

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Habitat Partnership Program
Republican Rivers



DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT PLAN



Approved- Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission: November 15, 2019
This plan is valid for 10 years from approval date.

2019-2029

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Distribution Management Plan (DMP) is the basic framework for the Republican Rivers HPP Committee for the next ten years - 2019 to 2029. The RRHPP encompasses all of Yuma and Washington Counties, a portion of Kit Carson County and the South Platte River Corridor. Across this large landscape, there is a diversity of wildlife habitats, land use practices, and opportunities for the Republican Rivers HPP Committee. This management plan outlines the objectives and goals of the committee and serves as a guiding document to help develop and prioritize projects across the area. These management guidelines include five main issues that the committee will focus its time and money towards, including: Big Game Management, Habitat, Water, Conflict Management, and Education. A significant change was an increased emphasis on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management in deer populations, after new research was released showing possible large scale population impacts.

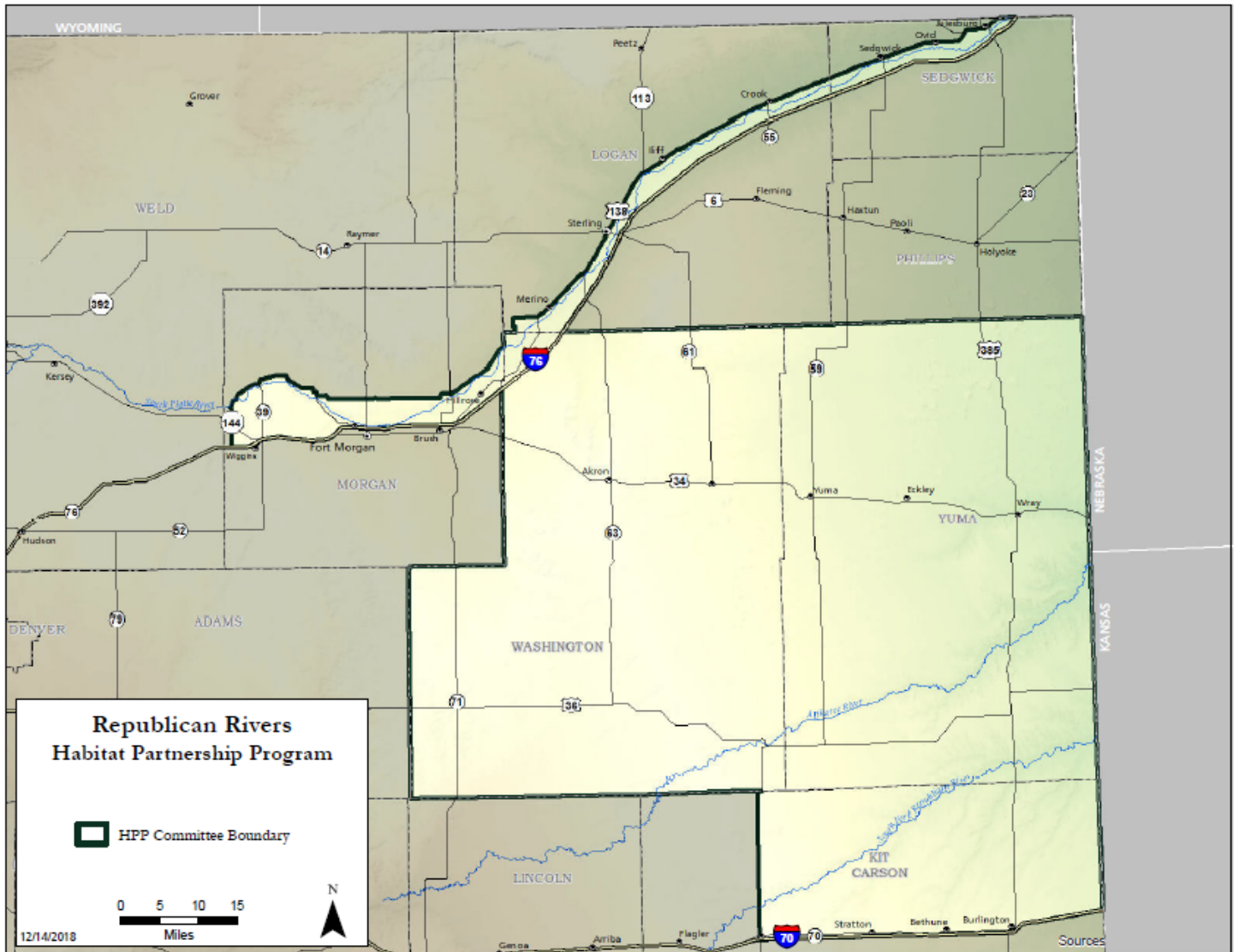
Historically the RRHPP has had very few game damage projects and has had an emphasis on improving habitat and distribution of big game species in the area. The addition of the South Platte corridor to the committee's boundary in 2015 greatly increased HPP's ability to help reduce long-term game damage claims along the Platte River. The committee will continue to focus on improving wildlife habitat while reaching out to landowners and wildlife managers along the Platte River to try and lesson the impacts of game damage caused by deer. A livestock grower representative from the South Platte River was also added to help reach landowners in that area and provide perspective to the challenges that they face. The NRCS representative position went away due to the retirement of that individual.

Operating guidelines have been established to help inform funding decisions and prioritization of projects. Budget guidelines show likely allocations of funds based on past projects. Budget allocations may change as new opportunities arise. The committee has identified current and foreseeable issues for the area and has specified project types and management strategies that are aimed at adapting to these issues in order to continue reducing wildlife conflicts and helping CPW in achieving game management objectives.

There are a number of foreseeable challenges the committee is likely to address in the next 10 years. Land use across the area continues to change with more energy development, changing agricultural practices, and increased recreation, which may have significant impacts to wildlife populations. In portions of Yuma, Washington and Kit Carson Counties, water resources continue to decline and are becoming a limiting resource for many wildlife species. With the majority of the land in the RRHPP boundary being held in private ownership, there is a growing need for increasing public access for hunting. Increased access may help to address damage and disease concerns as well as help to retain and recruit new hunters, which provide long term conservation funding.

The RRHPP committee is committed to providing assistance to landowners to help them achieve wildlife management goals and reduce areas of conflict, as well as providing hunters with increased wildlife recreation opportunities.

MAP OF REPUBLICAN RIVERS HPP AREA



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dustin Wise, Sportsman Representative, Chairman | Started HPP Term: Jun. 2011 |
| 2. Chris Craig, Livestock Grower Representative | Started HPP Term: Mar. 2015 |
| 3. Don Fritzler, Livestock Grower Representative | Started HPP Term: Jan. 2017 |
| 4. Clayt Cooper, Livestock Grower Representative | Started HPP Term: Jan. 2019 |
| 5. Josh Melby, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Representative | Started HPP Term: Aug. 2010 |

INTRODUCTION

The Republican Rivers Habitat Partnership Program (RRHPP) discussions began in January 2003. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW-now CPW) hosted several meetings in Sterling, Akron and Vernon. The original plan was to have one committee that would cover Area 3 of the CDOW, which encompasses most of northeast Colorado. It soon became apparent that the area was too large and interest outside of the Yuma /Washington County was minimal. Therefore, a committee was formed consisting of landowners, sportsman and organization members that would cover Yuma and Washington Counties.

Members of the RRHPP committee include 3 livestock producers, 1 sportsman, and 1 representative of Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

The six issue areas targeted by the group include:

1. Big Game Management
2. Habitat
3. Water
4. Conflict Management
5. Education

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

ISSUE 1: BIG GAME MANAGEMENT

ISSUE 1A: Deer and Elk Management

The RRHPP area covers a very large landscape and includes a diversity of habitats that have traditionally been known for producing high quality, trophy class deer. The RRHPP committee continues to hear from the public that maintaining quality deer herds (range 35-40 bucks/100 does) is a high priority. Quality, population size, disease management, crop damage, and overall hunter satisfaction are factors that will be used by the committee when making recommendations to CPW for future license numbers. The RRHPP Committee is in a unique position to help work with landowners to achieve these objectives while also helping to address any concerns they may have. Species included in this issue are; mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk.

Whitetail deer have expanded their range throughout much of the RRHPP area into what has traditionally been mule deer habitat. There is a concern about competition between mule deer and whitetails if sufficient whitetail harvest does not occur in these areas.

Disease management in the RRHPP area is a growing concern for deer with recent changes in Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management. The committee is committed to addressing CWD management and look for ways to help achieve long-term management of a healthy deer and elk population.

ISSUE 1B: Pronghorn Management

Populations of pronghorn in the RRHPP area have declined from historic levels due to a variety of factors including drought and severe winters. The committee will work with CPW to help evaluate the status of the population and make suggestions based on management strategies, quality, hunter satisfaction, landowner satisfaction and future license numbers.

Objectives:

1. Develop and maintain quality of big game animals.
2. Make recommendations to CPW on the management of big game populations.
3. Increase and promote novice and youth hunting opportunities.
4. Work with CPW to restore pronghorn numbers to achieve goals outlined in the current DAU and increase hunting opportunities.
5. Address the loss of CRP acres and the impact to deer populations.
6. Support opportunities to harvest whitetail deer.

Strategies:

1. Make recommendations to CPW regarding number of hunting licenses within the framework of the DAU plans. Maintain a buck/doe ratio at the top of what is allowed within the DAU management plan as long as it does not cause disease or damage concerns.
2. Collect local input on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management and make recommendations to CPW on strategies for management. In areas of high CWD prevalence the Committee will look at projects to help reduce prevalence rate. The Committee will

also help to distribute information to landowners and help to promote management of a healthy deer population.

3. Prioritize projects to increase harvest in areas with high deer concentrations, to help stay within the population recommendations as listed in the DAU plan.
4. Focus on projects in areas where large areas of CRP have been removed. Look for options that create a similar habitat to maintain deer populations in these areas.
5. Encourage the use of novice and youth hunters to manage overpopulations of deer or areas of damage. This may include the use of a hunt coordinator.
6. Support increased whitetail harvest in targeted areas including the sandhills and leased hunting properties

ISSUE 2: HABITAT

The RRHPP will work with the different habitats identified in the Habitat section of this plan. Within each habitat, the committee will address overall habitat needs, and on a project basis will consider habitat projects that are species specific.

Objective:

1. Maintain, protect and improve the quality of wildlife habitat.

Strategies:

1. Promote riparian management to meet the cover requirements for the desired species. This may include riparian fencing, tree and grass planting, and grazing plans.
2. Encourage rotational grazing systems and timing that helps to improve wildlife habitat quality and long-term sustainability.
3. Partner with USDA programs (CRP, WHIP, EQIP, Pheasants Forever, etc.) to enhance programs beyond the minimum program criteria to maximize wildlife benefits.
4. Encourage farming practices that promote leaving wildlife forage, while also maximizing harvest (i.e. stripper header leaving wheat stubble certain heights).
5. Assist landowners with developing tree and grass plantings. All tree plantings will contain species that are beneficial to wildlife. Grass seed mixes will consist of warm season grasses, forbes and shrubs that are beneficial to wildlife (species such as smooth brome will not be allowed in seed mixes).
6. Assist landowners with food plots and wildlife survival plantings in areas where it will help increase harvest or alleviate wildlife damage.

ISSUE 3: WATER

A growing concern across much of the RRHPP Committee boundary is the decline of water resources and the impact it will have on wildlife populations, livestock operations, farming practices and the local economy. The RRHPP Committee will look for opportunities to improve water management and availability in ways that benefit big game.

Objective:

1. Encourage projects that increase availability of water for wildlife and livestock when it helps to improve habitat conditions.

Strategies:

1. Promote water development projects to meet the needs of wildlife, including alternative water sources.
2. Maintain a stockpile of wildlife guzzlers and distribute them to landowners as requested.
3. Assist landowners with livestock water sources that improve grazing distribution and help improve overall habitat conditions. When possible encourage landowners to exclude livestock from natural water sources and provide tanks instead.
4. Assist with the development of new water sources (wells, solar pumps, etc.). If a new well is a dry hole, then the committee will pay for half of the costs, up to 300 ft.

ISSUE 4: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

A large portion of the RRHPP area is comprised of cultivated crops, providing for the potential to see damage from big game animals near areas of concentration. Historically, most of the deer damage to crops has occurred in irrigated fields adjacent to the South Platte, Republican and Arikaree Rivers. A high percentage of the damage occurs along the South Platte River, where there are concentrations of deer on the river properties. Many of these properties have very restrictive access and low deer harvest resulting in damage to adjacent crops. There has been very little damage caused by pronghorn across the area. In the past the RRHPP Committee has not had a lot of projects involving agricultural damage, but the possibility still exists and projects designed to alleviate or prevent damage will be a top priority.

Objectives:

1. Identify any current or potential wildlife conflicts, and work with landowners and the public to minimize wildlife conflicts.
2. Focus on areas of high deer concentration (above the standards set by the DAU plan).
3. Determine ways to get harvest in problem areas and promote responsible hunting.

Strategies:

1. Work with landowners to minimize crop damage caused by deer and antelope.
2. Develop and test new methods for reducing or preventing deer damage to corn and trees.

3. Work with landowners and sportsmen to increase harvest in damage areas. Promote responsible hunting and reduce incidence of hunting without permission. This may include the use of a hunt coordinator.
4. Develop habitat projects adjacent to areas of damage to draw deer away from the crops. Habitat projects may also be used to change deer movement patterns into areas where they are more susceptible to harvest by hunters.
5. Look for opportunities to hold public meetings in communities near areas where damage is occurring. Provide information or a booth at area events to promote the HPP program.

ISSUE 5: EDUCATION

Within the RRHPP area, the committee has heard that information about wildlife issues has been slow getting out to landowners or the general public. The RRHPP wants to make the public aware of wildlife issues by serving as a forum for providing information to increase the awareness about local wildlife issues and projects that affect local wildlife populations.

Objectives:

1. Provide an opportunity for the Republican Rivers HPP committee, local residents, organizations and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to discuss wildlife issues and concerns.
2. Develop outreach efforts along the South Platte River to promote HPP.

Strategies:

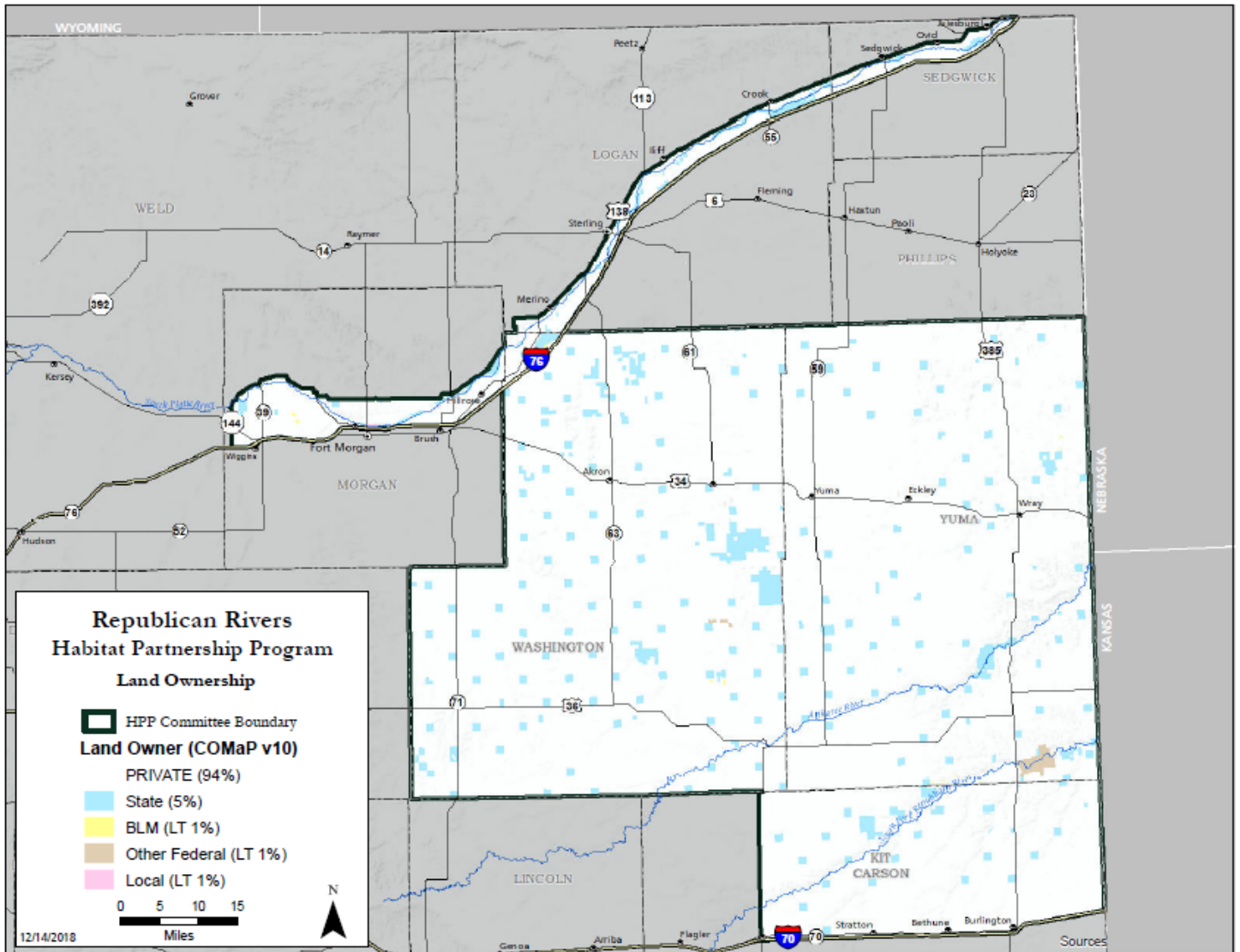
1. Educate private landowners on the values of "quality" game.
2. Sponsor field days, educational booths and print brochures to promote wildlife, habitat and HPP.
3. Provide periodic articles in local publications on what HPP is doing.
4. Provide info on wildlife habitat cost share programs and contact information.
5. Educate landowners on the landowner preference system.
6. Look for opportunities to hold public meetings in communities near areas where damage is occurring. Provide information or a booth at area events to promote the HPP program.
7. Improve the efficiency of distributing information to the public. This may include the use of social media.

REPUBLICAN RIVERS HPP AREA DESCRIPTION

The RRHPP encompasses all of Yuma and Washington Counties and a portion of Kit Carson County. The RRHPP is bounded on the east by the Nebraska and Kansas borders, on the south by Interstate 70 in Kit Carson County and the southern Washington county line, on the west by the Washington County line, on the north by the Yuma and Washington northern county lines. The Committee boundary also includes the Platte River corridor from the Weld / Morgan County line to the Nebraska state line. The boundaries would include Game Management Units (GMU's) 96, 91, and 92.

The RRHPP committee boundary includes portions of deer data analysis units (DAU) 44, 47, 54 and 55, including all or portions of Game Management Units (GMU) 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107, and 109. The RRHPP also incorporates portions of pronghorn DAU's PH-2, PH-4, and PH-19 which also include all or portions of GMU's 97, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107, and 109. The focus area also includes portions of GMU's 103 and 109.

Land ownership in the RRHPP area is approximately 94% private and 6% public. Public lands are those owned by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Colorado State Parks (See Land ownership map).



HABITAT DESCRIPTION

Within the RRHPP area, the committee identified several habitat types. These habitats have important agricultural value and water resources as well as supporting diverse wildlife populations.

Short-grass prairie

The short-grass prairie habitats have been reduced to a small fraction of its historic range. The largest blocks of the short-grass prairie occur along the river corridors and in Washington and Kit Carson Counties. Several wildlife species depend on the short-grass prairie ecosystem. Management of livestock grazing is the major influence on the short-grass prairie condition.

Mid-tall grass prairie

The mid-tall grass prairie occurs in the sandhill areas of Yuma, Washington and Kit Carson Counties. Throughout the sandhills, there are large tracts of mid-tall grass prairie. The sandhill areas are essential for deer, pronghorn, and native bird species. Mid-tall grass prairie areas have remained stable with little being broken out for farming or development, as the rolling hills are too rough for farming. Management of livestock grazing appears to be the major influence on the mid-tall grass prairie condition. Fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) also provide blocks of mid-tall grass prairie that are essential to wildlife populations.

Riparian

Within the RRHPP, there are 7 riparian systems; Chief Creek, North Fork of the Republican River, Black Wolf Creek, Arikaree River, South Platte River, Bijou Creek and South Fork of the Republican River. The forest canopy is quite variable in all the rivers systems ranging from sparse to dense cottonwood forests. Native fish species occur in systems with peripheral water. Several fish species are listed as Species of Special Concern to the State of Colorado. Again, management of livestock grazing seem to be the primary influence on riparian habitat condition. The rivers within the RRHPP are all part of the Republican River and South Platte River basins.

Cropland

Within the RRHPP, cropland is found throughout the area. Crops consist of dry land crops and irrigated crops. These agriculture lands provide food, nesting cover and winter cover for many wildlife species. Croplands support the largest game species within the RRHPP, ringneck pheasants. Hunting upland birds in the RRHPP is a major economic resource to the communities within the RRHPP.

The eastern 2/3 of Washington County is primarily comprised of dry land farming. Throughout this farming area there are small tracts of native short grass prairie. Tall to mid-grass habitats run along the eastern county line, from the southern county line north to Highway 34 near Otis, CO. The tall to mid-grass area is part of the sandhill complex that runs east-northeast into Yuma County. There are 2 sandhill complexes in Washington County, one on the east side and another in the far northwest corner, just south of the South Platte River.

Yuma County is broken up into areas of dry land farming, irrigation farming, short grass prairie, tall to mid grass prairie, and riparian areas. Dry land farming occurs in the northwest corner, south of Wray to the Black Wolf Creek, and the area between the Arikaree River and the South Fork of the Republican River. Center pivot irrigation occurs throughout the county except the northwest corner. Center pivots are scattered throughout the sandhills, along the North Fork of the Republican River, Black Wolf Creek, and Arikaree River. Short grass prairie can be found in broken blocks northwest of Yuma, south of Wray, the Vernon area, north and south of Black Wolf Creek,

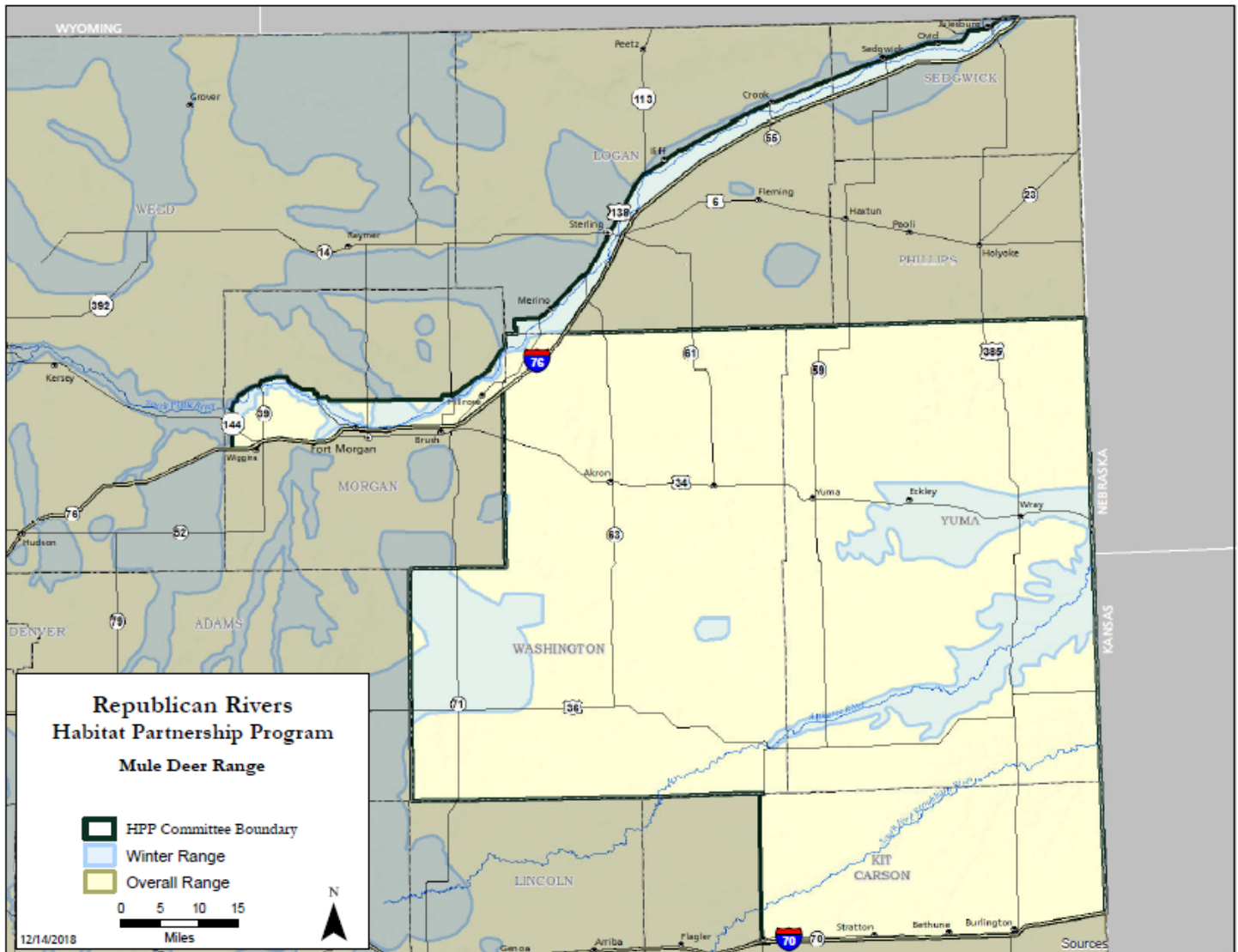
and north and south of the Arikaree River. Tall to mid-grass prairie can be found within the sandhill complex which extends from the southwest corner northeastward throughout the county. The sandhill complex encompasses approximately one-half of the county. There are five major riparian zones in the county, Chief Creek, North Fork of the Republican River, Black Wolf Creek, Arikaree River, and South Fork of the Republican River.

Kit Carson County includes the South Republican River corridor which is dominated by Cottonwood trees. The river is bordered by a series of canyons and grasslands. The rest of the county is a mix of short to mid-grass prairie and dry land agriculture.

The portion to the South Platte River in Morgan, Washington, Logan and Sedgwick Counties is dominated by Cottonwood forests and shallow wetlands. The edges of the river are highly dominated by irrigated and dry land agriculture. There is also a narrow band of sandhills on the north and south sides of the river that are primarily pasture grasslands.

BIG GAME POPULATION SUMMARY

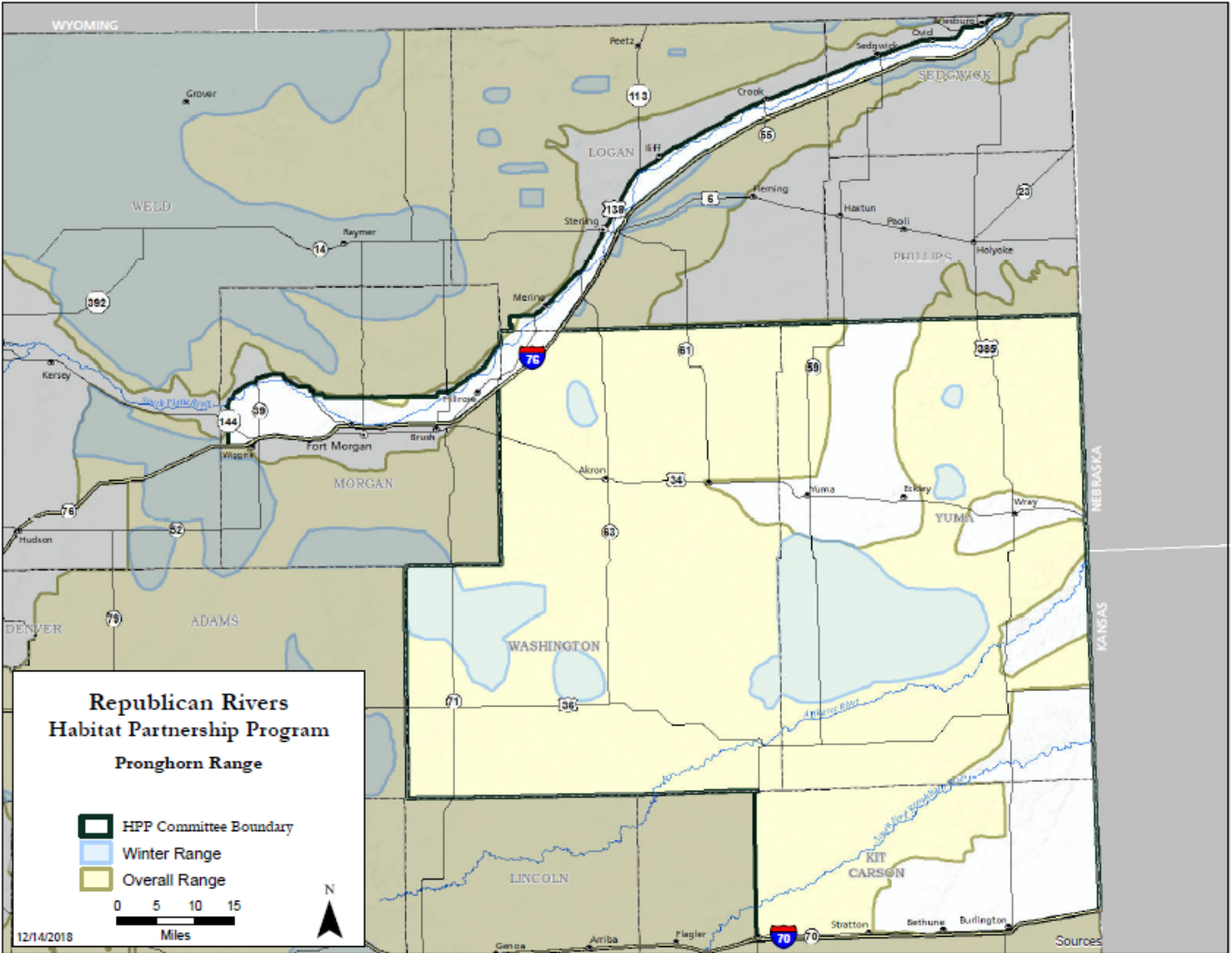
MULE DEER RANGE MAP



DEER - The South Tablelands deer herd (D-54) is located south of Interstate 76 consisting of Game Management Units (GMUs) 93, 97, 98, 99, and 100. The Arikaree deer herd (D-55) is located in southern Washington and Yuma Counties consisting of GMUs 101 and 102. The RRHPP includes all of D-55 and only a portion of D-54 that lies in the remainder of Washington and Yuma Counties. Both mule deer and white-tailed deer are found throughout the RRHPP area. In D-55, both species are managed to maintain a 60:40 ratio of mule deer to white-tailed deer. In D-54, management is only focused on mule deer and whitetail only licenses are allocated to maximize harvest and minimize the number of white-tailed deer in D-54. White-tailed deer expansion, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), and game damage are the primary concerns. The D-55 Herd Management Plan (HMP) was adopted by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in 2018 and the D-54 HMP is expected to be adopted by the Commission in 2019.

The D-46 and D-47 deer herds are in the SE Region and the Republican Rivers HPP area includes less than 10% of these deer herds. The Management Plans for these herds were adopted in 1999.

PRONGHORN RANGE MAP



PRONGHORN- The Sandhills (PH-4) and Hardpan (PH-2) pronghorn herds are located south of Interstate 76. PH-4 consists of Game Management Units (GMUs) 93, 97, 98, 101 and 102 and PH-2 consists of GMUs 99 and 100. The Republican Rivers HPP includes only those portions of PH-4 and PH-2 that are within Washington and Yuma Counties. Within the RRHPP area, pronghorn densities in Washington County are about twice that of Yuma County. The primary concern is during above average winters when high concentrations of pronghorn can cause agricultural damage/conflicts on private lands. Game damage licenses have been used to address these winter conflicts. The PH-2 Herd Management Plan (HMP) was adopted by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in 2018. The PH-4 HMP was adopted by the Commission in 2006. However, the low number of pronghorn in this herd has not warranted updating the HMP. The PH-19 pronghorn herd is in the SE Region and the Republican Rivers HPP area includes less than 10% of this pronghorn herd. The Management Plan for this herd was adopted by the Commission in 2017.

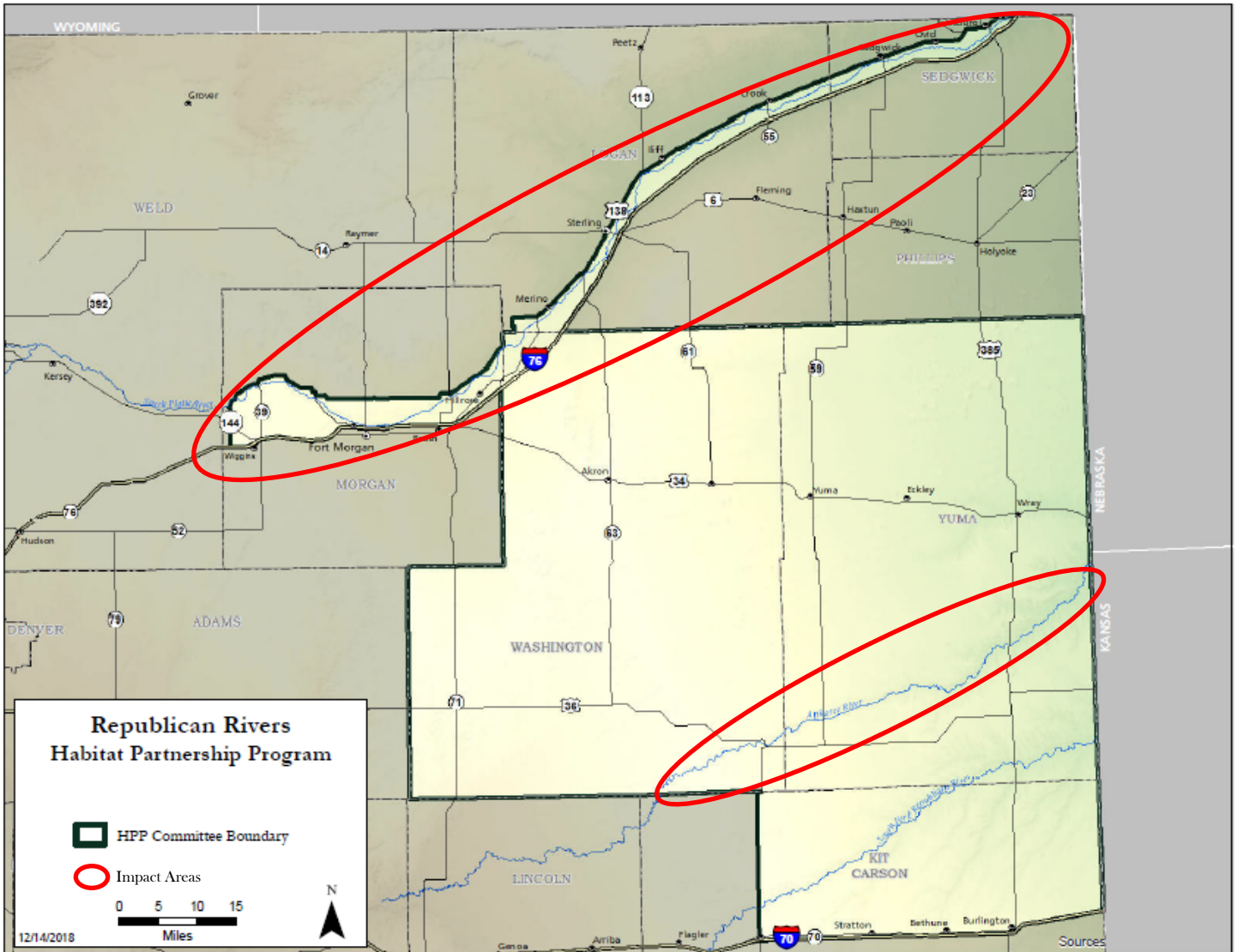
Table 1. Herd Management Summary for Republican River HPP Area

Management Herd	1990s Population Avg	2000s Population Avg	2010 - 2018 Population Avg	Current Population Management Objective
Deer - Arickaree D-55	1,860	1,630	2,300	2,300-2,700
<i>Game Management Units: 101,102</i>				
Deer - South Tablelands D-54*	3,410	3,000	3,600	3,500-4,000
<i>Game Management Units: 93,97,98,99,100</i>				
Deer- South Republican D-47*	1,620	2,750	3,300	2,000
<i>Game Management Units: 103,109,116,117</i>				
Deer - Big Sandy D-46*	1,950	2,070	2,530	2,500
<i>Game Management Units: 107,112,113,114,115,120,121</i>				
Pronghorn- Sandhills PH-4*	570	450	610	550-650
<i>Game Management Units: 93,97,98,101,102</i>				
Pronghorn- Hardpan PH-2*	1,350	1,200	1,550	1,400-1,700
<i>Game Management Units: 99,100</i>				
Pronghorn- Last Chance PH-19*	1,500	2,150	2,085	1,800-2,200
<i>Game Management Units: 106,107,109</i>				

* Republican River HPP area only includes portions of D-54, D-47, D-46, PH-4, PH-2, and PH-19, however listed population averages are for all of D-54, D-47, D-46, PH-4, PH-2, and PH-19.

IMPACT AREAS

There are two primary impact areas identified by the Committee as an area of focus. These include the Arikaree River corridor and the South Platte River Corridor. These are the two areas with the highest concentration of deer and are where the most agricultural damage occurs. The committee will focus on promoting projects in these areas that support their goals and strategies. The committee will make projects in these areas a priority but will continue to support projects from the entire RRHPP area.



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 habitat manipulation projects and/or 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

Habitat Manipulation: (including but not limited to)

- Prescribed burning
- Water developments
- Weed control
- Herbicide Vouchers
- Fertilization
- Seeding
- Hand thinning
- Mechanical treatment (chaining, roller chopping, hydro axing, etc.)

Fencing Projects: (including but not limited to)

- 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: (including but not limited to)

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

Information/Education Projects: (including but not limited to)

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

Research/Monitoring Projects: (including but not limited to)

- Habitat
- Population
- Inventory
- Movement

Conservation Easements (transaction costs only)

Archaeological Clearances (and other NEPA required clearances, Agency Preferred)

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 or assist CPW in meeting big game management objectives. Higher consideration will be given to projects proposed in/near past project areas.

OPERATING GUIDELINES

The Republican Rivers HPP includes lands in game management units 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107 and 109. Any landowner or their agent, sportsperson or private or public agency with land interests within the committee area may propose any project for consideration by the committee. The RRHPP committee shall consider the goals and objectives, prioritization of issues and availability of funding in approving project proposals. The committee is aware that additional issues will arise over the ten-year period that this plan covers and that priorities may change.

In order to accomplish the goals and objectives of this plan, the Republican Rivers HPP committee will utilize the project types listed above in accordance with the following operating guidelines.

1. Landowners and/or project applicants are encouraged to attend HPP meetings and present their project applications in person. This gives the Committee a chance to ask questions and to work with the landowner to find the most reasonable and effective options.
2. Applicants are encouraged to obtain matching funds for the HPP funding requested in their application. Priority will be given to projects with a higher ratio of matching funds. Projects with a lower ration of matching funds will be considered if the primary purpose is to improve or create wildlife habitat.
3. All projects should allow a reasonable amount of access for hunting on the property unless special circumstances can be justified.
4. Water developments will be considered when aiding in the reduction of conflict or dispersal of big game and livestock. In the case of a dry hole the committee will limit its responsibility to one half of the costs of a dry hole up to 300ft.
5. The Committee will require landowners to fence livestock out of habitat projects if it is determined that they could have a detrimental impact on the project.
6. The HPP project application is required for all projects.
7. Project proposals should be scheduled through the RRHPP administrative assistant for consideration by the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

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 admins.

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 stack yards 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 AND EDUCATION: 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 in Colorado. The HPP State Council then allocates funding to the individual HPP committees. The Larimer County 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.

The Republican Rivers HPP Committee has developed a budget allocation in line with our vision, which allows for short-term strategies to deal with immediate fence and forage conflicts caused by big game, but concentrates on adaptive, long-term management strategies leading to the establishment of healthy and sustainable rangelands. Our budget for the ten-year period has been broken down as follows:

BASE BUDGET ALLOCATION:

Habitat Manipulation	75%
Fencing & Game Damage	10%
Information & Education	5%
Research/Monitoring	5%
Conservation Easements & NEPA Related Activities	5%

TOTAL ALLOCATION: 100%

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

LAND USE CHANGES AND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

The RRHPP area has stayed relatively the same for the past several years; however there are a number of land use changes that will become increasingly important to wildlife management in the coming years. With the increasing demand for energy, the development of oil and natural gas resources in the area has increased and is likely to continue in future years. There has also been an increased demand for the development of renewable energy sources, primarily wind energy in the RRHPP area.

LIMITED WATER RESOURCES

Water resources in the area continue to be highly utilized and limited supplies have caused increased tension between users.

HUNTING ACCESS LIMITATIONS

The Committee also understands that the number of hunters has been on a downward trend and if it continues there will be significant impacts to wildlife management in this area. Promoting opportunities for youth and novice hunters will become a bigger priority for the committee in order to preserve the tradition of hunting and sustain long term wildlife management. In addition, hunting access continues to get harder as more and more ground is leased for hunting. Projects that increase access for the general public to hunt will be essential to retain hunters in addition to keeping big game populations within DAU guidelines. Increased hunting opportunity will also help to manage Chronic Wasting Disease prevalence in deer populations which is a growing concern.

The RRHPP committee will continue to work with the CPW to address these changes and others as they continue to develop. It will be important to determine the impacts of these changes on local wildlife populations and to support projects to minimize the overall impact to wildlife habitat.