

MIDDLE PARK HPP

DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS

- Reformatted and reorganized entire document
- Added an Executive Summary
- Updated HPP Area Map & Committee Members
- Added HPP Orientation and HPP Statute - (C.R.S. 33-1-110).
- Added Committee Objectives & Strategies section
 - Added 6 specific objectives and updated strategies
- Updated Landownership Map and moved under Area Description
- Updated Public Lands section and moved under Habitat Description
- Added Big Game Population Summary section
- Updated existing maps and added additional maps to the Big Game Ranges & Migrations section
- Created an Impact Areas map and updated the description
- Added Game Management Objectives section
- Standardized Project Types & Priorities section
- Updated Operating Guidelines section
- Added Operating Guideline concerning program eligibility
- Added last two paragraphs to operating guideline section
- Added Management Strategies section
- Standardized Budget Guidelines section
- Added Current & Foreseeable Issues section

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Habitat Partnership Program
Middle Park



DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT PLAN



DRAFT

Approved - Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission: _____
This plan is valid for 10 years from approval date.

2020-2030

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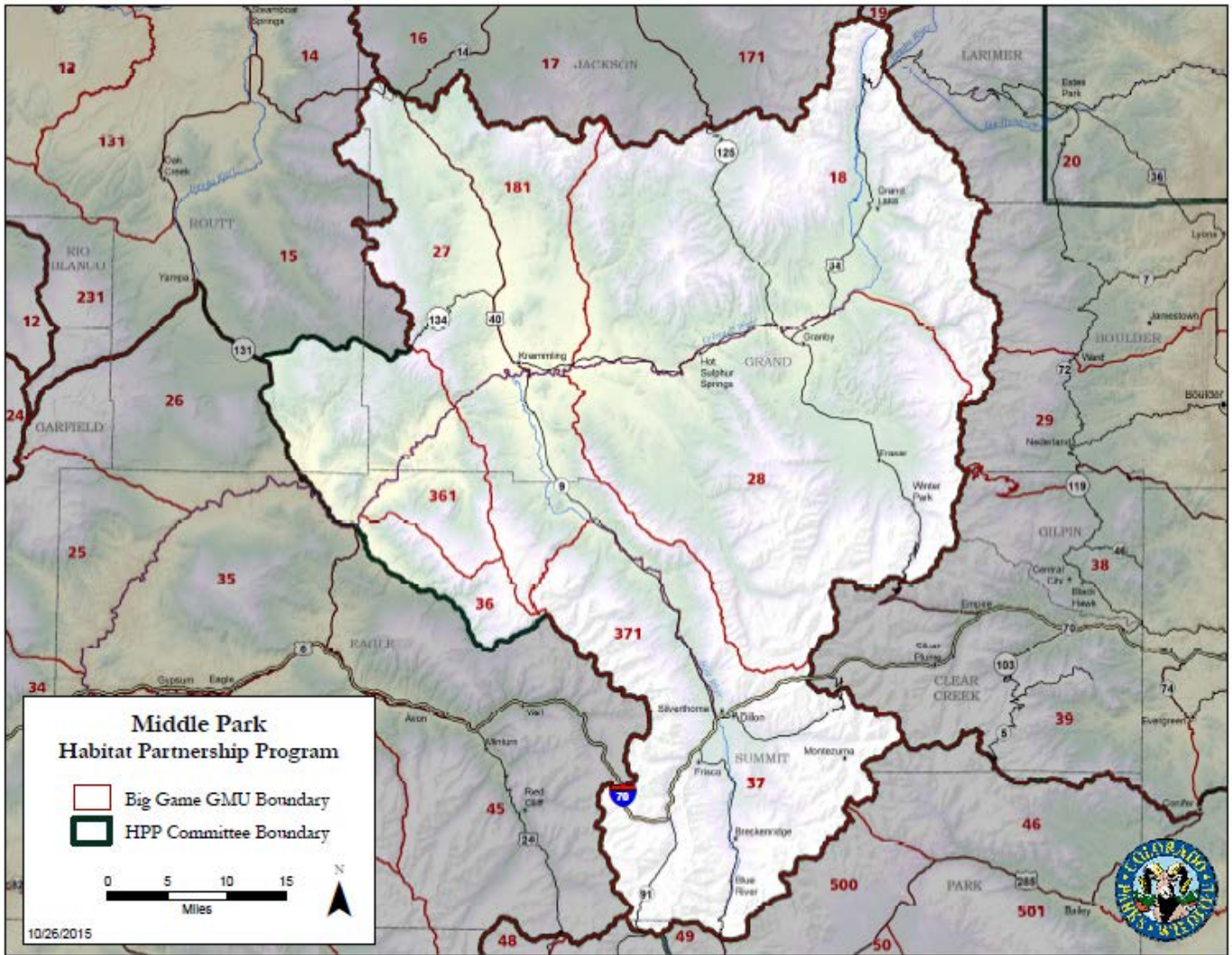
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Middle Park Habitat Partnership Committee (MPHPP or “the committee”) endeavors to work cooperatively with landowners and local, state, and federal agencies to establish strategies to resolve immediate fence, water and forage conflicts caused by big game; and to develop and implement long-term solutions to resolve conflicts while maintaining healthy sustainable rangelands. In addition to resolving wildlife conflicts, HPP is statutorily directed to “assist the division in meeting game management objectives...” The committee supports the idea of working as a partnership with other entities and landowners. We encourage interested parties to leverage monies from other available sources to implement as many projects as possible and to show broad reaching interest in managing conflicts.

We require each participating landowner or agency to submit a completed application prior to considering proposed projects. The success of the management plan will depend heavily on the committee’s ability to foster cooperation between the landowners and the hunting public, since a major tool for moving the animals from the conflict areas and decreasing the numbers will be the public hunters. The committee encourages landowners to utilize public hunting as a tool to disperse game preventing refuge areas and achieving management goals.

Fence damage and noxious weeds are identified as perennial issues the committee will continue to work with landowners to seek solutions to mitigate damage and stem the tide of noxious weed infestations. Water developments have long been recognized as a “win, win” for both wildlife and livestock and will continue to be projects supported by the committee.

MIDDLE PARK HPP AREA



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Dave Hammer, livestock grower rep. /chair | Started HPP Term: 09/2001 |
| 2. Chuck Alexander, livestock grower rep. /co-chair | Started HPP Term: 07/1993 |
| 3. Doug Bruchez, livestock grower representative | Started HPP Term: 08/2017 |
| 4. Vacant, sportspersons representative | Started HPP Term: |
| 5. AWM Lyle Sidener, CPW representative | Started HPP Term: 12/2005 |
| 6. Vacant, USFS representative | Started HPP Term: |
| 7. Tiffany Rubalcaba, BLM representative | Started HPP Term: 01/2020 |
| 8. Vacant, NPS representative | Started HPP Term: |

INTRODUCTION

The Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) was developed to address perennial conflicts between agriculture and big game, primarily fence and forage damage. Cow/calf ranch operations and grass hay production comprise the major agricultural enterprises in Middle Park. Conflicts arise due to over-utilization of vegetation by big game in hay meadows and livestock grazing areas and also by damage to fences caused by big game animals. Isolated problems caused by big game have involved crop damage to lettuce and other cold crops, along with loss of production in alfalfa fields.

The Middle Park Committee was given responsibility for administering one of two pilot programs established to resolve big game/livestock forage and fence conflicts in accordance with guidelines passed by the Colorado Wildlife Commission in January 1990.

HPP has facilitated the development of partnerships between wildlife managers and habitat managers, including private landowners. The Middle Park Committee endeavors to minimize big game conflicts by continuing to be proactive.

HPP ORIENTATION

HPP was initially started to resolve fence and forage conflicts caused to agricultural operators by deer, elk, pronghorn and moose. While the law governing HPP was broadened in 2002 ("...reduce wildlife conflicts... game management objectives") in 2017 the State Council and the NW Region Manager reaffirmed the intent and focus of HPP.

This direction provides for HPP participation, whether by local committees or the State Council, to be limited to those conflict resolution projects or game management objective projects that involve deer, elk, pronghorn and moose.

HPP STATUTE - (C.R.S. 33-1-110)

(8) (a) The habitat partnership program is hereby created to assist the division of parks and wildlife by working with private land managers, public land management agencies, sports persons, and other interested parties to reduce wildlife conflicts, particularly those associated with forage and fence issues, and to assist the division of parks and wildlife in meeting game management objectives through duties as deemed appropriate by the director.

(b) The director, with the approval of the commission, shall have the authority to appoint a "habitat partnership committee", referred to in this section as a "committee", in any area of the state where conflicts between wildlife and private land owners and managers engaged in the management of public and private land exist.

(c) A committee shall consist of the following members: One sports person who purchases big game licenses on a regular basis in Colorado; three persons representing livestock growers in the area of the state in which the committee is being established; one person from each of the federal agencies that has land management responsibilities in such area of the state; and one person from the Colorado division of parks and wildlife. All persons on any such committee shall be residents of the state of Colorado.

(d) The duties of a committee are the following:

(I) To develop big game distribution management plans to resolve rangeland forage, growing hay crop, harvested crop aftermath grazing, and fence conflicts subject to commission approval;

(II) To monitor program effectiveness and to propose to the council changes in guidelines and land acquisition planning and review as appropriate;

(III) To request for the committee, on an annual basis, funds from the council consistent with the distribution management plan developed by any such committee;

(IV) To expend funds allocated by the council or acquired from other sources as necessary to implement distribution management plans;

(V) To make an annual report of expenditures and accomplishments of the committee to the council by August 15 of each year;

(VI) To nominate a person to act as a representative of agricultural livestock growers or crop producers to the habitat partnership council for the area of the state where such committee is organized;

(VII) To reduce wildlife and land management conflicts as the conflicts relate to big game forage and fence issues and other management objectives.

(e) The committee shall be authorized to procure from land owners, land managers, or other providers, materials or services necessary for carrying out activities identified in the distribution management plans pursuant to subparagraph (IV) of paragraph (d) of this subsection (8); except that all such procurements shall be certified as within the scope of the activities and funding levels authorized in such distribution management plans before any such procurement may be authorized.

COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVES

1. To address perennial conflicts between agriculture and big game, primarily fence and forage damage.
2. Continue to develop partnerships between wildlife managers, wildlife resource stakeholders and those that manage public and private rangeland habitats.
3. Work with CPW and other partners to assist CPW in meeting big game management objectives within the MP HPP area.
4. Identify, prioritize, recommend and implement solutions to rangeland, habitat, fencing and other big game/livestock conflicts.
5. Hunting will be promoted as a management strategy in all areas where it will aid in meeting overall population management objectives.

6. Increase effectiveness of habitat manipulation projects and implement a landscape-scale philosophy by increasing the scope and connectivity of projects.

STRATEGIES

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

Habitat improvement projects may be used to improve rangelands for the purpose of attracting big game animals away from areas of conflict. Habitat improvement projects may be used on private lands to achieve the objectives of HPP and the landowner. Landscape management approaches are encouraged.

I. Specific Conditions

- A. Projects identified on public lands will be given first priority; however, projects on private lands may be considered, especially if the private lands are part of a larger landscape habitat management plan.
- B. Vegetative treatment projects should be a minimum of 200 acres in size whenever possible.
- C. Partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and individuals will be encouraged to leverage funding and maximize cost/benefit ratios.
- D. The committee may contract for services from the private sector to do habitat improvement projects.

FENCING

Fence projects will be designed to facilitate wildlife movement, enhance livestock management in important wildlife habitats, reduce maintenance for the landowner and minimize CPW damage payments and/or Middle Park Committee payments for fence damage.

I. Special Conditions

- A. Landowners will be asked to help identify major big game crossings where a fence of a different design may reduce or eliminate conflict.
- B. Fencing strategies may include lay-down designs; high-tensile wire; solid top rail of pipe or posts; white-vinyl top wire designs; gates; lowering overall height, etc.
- C. Repairing fence to their original configuration will only be used in instances where other options would be impractical. When fences are repaired, every effort will be made to incorporate materials and designs that will reduce or eliminate future damage by big game.

DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT HUNTS

Distribution management hunts (DMH) are a tool to help move big game animals from conflict areas, on private land for the most part, to areas where they won't cause problems. Reduction of big game (elk) numbers by harvesting specific problem animals is an additional benefit of this special season, not the purpose for the season. This strategy has been the most successful part of the Middle Park HPP in the judgment of participating landowners.

In the past, some of the hunting during DMHs occurred where elk were most accessible, and not necessarily in areas where they were causing problems. This is not the intent behind

distribution management hunts, and the committee feels strongly that elk harvest needs to occur mainly in regular hunting seasons. DMHs will continue to be administered under the supervision of the CPW Area Wildlife Manager in conjunction with the committee to insure that abuses do not occur. With cause, the participation of individual landowners and hunters may be restricted.

The committee will actively pursue establishing "safe havens" where elk can remain undisturbed during times when damage typically occurs. These areas will be defined with the participation of land management agencies and with the permission of private landowners.

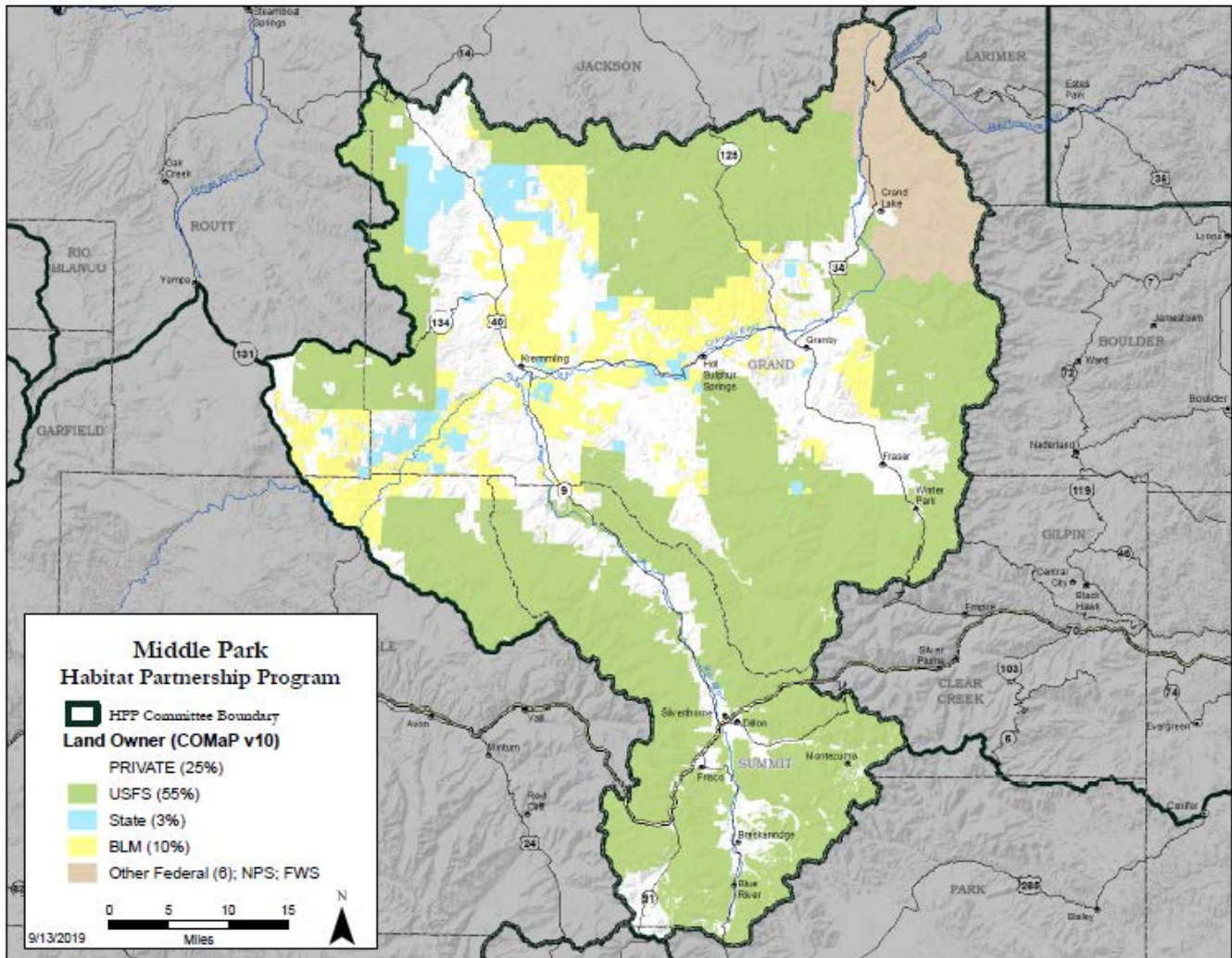
HUNT COORDINATORS

Hunt Coordinators may be contracted through the committee to assist landowners and hunters with harvest and distribution of animals. The Hunt Coordinator is the primary contact between CPW, the committee, the private landowner and the hunting public. Duties and responsibilities of the hunt coordinator will be established.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Middle Park Committee originally administered HPP in Grand County and the lower Blue River portion of Summit County. The committee boundary was extended by Wildlife Commission action to include the rest of the administrative boundary of Area Nine in November of 1998. This extension includes the Sheephorn Valley and areas northwest of Piney Ridge to the Colorado River and east of Highway 131 in Game Management Unit (GMU) 361 in Eagle County. The extension also includes the southern portions of GMU 15 that is south of Highway 134 and lies in Grand, Eagle, and Routt Counties.

The program area involves land administered by the BLM, USFS, NPS, CPW, and other state and county agencies, as well as lands that are privately owned. Game Management Units involved include 18, 181, 27, 28, 37, 361, 371 and portions of 15.



HABITAT DESCRIPTION

The area encompasses a variety of topographical features, with elevations ranging from 6,750 feet to more than 13,000 feet above sea level. These conditions give rise to diverse communities of vegetation. The vegetation in this area can be categorized as cropland, wetland/riparian, rangeland, forest lands and alpine.

Croplands are found at lower elevations and consist of irrigated hay meadows that have been re-seeded to more desirable forage plants. Most of the hay ground is “native grass hay” consisting of timothy and smooth brome.

Wetland/riparian vegetation are found along the river and stream bottoms and irrigated meadows. This area is dominated by narrow leaf cottonwood and willow. The riparian habitat is extremely valuable as wildlife habitat. It supports the greatest abundance and diversity of wildlife.

Rangelands consist of sagebrush, mountain shrub and native grasslands. The sagebrush type is the most common rangeland within the committee boundary. Sagebrush dominates most of the drier, lower elevation sites that are well drained. Mountain shrub is found on the moister sites on the lower elevations, primarily on the northern slopes. This plant community is not widely

represented but provides important wildlife food and cover. Native grasslands are found in two different areas. Low elevation grasslands occur on windswept sites with poorly developed soils that cannot support sagebrush. Higher elevation grasslands occur on the more level sites in forested areas and are comprised of large bunchgrasses such as Thurber fescue, wild rye, needle grasses and brome grasses.

Forest lands are comprised of four major types - pinyon-juniper, lodgepole pine, aspen, and spruce-fir. Pinyon-juniper is found on the dry, lower elevation slopes. Lodgepole pine is found throughout the mountainous areas between 8,000 - 10,000 feet. Historically because of the dense over story, this habitat type provided little forage for deer and elk but was important for cover. Since the mountain pine beetle infestation and resulting pine mortality, much of the lodgepole understory has converted vegetatively, altering deer and elk distribution and effecting harvest. Aspen is found throughout the committee area at nearly all elevations. This habitat provides some very high quality forage and cover for deer and elk yet a lot of the aspen type is declining. On some sites aspen is the climax species; on other sites it is a transitional species that occurs for only a relatively short period of time after disturbance such as fire. The spruce-fir type mainly occurs at the higher elevations, usually above 10,000 feet to the alpine. This habitat provides excellent summer cover for deer and elk. Douglas fir, ponderosa pine and limber pine coniferous forest types also occur to a lesser extent in Middle Park.

Alpine sites occur in the very high elevations usually above 11,500 feet. The alpine is characterized by the absence of trees. Short grasses and numerous forbs make up the vegetation. This habitat provides high quality deer and elk forage areas primarily from July through September.

Slope and aspect play a large role in determining vegetative type. For example, some higher elevation sites with a southern exposure are dominated by sagebrush while the lower elevations with a more northern exposure can support aspen and coniferous forests due to high moisture retention of the soils. This variation of vegetation types scattered throughout the area creates a highly desirable mosaic that is very beneficial to wildlife such as deer and elk.

PUBLIC LANDS

BLM ADMINISTERED PUBLIC LANDS

The Kremmling Field Office of the BLM has been an active participant in the committee since the program's inception. Public land managed by the BLM in Middle Park supports a large portion of the resident big game herds which inhabit the various DAUs in Middle Park and adjoining areas during summer. The winter ranges are predominantly sagebrush steppe/mountain shrub vegetative types which occur below 8,500 feet in elevation. The committee and the BLM operate with the philosophy that big game animals should use the public lands during winter to the extent that utilization of forage plants does not damage vegetation or result in competition with other resources at levels which could result in resource damage. If big game animals inhabit public rangelands, they are not normally causing conflicts with resources on private land.

In Middle Park and the lower Colorado River area, the Kremmling Field Office currently manages 79 active livestock grazing allotments. These allotments include 107,157 acres of BLM managed public land and in some cases private land is also included in these allotments. A total of 11,609 animal unit months (AUMs) are grazed on the allotments. Since 1995, several important allotments have been removed from livestock grazing and are currently managed for wildlife production. Two of these allotments, Sulphur Gulch and Lawson Ridge, support numerous deer and

elk during winter and pronghorn during all seasons of the year. Other allotments, Spruce Creek, Selak E, Selak, and the Fraser River provide high quality summer range for deer and elk.

U. S. FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTERED PUBLIC LANDS

The following information is for the **Sulphur Ranger District (Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest)** portion of National Forest System Lands within the committee boundary (east half of Grand County).

Six historic Sulphur Ranger District cattle and horse allotments have been closed to grazing: Meadow Creek, Gold Run, Elk Creek, St. Louis Creek, Vasquez, and Walden allotments. These allotments total 46,487 acres of summer range: mountain meadows, dense timber stands and willow riparian areas. Net acreage of formerly suitable habitat for livestock on these six allotments total 3,461 acres. Many problems were identified in range analyses and range reports in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Overstocking of livestock, soil compaction and damage to critical riparian areas all were contributing factors to downward trends on these allotments. As allocated AUMs were decreased, range conditions began to stabilize, and in some cases, upward trends were apparent. Due to range conditions, lower AUM allocations, changing livestock economics, and/or conflicts with wildlife and recreation, most of these permits were waived and subsequently closed.

The following information is for the **Parks Ranger District (Medicine Bow Routt National Forest)** in the north portion of the committee area.

The Grand County portion of the Parks Ranger District includes 11 cattle allotments; 2 of which are vacant (Grass and Rabbit Ears: 16,797 total acres).

The following information is for the **Eagle Holy Cross Ranger District (White River National Forest)** in the southwest portions of the committee area in Eagle County.

Two active cattle allotments (Sheephorn and Lone Lick/East Sheephorn) occur in the Piney Ridge, Sheephorn area of the Middle Park Committee area. The East Sheephorn and Lone Lick Allotments have been combined since the last HPP plan. Information on these allotments is in Table 4 below. The Middle Park HPP portion of the Holy Cross District does not have any active sheep and goat allotments.

BIG GAME POPULATION SUMMARY

Each individual herd (deer, elk, pronghorn, and moose) is grouped into a Data Analysis Unit (DAU). The DAU boundaries are drawn so that they approximate an individual herd unit where most of the animals are born, live, and die with as little egress or ingress from other herds as possible. The unit contains the entire habitat necessary for wildlife to breed, rear young, migrate, and forage.

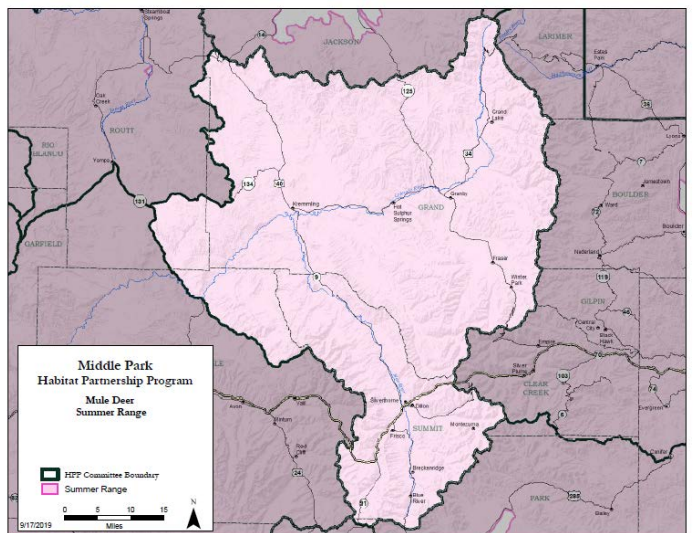
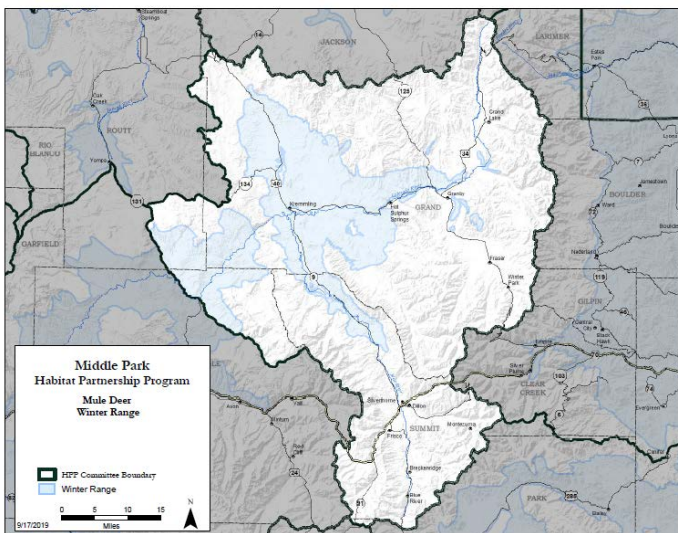
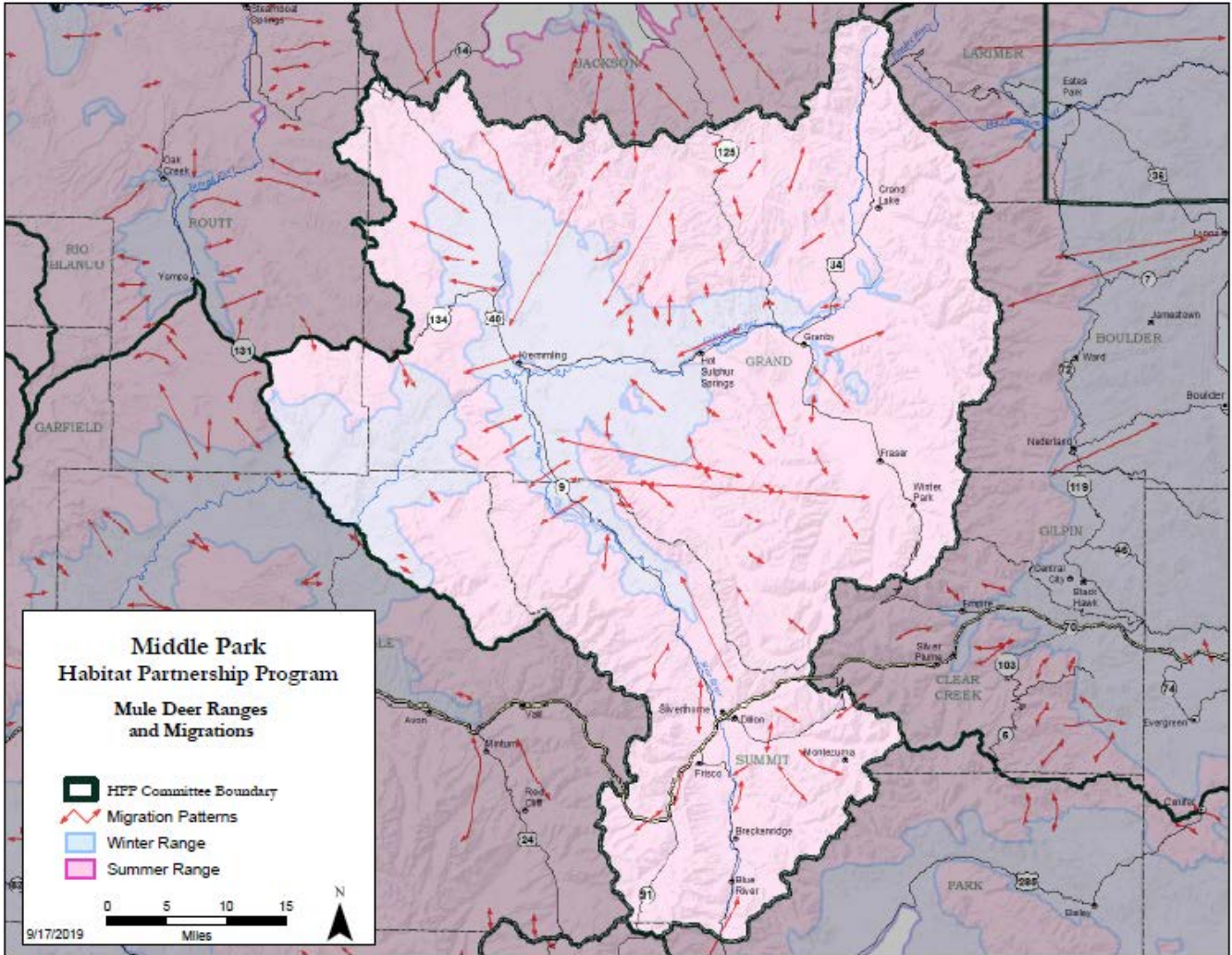
Below are the management objectives for all the DAUs within the scope of the MPHPP. The MPHPP committee will assist CPW in meeting herd management objectives associated with the committee's area through the establishment of private land access, recommending special hunts (i.e. youth, disabled, veterans, etc.) and continued preservation and improvement of habitat. Lastly, the committee will provide input for Herd Management Plans (HMPs).

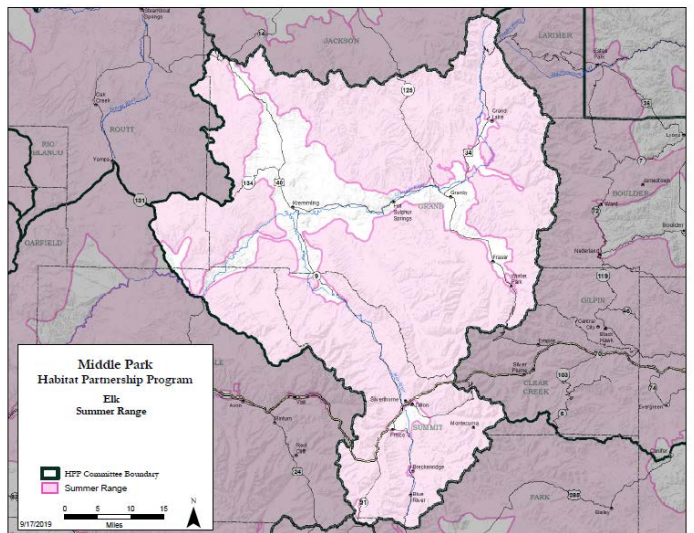
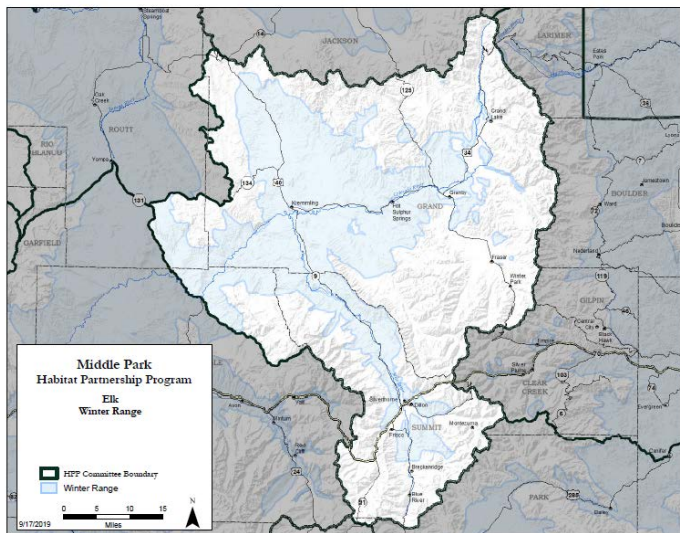
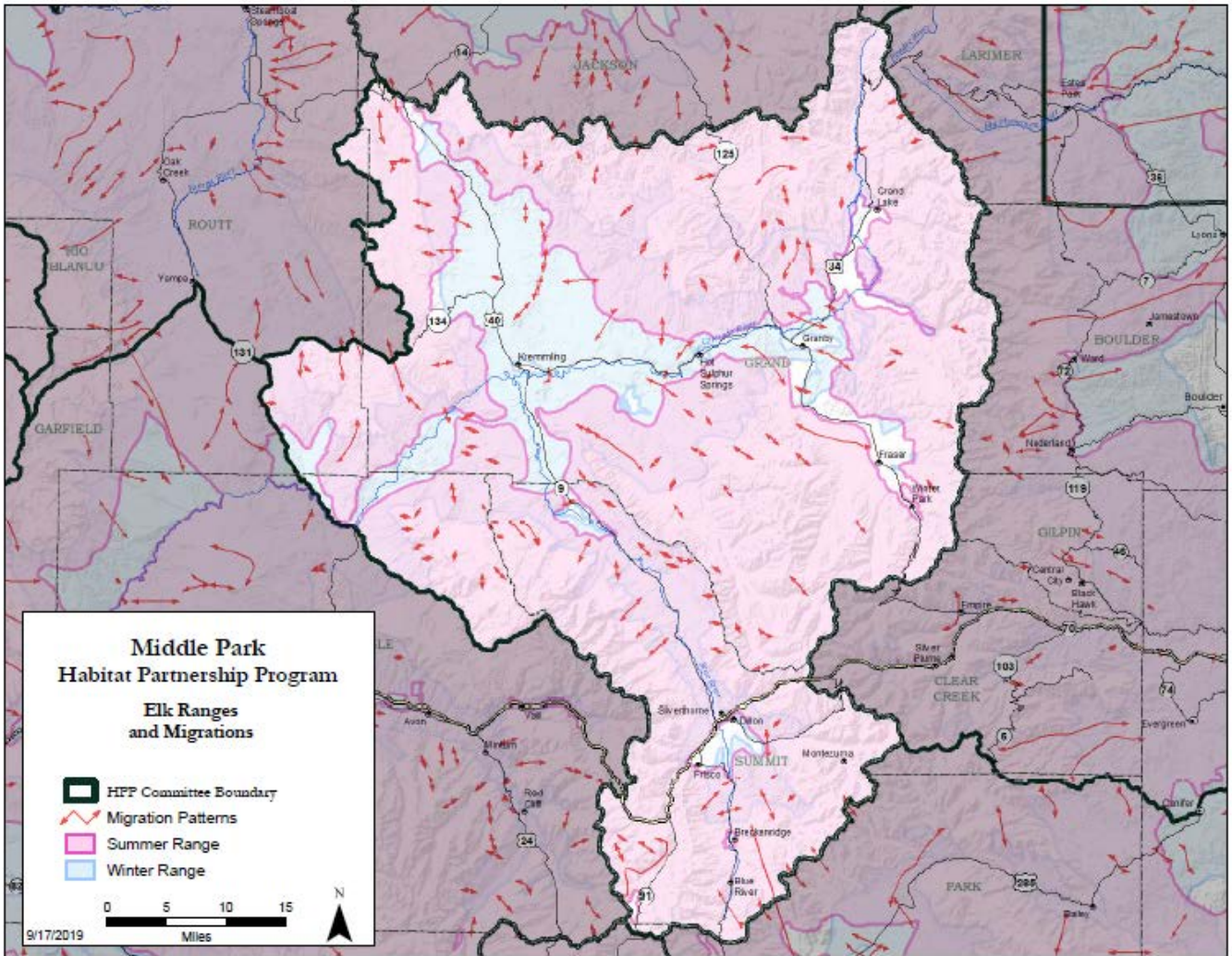
Table 1. Data Analysis Unit Summary for Middle Park HPP Area

Management Herd (*DAU plan in the renewal process)	1990s Population Avg.	2000s Population Avg.	2010 - 2017 Population Avg.	Current Pop.Mngt. Objective
Mule Deer - State Bridge(D-8)	15,200	16,900	14,700	13,500-16,500
<i>Game Management Units: 15, 35, 36, 361 & 45</i>				
Mule Deer - Middle Park(D-9)	13,452	13,666	16,658	10,500-12,500
<i>Game Management Units: 18, 181, 27, 28, 37 & 371</i>				
Elk - Gore Pass(E-7)	6,400	5,800	5,200	4,000-5,000
<i>Game Management Unit: 15 & 27</i>				
Elk - Troublesome(E-8)	5,450	4,866	4,988	3,600-4,300
<i>Game Management Unit: 18 & 181</i>				
Elk - Piney River(E-12)	5,584	5,367	3,585	3,000-4,600
<i>Game Management Units: 35, 36 & 361</i>				
Elk - Williams Fork (E-13)	8,922	6,309	5,703	4,700-5,500
<i>Game Management Unit: 28, 37 & 371</i>				
Pronghorn - Middle Park(A-37)	502	715	733	630
<i>Game Management Units: 18, 181, 27, 28 & 37</i>				
Moose - (M-3)	100	245	350	190
<i>Game Management Units: 15, 27, 181, 18, 361, 28, 36, 371 & 37</i>				

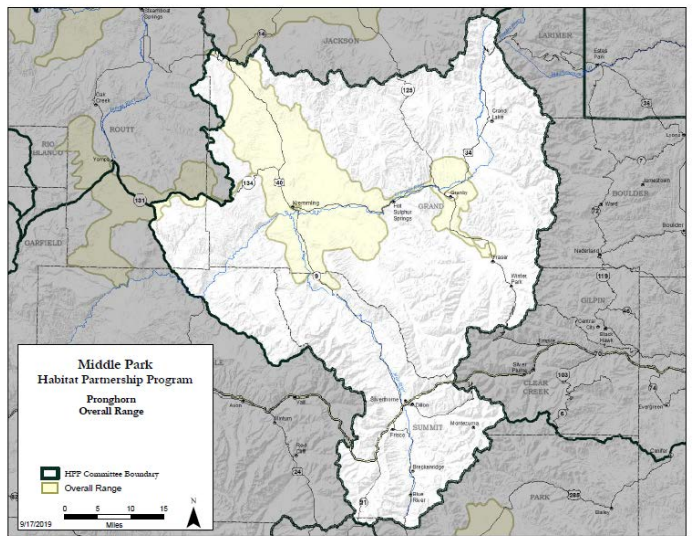
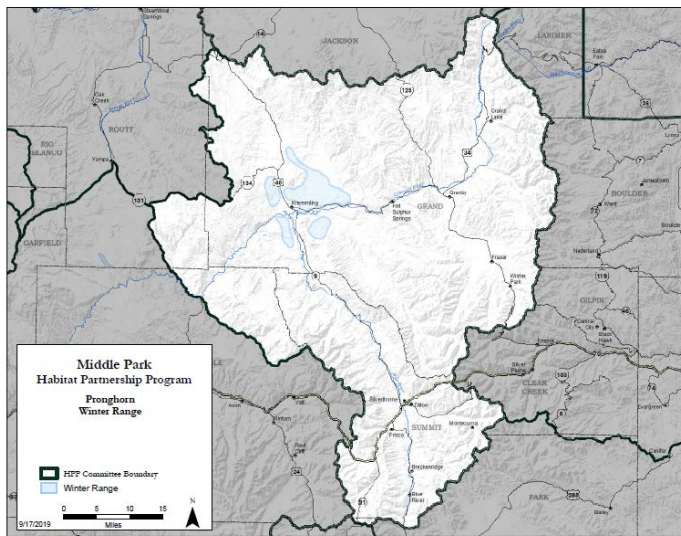
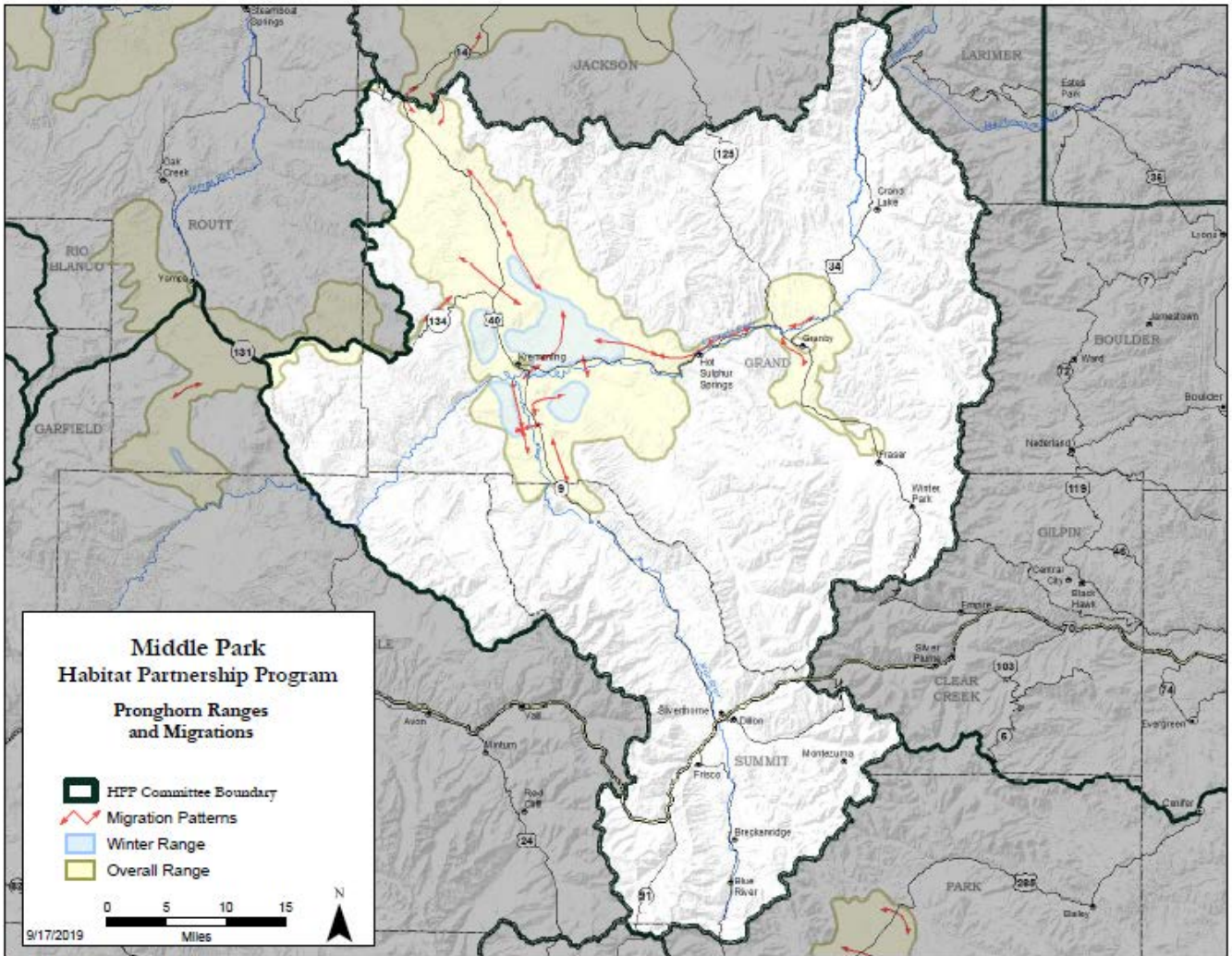
BIG GAME RANGES & MIGRATIONS

DEER

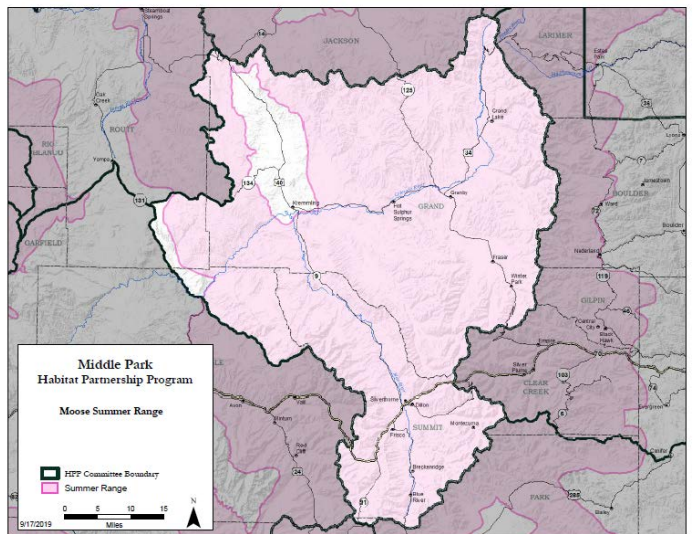
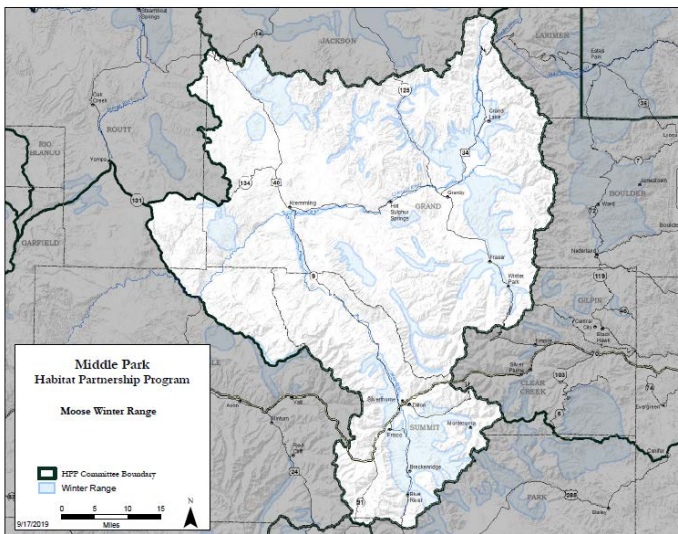
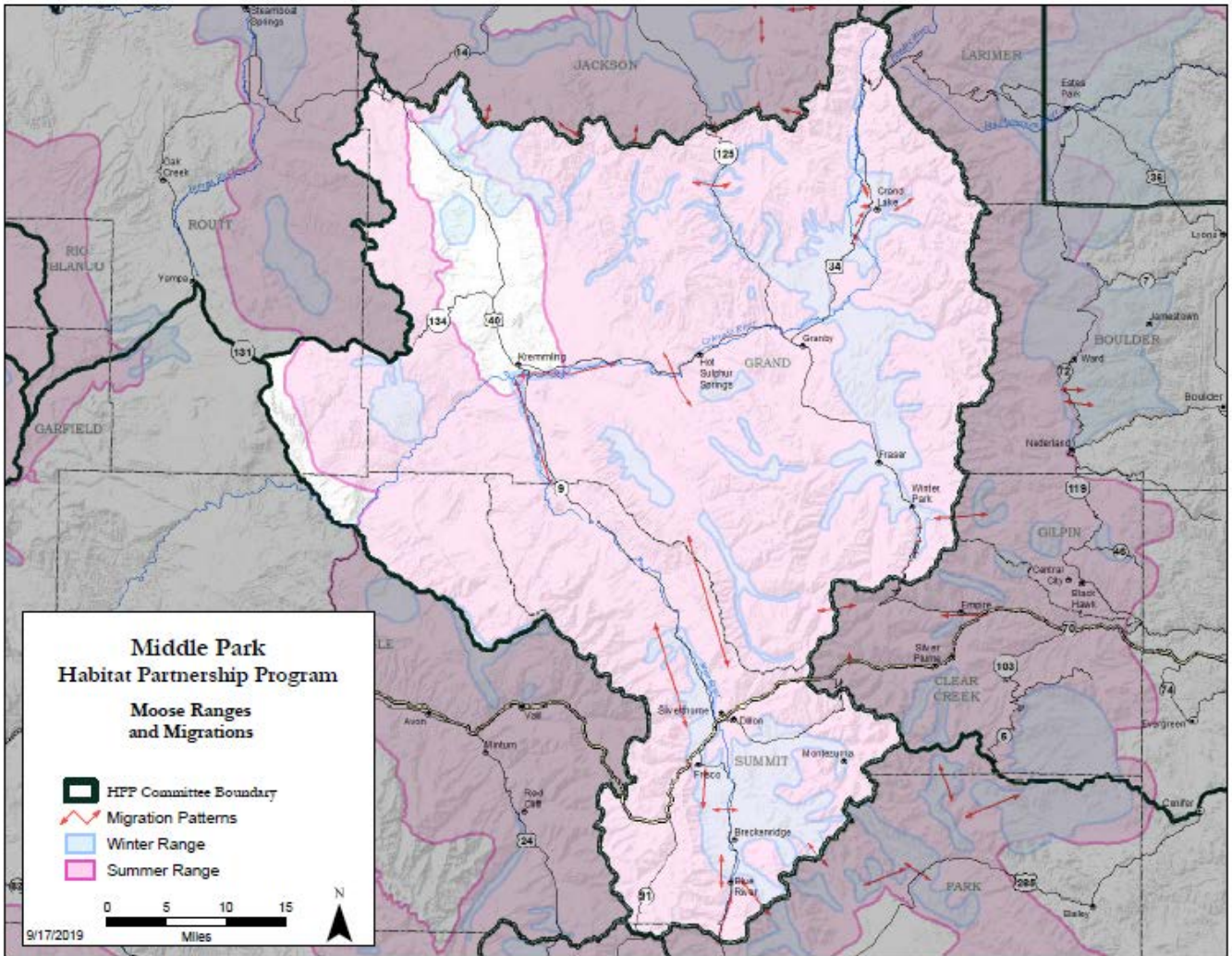




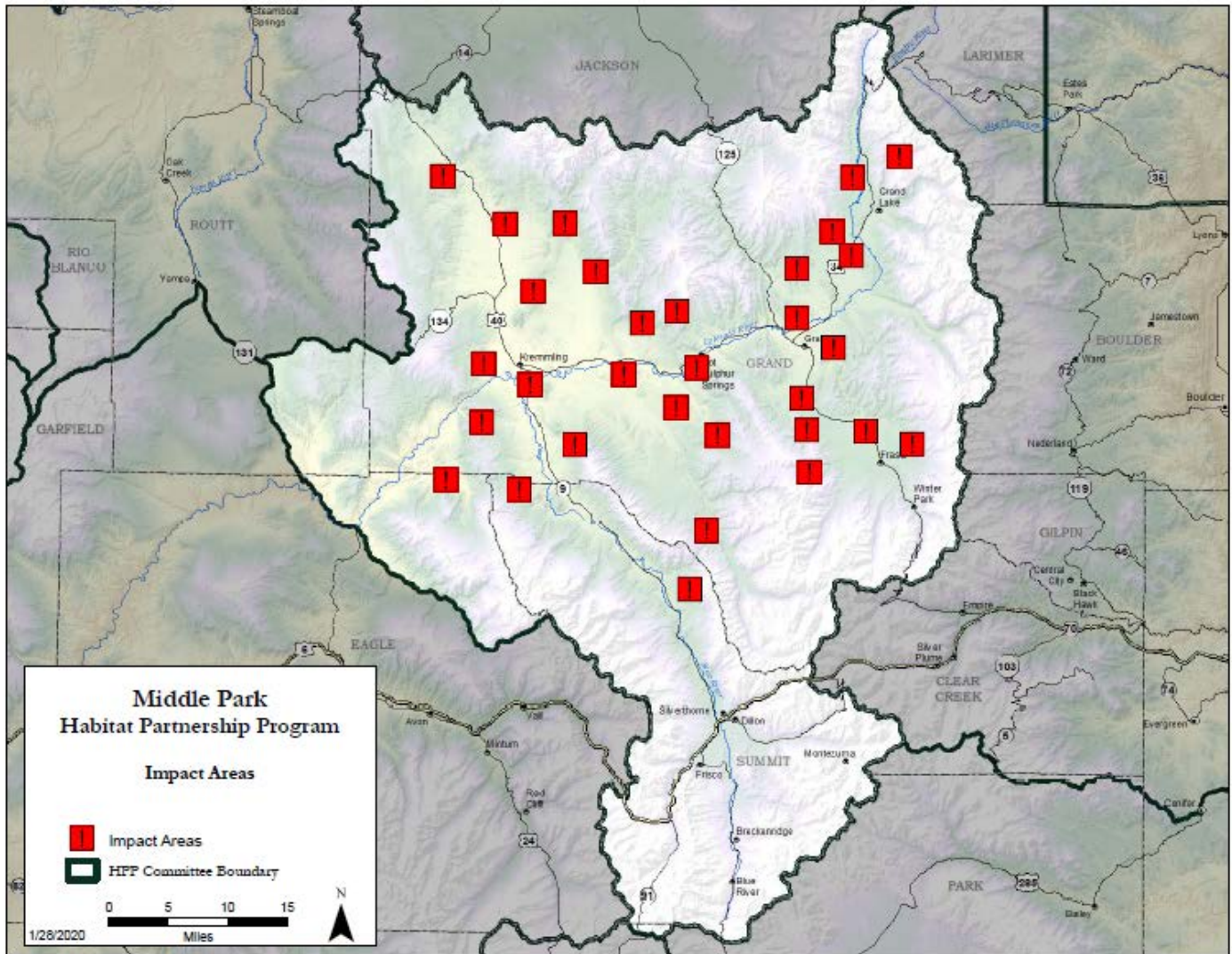
PRONGHORN



MOOSE



IMPACT AREAS & DESCRIPTION



Impact areas are defined as areas where big game numbers produce conflict with private resources or are areas that serve refuges for big game that don't allow for harvest. The big game numbers on refuges can create problems on adjoining private property.

An impact area on private lands is an area where a landowner or his designee documents there is an excessive concentration of big game that is causing a problem in the management of his/her lands with respect to use, forage, growing hay crops, harvest crop aftermath, grazing and/or fences. Lands subject to conservation easements may be included in conflict areas for distribution management hunts, leases, range improvement projects, etc. These problems must be described in writing or as a verbal statement made to the committee.

An impact area on public lands is an area where the management agency makes a finding that the level of big game utilization or the combination of big game and livestock use is inconsistent with the long term ecological objectives of approved land use or resource management plans. This problem also must be described in writing or as a verbal statement made to the committee.

An impact area can also be an area on public or private lands where the restriction of hunting results in significant harvest reduction and a corresponding concentration of big game animals causing significant forage and/or fence conflicts prior to, during or after the hunting seasons. The affected private landowner or his designee or public agency will describe the problem in a written or verbal statement to the committee.

The committee realizes that impact areas can be dynamic and these areas will be updated in the plan as needed to address fence and forage concerns within its geographic boundary.

SECURITY AREAS

The committee, upon discussion and agreement of the appropriate landowners (public and private), will designate security areas as locations where use and concentration of wildlife species is tolerated. Specific management strategies will be planned and implemented accordingly to mitigate or compensate for any resource management impacts that occur due to this tolerance.

Since approximately seventy four percent of the land within the committee area is public land, these are the areas targeted for security areas. However, there is a need for security areas on private lands since the winter range and transitional range for big game occur on large portions of private lands. The committee realizes that security areas can be dynamic and these areas will be updated as needed to address safe havens for big game within its geographic boundary.

As evidenced by the success of the distribution management hunts, negative stimuli have a major influence on animal distribution. In order for habitat improvement projects to serve their purpose, disturbances during critical time periods need to be eliminated, or at least kept to an absolute minimum. The committee will work with private landowners and land management agencies to identify areas where it is desirable to hold elk. Appropriate steps will be taken to establish "safe havens" on these areas that will be off-limits to distribution management hunters and where it may be appropriate to curtail other recreational activities (e.g., snowmobiling & cross-country skiing).

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AREAS

Habitat enhancement areas are locations where there are opportunities to improve/protect/enhance habitats to reduce, eliminate, or mitigate issues or conflicts occurring there or in other areas. Habitat enhancement areas can occur on public or private lands where projects can be implemented to improve vegetative conditions for wildlife and agriculture. These projects include, but are not limited to, grazing management strategies, improvement of hunting access, water developments, and restrictions on recreational activities etc.

The committee realizes that habitat enhancement projects and project areas are ongoing and dynamic and these areas will be updated as they come on line to address fence and forage concerns within its geographic boundary. All habitat enhancement projects and project areas are kept on file by the committee.

GAME MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

In addition to resolving wildlife conflicts, HPP is also statutorily directed to "assist the division in meeting game management objectives..." This assistance will be directed towards a) maintaining/increasing the population in a given area primarily by habitat manipulation projects; b) maintaining/decreasing the population in a given area primarily by pursuing hunting opportunities and c) participating in research activities aimed at habitat, population, disease and/or movement factors that influence big game populations.

PROJECT TYPES & PRIORITIES

PROJECT TYPES (TO INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

Habitat Manipulation:

- Prescribed burning
- Water developments
- Weed control, including herbicide vouchers
- Fertilization
- Seeding
- Hand thinning
- Mechanical (chaining, roller chopping, hydro axing, etc.)

Fencing Projects:

- Fence vouchers for fence repair materials
- Construction of new fences (usually > ¼ mile in length)
- Landowner reimbursement for purchased fencing materials
- Prototype or experimental fence designs
- Wildlife crossings or retrofitting fences to be more wildlife-friendly

Game Damage Projects:

- Stackyards- materials and/or labor
- Distribution hunts
- Hunt coordinators for distribution hunts, youth hunts, etc.
- Forage purchases
- Baiting

Information/Education Projects:

- Seminars
- Workshops
- Brochures
- Electronic media: websites, etc.
- Comment letters
- Travel management (signage, temporary fencing, etc.)

Research/Monitoring Projects:

- Habitat
- Population
- Inventory
- Movement

Conservation Easements (transaction costs only)

Archaeological Clearances (and other NEPA required clearances)

HPP projects may be undertaken on public lands, private lands or a combination of both as needed wherever the local committee believes the project has the best chance to effectively reduce, minimize or eliminate the big game/livestock conflict and/or improve, protect, enhance habitats.

OPERATING GUIDELINES

Has the applicant/landowner acted in good faith and cooperation with CPW? To maximize program effectiveness, applicants or landowners with a history of misconduct related to the HPP program shall be ineligible for program participation.

The focus of the committee will continue to be on those problems impacting an area of at least 640 acres in size including those which may be under multiple ownerships. Non-commercial operators on small acreages will not normally be accepted into the program on an individual basis; however, eligibility may be established if cooperation is taking place among neighbors or such participation will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the program.

Hunting and hunting access does not have to be a pre-requisite for the implementation of projects on private lands. However, hunting will be promoted as a management strategy in all areas where it will aid in meeting overall population management objectives.

In an effort to be consistent and fair to all applicants, the committee has established operating guidelines that detail priorities, eligibility requirements, project rules and limits, and other policies. The committee retains the authority to review and update these guidelines as necessary to meet the changing needs of the area; however, these standard rules should apply to most HPP projects and will be enforced by the committee with few exceptions.

Monitoring projects are critical for the long term sustainability of the HPP program. To provide documentation, determine treatment effectiveness, and be able to convey results, monitoring will be done on all projects. Specific monitoring methodology shall be matched to the treatment. Monitoring data will be submitted to the HPP local committee and administrative assistants.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Management strategies were developed to achieve the committee's objectives. Strategies primarily involve resolving big game conflicts through habitat manipulation, fencing, and game damage projects; or achieving big game management objectives through information and education, research and monitoring, or conservation easements. Most HPP projects will fall into one of the following management strategy categories.

1. **HABITAT MANIPULATION:** Improving habitat on private, public, and tribal lands draws big game away from impact areas; improves big game distribution; holds big game for longer periods of time on public lands; or improves forage abundance, availability, or palatability such that it reduces competition between big game and livestock.

2. **FENCING PROJECTS:** Repair of existing fences and/or construction of new fences help alleviate ongoing big game damage, and offset the financial burden to landowners. Fences will be wildlife-friendly to HPP specifications. Maintenance of fences will be the responsibility of the landowner.
3. **GAME DAMAGE PROJECTS:** Providing stackyards for landowners otherwise ineligible for them and using hunt coordinators and forage purchases address pending damage problems that CPW may be financially liable for.
4. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION PROJECTS:** Producing and distributing informative materials helps public land agencies and private land managers educate the public and provides information about the programs, agencies, conflicts and user responsibilities. Travel management may include signage or education on closures or activities that will benefit big game.
5. **RESEARCH & MONITORING:** Projects will include, but not be limited to, those focusing on habitat condition, populations, inventory and movement patterns. While these types of projects may be funded, the committee's primary focus will be on conflict resolution between big game and livestock.
6. **CONSERVATION EASEMENTS:** Conservation easements help to protect a property's conservation values, particularly agricultural productivity, wildlife habitat, and hunting access.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

The base-operating budget for the State HPP program is based on 5% of total annual revenues for big game license sales for those areas that have HPP committees. The Statewide HPP Council then allocates funding to the individual HPP committees. The Middle Park HPP budget was developed to best meet the goals and objectives outlined earlier in the plan, while maintaining the flexibility to deal with emergencies and take advantage of opportunities.

Within certain parameters, the statewide HPP financial system allows local HPP committees to carry specific project dollars over from year to year if the project is ongoing or the funds have been committed. This allows us to better address long-term management and larger, more complicated projects as well as giving us the flexibility to more efficiently prioritize our projects.

Additional funds are also available through the HPP State Council for special projects or unforeseen opportunities outside of the capacity of the committee. These dollars supplement our existing budget and allow us to take on special projects from time to time.

BASE BUDGET ALLOCATION:

Habitat Manipulation	64%
Fence Construction & Repairs	8%
Game Damage (Stackyards, etc.)	10%
Information & Education	2%
Conservation Easements & NEPA Related Activities	9%
Monitoring	7%

<u>TOTAL ALLOCATION:</u>	<u>100%</u>
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It is important to acknowledge that the budget allocation is based on past projects, future projects that are likely to be proposed as well as committee emphasis in funding certain project types. While these are desired and/or likely allocations, the committee retains the ability to shift funds as needed between categories as projects and opportunities arise or as situations dictate.

CURRENT & FORESEEABLE ISSUES

HUNTER ACCESS

Lack of hunter access is a significant problem in Middle Park. Rocky Mountain National Park is situated in the northeast portion of GMU 18 (DAU E-8). Immediately to the south, a concentration of home sites/ranchettes around Grand Lake and the "three lakes area" creates another refuge situation. In GMUs 28, 37 & 371 approximately 20 percent of the elk are totally protected on Henderson mill property, Snow Mountain Ranch (operated by YMCA), Granby Ranch sub-division and Ski Granby Ranch ski area and several large ranches that don't allow any hunting. A significant portion of the Muddy Creek drainage (GMUs 181 & 27) is controlled by private interests who manage for trophy hunting.

RECREATION

Middle Park is within easy travelling distance of major population areas. This gives rise to heavy recreational pressure on public lands within the committee area. Increasing recreational pressure in early fall has demonstrated that it can displace elk onto private property creating conflict issues. Where elk can remain on private land with minimal disturbance, they may take up long-term residency, compounding wildlife conflicts.

GREATER SAGE GROUSE

Greater sage-grouse populations continue to thrive within Middle Park and CPW will continue to monitor their populations and make management recommendations. The committee recognizes the importance of maintaining this iconic species on the landscape and where possible will support projects that will benefit them in addition to meet HPP goals in this area. The committee will also ensure that projects that they are involved in are not detrimental to greater sage-grouse.

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

CWD continues to be a concern for big game managers west wide. CPW has formulated a CWD Response Plan and has management guidelines outlined as to how the agency will respond to CWD in big game populations. CWD prevalence has remained below management action stipulations in Middle Park populations. The committee will keep apprised of the current trend within Middle Park big game populations and work with CPW if management changes are needed.