



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Uncompahgre HPP Committee

Zoom Videoconference

November 10, 2021

6:30 p.m.

Uncompahgre HPP Members Present: Bobby Gray, Sportsman; Kelly Crane, CPW; Thane Stranathan, BLM; Todd Stewart, Livestock Grower

Guests: Michael Blanck, CPW; Alyssa Kircher, CPW; Natalie Renneker, CPW; Rachel Sralla, CPW; Joanne Evans, Brenda Miller, Tony Abel, Bruce Irvine

Introduction: Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$30,122.00.

New Business:

1. Joanne Evans presented a fencing proposal. The property is located in transitional and winter range for elk, and experiences year-round use by deer. The existing fence is old and in disrepair, and is composed primarily of woven wire sheep fencing. The property experiences heavy big game use in the spring, summer, and fall, especially during migration. Deer and elk sometimes become entangled or cause damage when attempting to cross the fence line, which can result in abnormal big game distribution in the area. The project consists of removing 1.2 miles of existing woven wire fence and clearing the fence right-of-way. A new wildlife-friendly fence that meets HPP specifications for wire spacing will be constructed, including a high visibility top wire. This will increase the ability of big game to move throughout the property without getting caught up, and will help prevent future damage to the fence. The project was approved for \$5,500.00 for materials, and HPP will provide 5 rolls of white wire.
2. Brenda Miller presented a proposal for a seeding project. The property is located in big game transitional and winter range, and receives year-round use by deer. A 100-acre irrigated field that had historically been overgrazed by livestock is being rejuvenated for wildlife use, and additional seed is needed to improve the forage component for big game. Seed would be applied in the fall, and the seed mix is comparable to the one recommended by CPW with native grasses and forage species. The project was approved for \$325.00 for seed mix.
3. Bruce Irvine presented a pond cleaning proposal. The project area is located on private lands and USFS allotments in winter range for elk, and experiences seasonal use by deer. The existing ponds are silted in, degraded and do not hold water well, resulting in competition between livestock and big game. The project consists of renting heavy equipment to clean out and

reconstruct or repair ponds as necessary to increase water storage capacity. The project was approved for \$1,743.20 for rental equipment costs.

4. Tony Abel presented another phase of the Cimarron Ridge Weed Management project, which has helped improve habitat and forage conditions in seasonal deer, elk, and moose ranges. Previous phases included chemical control for weeds, and mastication work to remove overgrown oakbrush, snowberry, and serviceberry to open the canopy and rejuvenate forage species and grasses. Earth disturbance from the heavy machinery resulted in a surge of noxious weed reestablishment, so follow-up weed treatment is necessary to allow desirable forage species to effectively revegetate. This phase targets approximately 150 acres that are heavily (>75%) infested with thistle and houndstongue to be treated with herbicide to reduce established weed infestations and treat pre-emergent weeds. Treatment will be primarily via spot spraying to ensure that nontarget species are not impacted. Reducing the presence and spread of noxious weeds will allow for native forage species to reestablish. The initial request was for 50% of the project; however the committee felt it would be more appropriate to match the other partners equally. The project was approved for 33% of costs up to \$13,443.00.
5. Todd Stewart presented a pond cleaning project. The project area is located on leased private land in important transitional and winter range for deer and elk. Previously, a number of ponds on the property provided sufficient water for both livestock and big game; however in recent years the ponds have become silted in and no longer hold water. This causes livestock and wildlife to concentrate around creeks and riparian areas, resulting in poor distribution and utilization of habitat and conflicts for water sources. The project consists of cleaning and repairing 3 ponds with heavy equipment. Once repaired, the ponds will hold sufficient water for deer and elk, reducing conflicts with livestock and improving game distribution throughout the area. The committee noted that this work is complementary to the Cimarron Ridge project, and should help reduce elk damage in the Colona area by holding elk higher for a longer period of time during migration. The project was approved for \$4,547.84, with Todd abstaining from the decision.

Other Business:

1. Alyssa Kircher presented the draft Herd Management Plan revisions for D40 and E35. For D40, the committee supported the draft alternative to increase the population objective range by approximately 17%; and supported the current sex ratio of 25-30 bucks per 100 does. For E35, the committee supported the draft alternative to increase the population objective range by approximately 17%, and the current sex ratio of 20-25 bulls per 100 cows. For both plans, the population increase is not expected to cause new or increased conflicts, and the committee has the resources necessary to help mitigate such conflicts should they occur. The sex ratios offer an appropriate balance between providing hunting opportunity, while still providing for a reasonable number of mature animals for hunters who wish to take a larger buck or bull. Comment letters reflecting these decisions will be provided to Alyssa for inclusion with the final plan to be presented to the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Next Meeting: February 9, 2022 @ 6:30pm