



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

San Juan Basin HPP Committee

San Juan Public Lands Center: 15 Burnett Ct

July 26th, 2021

6:00 p.m.

San Juan Basin HPP Members Present: John Gardner, Sportsman; Anthony Garcia, USFS; Adrian Archuleta, CPW; Mike Schmidt, BLM; Dan Huntington, Livestock; Aran Johnson, SUIT

Guests: Wes Lewis, Davin Montoya, Steve Pargin, Justin Adkisson, Michael Blanck

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$88,320.00. During budget review, the committee increased the FY2022 fertilizer voucher allocation to \$45,000.

Old Business:

1. Davin Montoya presented completion photos of the Montoya Brush Removal project from FY21. The project took 4 weeks and completed a mosaic pattern of oakbrush clearing on 3 ridges, resulting in open parks with rejuvenated forage. Mr. Montoya also seeded the cleared areas to help forage reestablish, and expects a 10-15 year interval before retreatment is needed.
2. The Simmons Well Development project is underway. One well has been completed and the second is in progress.

New Business:

1. Steve Pargin presented an annual proposal that 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.
2. The committee reviewed a fencing proposal from Wes Lewis on the Quien Sabe USFS allotment. The allotment is located in important summer and transitional range for deer, and experiences year-round use by elk. The existing fence is in severe disrepair with downed sections and hazardous old barbed wire, which presents entanglement

risks for big game and does not properly contain livestock. Lack of ability to rotate grazing pressure results in poor livestock and big game distribution, which degrades landscape health. The project consists of removing 1.5 miles of old hazardous fence and constructing new wildlife-friendly lay-down fence. Installing functional fences will improve grazing management, which will increase the quality and quantity for forage left available for big game after summer grazing. The fence will be left down when livestock are not present to allow deer and elk to move freely throughout the area. The project was approved for \$25,000 for contractor labor.

3. Justin Adkisson presented a fencing proposal for his property in Pagosa Springs. The project area includes 72 acres that experience year round use by deer, and heavy migration and winter use by elk. Horses that are used for an outfitting business are kept on the parcel, and frequent damage to the fence by wildlife crossing results in poor livestock containment as well as big game entanglement. The proposed fence design includes pipe posts, with pipe top rail and smooth lower wires preferred. The top line could be reduced to smooth wire due to cost constraints depending on funding. The committee discussed whether this project meets agricultural status, as well as previous concerns about a price per foot cap. The project was tabled and Mr. Adkisson will resubmit the proposal with an itemized materials list.
4. The committee reviewed a request for white wire from Dale Watson. Mr. Watson receives fence vouchers every year for repairs. This year he would like to replace the top wire on 1.5 miles of fence with high visibility wire to further reduce damage potential from big game. The committee approved providing 6 rolls of wire from inventory.
5. The committee discussed annual fence, herbicide, and pond voucher programs. Fence vouchers were approved for \$18,000.00. While other committees have experienced success with herbicide and pond programs, there is not as much of a need for herbicide in this committee area. When weed control projects do occur, they are more likely to involve contractor costs or funds for treating large areas that exceed the voucher limit of \$200. Herbicide vouchers were not adopted. Pond vouchers were also discussed, but were tabled for more information about utilization on USFS allotments and NEPA considerations.

Other Business:

1. The committee requested a comparison of fencing projects and funding levels from previous years. It may be necessary to set a price per foot cap based on fence design in the future.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting August 30th