



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM STATE COUNCIL ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING January 27, 2021

**Attendees:** Pat Tucker, Hunter Seim, Sheila Lamb, Mick Davis, Greg Jungman, Gary Visintainer, John Hardwick, Robbie LeValley, Brian Dreher, Teri Polley, Hanna Cook, Katie Richman, Samantha Sorensen

**Guests:** Ray Aberle (CPW Private Land Programs Manager), Trevor Balzer (CPW NW Habitat Coordinator), Jim Garner (CPW SW Habitat Coordinator), Josh Dilley (CPW Asst AWM)

**January 27 - 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM**

### **Introductions Brian Dreher and Ray Aberle**

Brian Dreher was appointed to the State Council November 20, 2020 as the Colorado Parks and Wildlife representative replacing Ken Morgan who retired May 2020. Brian is the Terrestrial Section Manager for CPW. He has worked for CPW for the last fifteen years, with twelve of those years as the Senior Terrestrial Biologist in the Southeast Region.

Ray Aberle joined CPW in October 2020 replacing Ken Morgan's position of Private Land Programs Manager, which coordinates statewide private lands programs, farm bill policy, Ranching for Wildlife and the Bighorn Sheep Access Program and is based in the Fort Collins office. Ray has worked with many of CPW's partners; NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), CCA (Colorado Cattlemen's Association), BCR (Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) and TNC (The Nature Conservancy). Ray was recently a professor at Front Range Community College teaching policy and management issues related to agriculture, wildlife and human dimension of natural resources; this includes getting students involved with Colorado livestock and crop producers. He comes from a long line of agricultural conservationists, and with his history, he has first-hand experience with Farm Bill programs.

### **Fire Seed Money Request**

Jim Garner (SW Habitat Coordinator) and Trevor Balzer (NW Habitat Coordinator) requested \$100,000 from the State Council to acquire and apply seed. CPW has allocated \$200,000 for seed for wildfire rehabilitation from the Delta Seed Warehouse which will be used for public land reseeding efforts in the East Troublesome and Mullen burn areas, which have significant big game winter habitat in north-central Colorado.

This request will be used for private land reseeding in both fire areas and was asked for now because the federal agencies haven't completed their fire assessments yet but it is critical to get the seed out this spring. CPW personnel are in contact with multiple landowners in the two burn areas and they are interested and willing to participate and will be evaluated by CPW prior to seeding. The state council approved this project.

### **Budget Updates**

With spring approaching, committee activity is picking up and some committees are spent out. State Council still has plenty of money for additional funding to the committees.

### **CPW/HPP Updates**

Colorado citizens voted Proposition 114 into statute in November 2020. The CPW Wildlife Commission approved an action plan for public involvement and reintroduction to restore and manage gray wolves in Colorado by December 31, 2023. The director and the commission will select members for the technical advisory and stakeholders group.

### **Oak Ridge SWA Archaeological Project**

In the past, the state council had been discussing a way they could assist federal agencies do archaeological clearances to accelerate projects because the clearances seem to be the bottleneck of getting projects done on federal lands. The past discussion was, if the arch clearances were complete, the agencies would commit to the project. The Oak Ridge SWA Arch Clearance project was approved by the HPP White River committee and, HPP wanted the project completed in 2-3 years (same as the prescribed burn timeline) but the BLM was unable to commit to this timeline. After some discussions, CPW decided to fund the part of the project that HPP was going to and so there is no HPP involvement.

Due to the issues raised in this project by both CPW and the BLM, HPP will no longer do archaeological clearances in advance of a project. As was previously discussed, NEPA and related clearances are the responsibility of the agency involved and should be done prior to any HPP funding.

### **RESTORE Update**

The state council committed \$500,000 this year to RESTORE, which was in addition to the \$250,000 contributed last year. Pat sat on the review panel this fall and most of the projects presented were wetlands and riparian work and not many projects that dealt with HPP interests; big game, fencing, sagebrush and habitat work that were reflected last year. The state council will not spend the full \$500,000; approximately \$300,000 will be allocated to RESTORE this year. There were projects that would have fit the HPP program, but they were not within an HPP area that has a committee and per statute, the state council is restricted to only areas with a local committee.

### **Access Working Group**

Ray Aberle updated the state council on the Access Working Group that was formed in October. Mark Leslie, Northeast Regional Manager and Kristin Cannon, NE Deputy Regional Manager are leading this group. The major concentrations for this group is looking at

additional ways to create public access for hunting and fishing in Colorado. The group is made-up of CPW, RMEF, TU, CBA, CCA, CWGA, FB, WLA and others.

One of the members has brought up his long standing belief that HPP projects should be required to provide public access as a condition of getting HPP assistance. Pat has spoken to several people to correct this but it persists. This belief has been around for many years and the State Council remains firm that this is not acceptable and would be a detriment to the program and landowners.

### Vence Project

Vence is a new fencing technique imported from New Zealand that uses collars on livestock with beacons and radio collar transmitters to control livestock movements without fencing. A representative from Vence gave a presentation to the Lower Colorado committee and the Gunnison committee assisted on a similar project a couple years ago w/a different vendor. HPP is interested in this type of project but it's expensive and needs several partners besides HPP and not every committee needs to test it. Stay tuned.

### State Council Nomination Update/Process Discussion/Timeline

In December, the announcement went out seeking volunteers to fill two openings on the State Council; one for a sportsperson representative to fill Mick Davis' vacancy coming up in June and for one person representing livestock growers replacing Terry Everhart who left in July 2020. To date there has been various interest across the state. Committees are interviewing interested people and February 19 is the deadline for them to submit a letter of interest to Pat. Pat will then distribute those letters and the Council will decide how best to proceed.

### Local Committee Updates

Katie, Samantha and Hanna reported current budgets, projects, vacant members, State Council nomination interests for each of the local committees.

### Final Comments:

**BLM Redistricting Update** - Hunter Seim (State Council BLM Rep) updated the council on Colorado BLM redistricting. With the creation of the Upper Colorado River District in Silt, Craig is now home to the new Northwest District Managers office. Elijah Waters is the new district manager for the Northwest and Greg Larson for the new Upper Colorado River manager.

**Terrestrial Section** - Brian Dreher updated the council on Terrestrial work throughout the state. The biologists have completed many projects; deployed 50 collars on elk in South Park, 40 collars on mule deer in Laramie County west of Fort Collins tracking Front Range deer movements, deployed elk collars west of Boulder, deer and elk capture project in San Juan Basin; collaring elk in Browns Park; 40 pronghorn collars in Middle Park. All these projects are GPS transmitter collars and getting locations every two hours collecting movement and survival. In addition, there are many research projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.