big game and allows deer and elk to utilize the property year-round, but still properly contains livestock for improved grazing management. The project was approved for \$3,827.32 for materials.
5. Devin Hagman presented a fencing project. The property receives year round use from deer and elk, and transitional use by moose. The existing fence is in disrepair and does not properly contain livestock. The project includes replacing .3 miles of old fence with new wildlife-friendly fence, including gates for crossings at high-traffic points. The project was approved for \$2,909.75. for materials.
6. The committee reviewed a fencing project from Brett Clifton. The property is surrounded by USFS and receives significant cattle and hunter trespass. 2.3 miles of fence is in severe disrepair and needs to be replaced. The committee noted that the existing conflicts on the property are primarily due to trespassing livestock rather

than issues with big game. Additionally, the committee does not typically fund fence projects that border public lands. The project was denied.

7. The committee reviewed FY22 voucher programs and approved the following:
  - a. Fence vouchers: \$10,000.00 (50 vouchers)
    - i. Minimum 80 acres
    - ii. Leased acres qualify
    - iii. Not allowable on allotment fences
    - iv. \$200 increments
    - v. Up to 3 vouchers per landowner annually distributed by DWMs
    - vi. 1 roll of white wire per voucher may be distributed if landowner requests it
    - vii. Restrictions on allowed materials: posts, barbed/barbless wire, electric braid, stays, staples, etc. No woven wire or hog panels, tools, chargers, etc.
  - b. Herbicide Vouchers: \$6,000.00 (15 vouchers)
    - i. No minimum acreage
    - ii. \$400 increments
    - iii. Up to 2 vouchers per landowner annually distributed by DWMs

### **Other Business**

1. The committee reviewed fencing guidelines. Perimeter fences are allowable, however the parcels on both sides of the fence must be privately owned and have agricultural use and wildlife conflicts. 'Agricultural use' does not include hobby farm. Boundary fences between public and private lands will not be approved. Fence projects must include removal of an existing fence - entirely new fences where none existed previously will not be approved except in cases of pasture division fences. Applicants are expected to approach neighboring landowners for cost-sharing opportunities, although projects will not be denied if there are no other partners.

### **Roundtable**

1. Paul Bernklau has retired from the committee. The livestock grower vacancy will be publicly announced.

**Next meeting: October 28<sup>th</sup> @ 12:30 - Rifle Fire House**