



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Videoconference

February 9, 2022

6:30 p.m.

Mount Blanca HPP Members Present: Roy Oliver, Livestock Grower; Scott Nilson, BLM; Shane Lancaster, Livestock Grower; Alvin Kunugi, Livestock Grower; Brian Bechaver, CPW

Introduction: Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$13,147.06.

New Business:

1. Brian Bechaver presented a weed control project for the San Luis Hills SWA. The project area is managed as a SWA in conjunction with Costilla County with the primary goal of restoring and enhancing winter range habitat for big game to assist in mitigating game damage on adjacent properties caused by elk, mule deer and pronghorn. For several decades, the winter range capacity on the SWA has been devastated by feral horses and other abandoned livestock. Wildlife (primarily elk), were forced onto the private lands to forage. This has resulted in extensive damage to growing alfalfa and haystacks and has been an ongoing concern for CPW and landowners alike. Currently efforts are underway to install fencing to exclude feral horses, and restore habitat to provide forage; however noxious weed infestations across 440 acres have resulted in poor quality grass and forage species.

CPW began a regimen of weed spraying on the "River Tract" of the SWA to attempt to control noxious weeds on the property in 2021. This regimen consists of spraying approximately half of that area every other year to reduce current infestations, and prevent weeds from further spreading. This project continues the noxious weed control regimen to improve winter range habitat, which will improve forage quality and quantity on the property during winter months. The project was approved for 50% of herbicide costs up to \$2,750.00.

2. Brian presented a solar pump project for the San Luis Hills SWA. An additional limiting factor to habitat improvement and utilization by big game on the SWA is a significant lack of water throughout the area. This project would create an alternate watering site for wildlife by installing a solar pump and small tire tank on an existing well on

the property. This will greatly benefit all types of wildlife on the property and will continue to allow big game animals to forage on the property during fall and spring months. The project was approved for 50% of costs up to \$3,500.00.

3. The committee discussed Doug Ouren's work as a hunt coordinator for elk dispersal efforts on the Baca Refuge and Sand Dunes National Park. Overall, the effort has been a success, and representatives from all involved agencies are pleased with the results and support continuing the project. Doug's participation has been integral to the success of the project: in addition to standard hunt coordinator duties, Doug has effectively collected and analyzed project data, and given presentations to multiple agencies and groups. CPW and HPP feel it would be beneficial to create a more formal document that summarizes the project, outlines its goals and accomplishments, and details ideas that could be used in future years. This would be valuable for documentation purposes for the committee and agencies involved, but also would provide a baseline of information in the event that Doug does eventually leave and would need to be replaced. It would be a "living" document that could be updated year to year and would provide a permanent source of information for reference by agency employees and HPP committee members as turnover occurs in the future.

Given Doug's experience with this type of work and sufficient remaining hours (80) in his contract, the committee approved directing the remaining hours towards producing this document. Additionally, the committee discussed increasing the pay rate from \$20 to \$25 for this work, to reflect the additional responsibilities of providing CPW and HPP with a final product in addition to the contracted service. This would increase the existing purchase order by \$400. The committee approved the rate increase.

Next meeting: TBD