



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

San Juan Basin HPP Committee

Zoom Videoconference

March 15th, 2021

6:00 p.m.

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

Guests: Roger Mauer, Bo Pitman

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$56,380.93.

New Business:

1. Roger Mauer presented a pond cleanout proposal. The property includes 280 acres in the HDs with an existing pond at the bottom of an arroyo, where runoff events fill the pond with silt and debris. The area experiences frequent use by deer and elk, with heavier use in the fall and winter. The pond fills with irrigation and provides an important water source for big game, however with increasing amounts of silt coming in, it has become less effective. The project proposal includes removing the silt with heavy equipment and reconstructing the pond, including placing boulders in the arroyo to help slow down and deflect the incoming water, which will allow the silt to settle out before the water fills the pond. The project was approved for \$5,000.00.
2. Bo Pitman presented a proposal for post-fire habitat management. Approximately 7 acres were severely burned and the soil was scorched. The area is covered with downed trees, and the proposal includes removing the trees and reseeding the area to promote forage reestablishment. The committee did not feel that 7 acres represented significant habitat or that downed tree removal met HPP objectives. Additionally, the fire may have affected the soil chemistry and ability to support forage growth. The project was denied, and the committee recommended that NRCS conduct soil testing prior to resubmitting an HPP application.

Other Business:

1. The committee discussed implementing a pond cleanout voucher program. Pond vouchers should be used to clean out ponds on allotments, or on private lands with prior DWM approval. Ponds should receive significant wildlife use. Vouchers are \$750 for two ponds, and an individual can receive up to 6 vouchers per fiscal year. If a project needs additional funding, applicants may still submit a regular project proposal to the committee. The committee noted that BLM or USFS staff should inspect and sign-off on vouchers rather than DWMs. The voucher program will be reviewed and possibly implemented in FY22.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting April 19 @ 6:00pm