



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

### North Fork HPP Committee

Maloney House, Delta County Fairgrounds

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

6:00 p.m.

**North Fork HPP Members Present:** Ross Allen, Livestock Grower; Ken Holsinger, BLM; Steve Kossler, Livestock Grower; Kyler McCarrel, USFS; Adam Gall, Sportsman; Andrew Taylor, CPW

**Guests:** Codi Inloes-Williams

**Introduction:** Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$12,957.00.

#### **Old Business:**

1. The committee reviewed the Hellman fence project which was previously discussed at the March meeting. The proposed fence line follows the county road rather than the property boundary, so the fence would remain entirely on private land. A small portion of the property would be left open to cattle trespass from the BLM, but the fence would prevent further ingress. Ultimately the committee remained concerned about constructing a new fence that functionally divided BLM interests from private and the project was denied.
2. Additions to the fertilizer list were approved adding \$5,500.00 to the fertilizer budget.

#### **New Business:**

1. The committee reviewed a water development proposal from Lawrence Zeldenthuis. Habitat improvement work including clearing PJ and oakbrush has been implemented on the property, and the landowners are installing a solar well development to increase water availability and habitat utilization by wildlife. The location of the well is very close to the USFS boundary, which would help hold animals higher on public land for longer periods of time during migration. The property has outfitter hunting, and the committee approved \$5,000 for materials contingent upon working with CPW to allow youth outreach or some other type of hunting.
2. The committee reviewed the McCluskey SWA Weed Control Project. Noxious weed infestations on the SWA reduce habitat quality and create new infestation vectors onto nearby private lands. Poor forage quality causes deer and elk to forage on irrigated private lands, resulting in game damage. The project consists of treating 30 acres with

herbicide to reduce the presence and spread of noxious weeds. Removing weed component will help improve forage quality and availability, and prevent further spread to adjacent private lands. The project was approved for \$5,000.00 for FY22, and the committee would like to establish this as an annual project indefinitely.

3. Ken Holsinger presented a weed control project for BLM. The project area includes winter range where invasive weed populations are outcompeting native forage species, reducing the quality and availability of forage for big game. This results in deer and elk utilizing private agricultural fields, causing damage to fences and forage. BLM will apply herbicide to weed infestations to reduce and prevent the presence and spread of noxious weeds. This will increase availability and quality of forage on winter range, and help reduce big game damage and conflicts with private agricultural operations. The project was approved for \$1,000.00 for the purchase of herbicide.
4. The committee reviewed and approved the FY23 proposed budget and FY23 voucher programs - see attached. ***Admin note - the Delta County Weed Control project was approved as an item under FY23 Budget.***
5. Ken Holsinger presented a BLM/SWA thinning project. The McCluskey state wildlife area provides critical winter range and winter concentration habitat for both elk and mule deer near the town of Paonia. Currently juniper woodlands dominate the landscape that can be or were formerly browse species dominant due to lack of natural disturbances such as fire and do not offer much forage opportunity for big game. Thus, big game are inclined to move onto and consume forage on adjacent irrigated ground. The project consists of thinning approximately 390 acres, followed by reseeding with short duration/high intensity grazing. Developing better browse and herbaceous understories will provide better high-quality forage for big game in closer proximity to desired thermal cover during late fall, winter, and early spring concentration reducing reliance on private irrigated properties. Improved/expanded carrying capacity on this property will help ameliorate conflicts with adjacent irrigated lands by offering better forage and security cover on the public lands of the wildlife area and BLM. The project was approved for \$20,000.00 and the project will go to the State Council to seek additional funding.

**Next Meeting: TBD**

### **North Fork HPP FY23 Voucher Programs:**

- All vouchers are on a reimbursement basis.
- Voucher programs are approved at the beginning of the fiscal year and are available to landowners throughout the year, i.e. in between meetings/as needed via DWMs.
- All vouchers must be submitted for payment no later than June 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Hunting access is required if voucher is utilized on private land.
  - 'Friends and family only' is allowed – does not have to be public access

### **Fence Voucher:**

- Minimum 35 acres
- Leased acres qualify
- Not allowable on allotment fences
- \$500 increments, distributed by DWM
  - Up to 1 voucher per landowner annually
- 1 roll of white wire per voucher may be distributed per voucher
- Restrictions on allowed materials: posts, barbed/barbless wire, electric braid, stays, staples, etc
  - No woven wire or hog panels, no tools, no chargers, etc

### **Herbicide Voucher:**

- Minimum 40 acres
- Leased acres qualify
- Allowable on allotments
- \$200 increments, distributed by DWM
- Up to 2 vouchers per landowner annually, if DWM determines need is greater than \$200

### **Pond Cleanout Voucher:**

- No minimum acres
- For use on allotments only unless DWM pre-approves pond on private land

- Ponds must receive significant wildlife use
- \$1000 increments for two ponds cleaned with heavy equipment
  - Based on \$100/hr up to 10 hours
- Up to 5 vouchers annually
- Before-and-after photos and GPS locations required before payment