

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Habitat Partnership Program
Uncompahgre



DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT PLAN



Approved - Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission: May 7, 2020
This plan is valid for 10 years from approval date.

2020 - 2030

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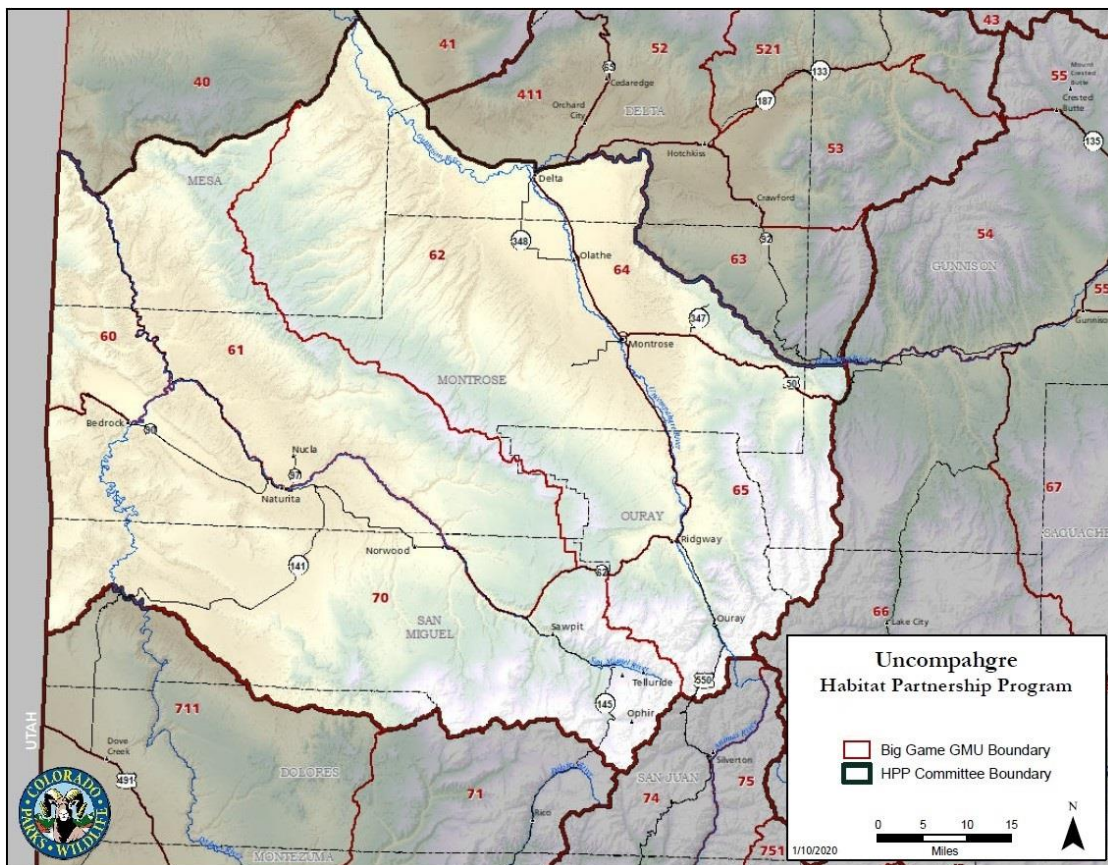
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Uncompahgre Habitat Partnership Program Committee was formed in 1996 to help resolve big game conflicts with fences and forage on private and public lands around the Uncompahgre Plateau. The area has experienced a steady increase in conflicts due to changing numbers and distribution of deer and elk, the impacts of human population growth and changing agricultural practices, degraded winter habitat, and declining habitat diversity across the committee area.

Impact areas have been identified in partnership with affected landowners and the local District Wildlife Managers. The committee has developed strategies for conflict resolution in these areas, including habitat improvement projects, special hunts, fencing assistance, land protection approaches, population control, and purchase of forage. Target budget allocations reflect the desired ratio of project types.

This Distribution Management Plan will be used by the committee as a guide to assist the committee in collaboratively analyzing conflicts, developing solutions, and allocating funding to help mitigate the ongoing and ever-changing conflicts that arise between big game management and private landowners, and to assist Colorado Parks and Wildlife in achieving game management objectives.

MAP OF UNCOMPAHGRE HPP AREA



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Bob Black, livestock grower representative | Started HPP Term: July 1996 |
| 2. Dave Andrews, livestock grower representative | Started HPP Term: Mar. 2006 |
| 3. Todd Stewart, livestock grower representative | Started HPP Term: Mar. 2006 |
| 4. Bobby Gray, sportsman representative | Started HPP Term: Jan. 2005 |
| 5. Angela LoSasso, BLM representative | Started HPP Term: May 2013 |
| 6. Loren Paulson, USFS representative | Started HPP Term: Mar. 2018 |
| 7. Kelly Crane, CPW representative | Started HPP Term: Mar. 2005 |

INTRODUCTION

The Uncompahgre Habitat Partnership Program Committee was appointed in 1996. The committee's primary mission is to identify and solve big game conflicts with rangeland forage, growing and harvesting hay crops, harvested crop aftermath grazing, and fences on both private and public lands within the six Game Management Units around the Uncompahgre Plateau; and to assist CPW with meeting big game management objectives within the committee area.

The Uncompahgre HPP area has experienced a steady increase in big game/landowner conflicts occurring primarily on the exterior "fringes" of the Uncompahgre Plateau, where private lands and public lands interface. Conflicts are primarily the result of expanded and changing distribution of deer and elk within the program area, a long-term increase in elk numbers, activities and development associated with human population growth and agricultural practices, habitat fragmentation, declining quantity and quality of big game winter habitat, and overall declining habitat diversity at the landscape level. Further, it appears that factors such as long-term land use conversion, fire suppression, and perhaps past game management and livestock grazing practices have exacerbated these issues. These factors have resulted in an unpredicted and undesirable distribution of big game animals that impact the forage base, agricultural crops, livestock operations, and fences on private and adjacent public lands.

The committee relies on public involvement to identify big game conflicts and determine the appropriate mitigation strategies. Impact areas have been identified through collaboration with committee members, affected landowners, and local District Wildlife Managers. The committee has successfully reduced conflicts with both short-term projects, such as fence repair and fertilization of impacted hay meadows; and long-term projects including vegetative treatments to improve habitat and productivity, water developments, and permanent fence construction. Recently, the committee has also considered funding for research and monitoring projects to assist CPW with meeting game management objectives. Other strategies for conflict resolution can include outreach and educational programs, special management hunts, conservation easements, and forage purchases.

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... assist in meeting 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

VISION:

“To develop a dynamic program that encourages an atmosphere of cooperation and partnership among private landowners, wildlife and habitat managers, various public interest groups, and local governments to reduce or solve big game conflicts with agriculture.”

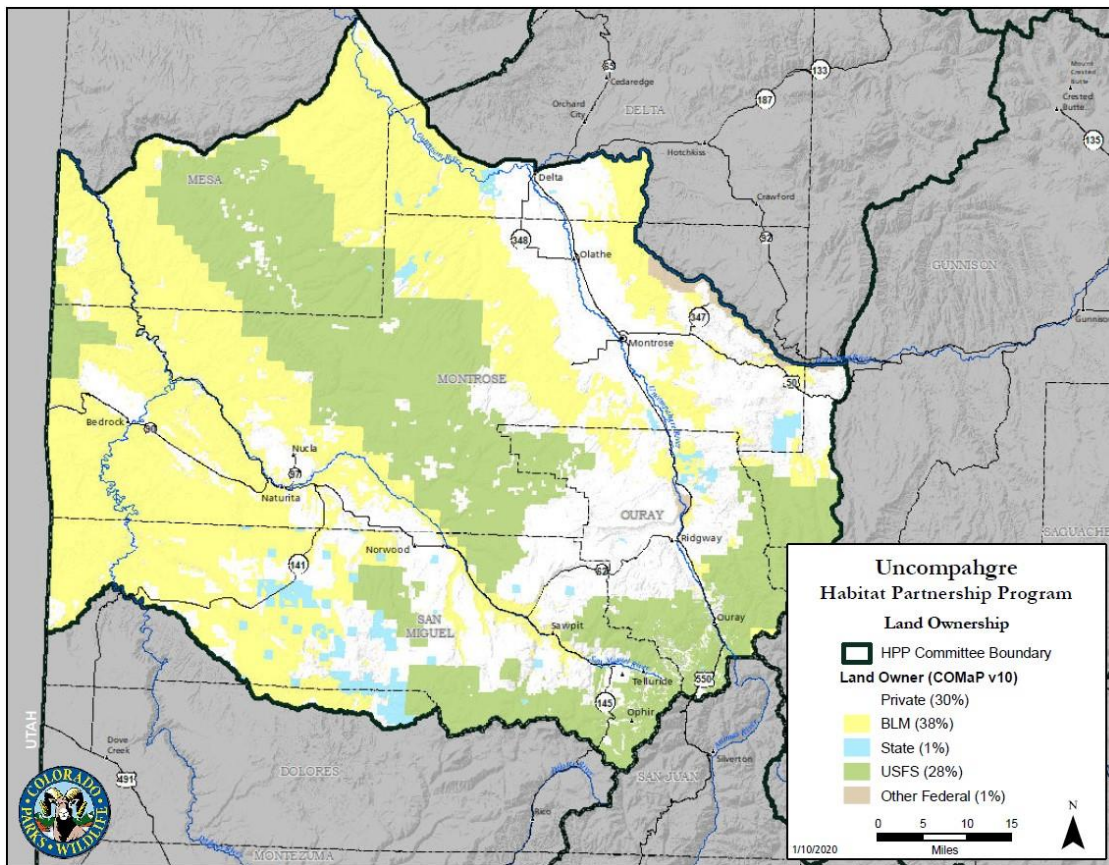
GOALS:

1. Ensure appropriate public involvement in identifying big game conflicts and solutions. Consider and integrate ecological, economic, and social values and the desires of stakeholders in our planning and decisions making process.
2. Prioritize conflicts and implement both short-term and long-term actions to resolve conflicts in a proactive, timely and cost-effective manner.
3. Make recommendations to stakeholders that encourage appropriate management actions for lands and populations that will reduce conflicts and help sustain individual operations and viable big game herds.
4. Improve communications among the Committee, CPW, ranchers, other private landowners, federal agencies, sportsmen, and local and state governments.
5. Encourage funding partnerships to increase our ability to accomplish the identified projects.
6. Improve the accuracy of population and habitat data collected within the committee area to provide a more appropriate basis for management decisions.
7. Improve big game habitat, distribution, and population sizes in accordance with CPW game management objectives.
8. Increase effectiveness of habitat manipulation projects and implement a landscape-scale philosophy by increasing the scope and connectivity of projects that incorporate public and private land, and create a link between past and future treatments on a landscape scale.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Uncompahgre HPP committee area includes Game Management Units 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, & 70, and is located in west-central Colorado, bordering Utah. The Uncompahgre Plateau is the most prominent land feature in the area, which contains 6 counties (Mesa, Delta, Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel, Dolores) and approximately 65,000 people. The human population is primarily concentrated in the valleys between Delta and Ouray, with smaller communities on the West End including Nucla and Norwood.

The committee area is bounded on the west by the Utah State line; on the north by the Dolores River, Unawep Canyon, and the Lower Gunnison River; on the east by the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Big Blue Creek, and Big Blue Creek-Cimarron Creek Divide; on the south by the Ouray-San Juan, San Juan-San Miguel, and San Miguel-Dolores County lines, Disappointment Creek, the Dolores River, and Summit Canyon Creek to the Utah State line. The area consists of approximately 4,994 square miles, which is 38.5% BLM, 31.7% private, 27.9% USFS, 1.7% State, and 0.2% other. The area ranges in elevation from a low of 4700 ft. at Gateway to over 14,309 ft. at Uncompahgre Peak.



HABITAT DESCRIPTION

At elevations below approximately 6,500-ft the predominant vegetation type is the high desert plant community, including saltbush, sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and greasewood. Elevations between approximately 6,000-7,500-ft are characterized by pinyon-juniper woodlands and grassland/shrub. The pinyon-juniper type covers approximately 40% of the committee area and is the principal plant community. From approximately 7,500 to 8,500-ft, ponderosa pine and mountain shrub are the dominant vegetation type. Elevations above 8,500 ft are characterized by aspen forests and a mixed spruce-fir complex.

Agricultural areas and cultivated croplands occur primarily in the Uncompahgre Valley between Montrose and Delta and in the other major river valleys surrounding the Plateau. As a result of extensive water distribution networks, the valley has become one of the major crop-producing areas on the Western Slope, and agriculture contributes greatly to the local economy. Agricultural practices within the committee area include row crop production and orchards on irrigated lands below 6,000 feet in elevation; alfalfa and grass hay production on irrigated lands below 7,500 ft; and livestock grazing on private and public lands throughout the area. Major crops include corn, pinto beans, wheat, onions, and alfalfa.

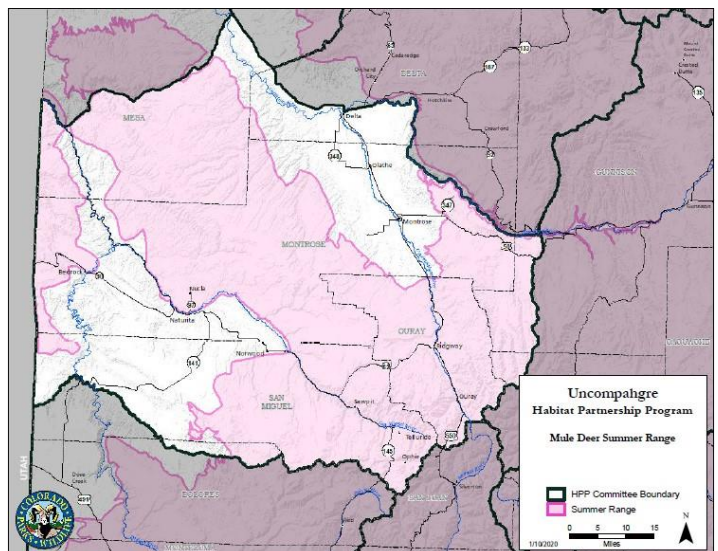
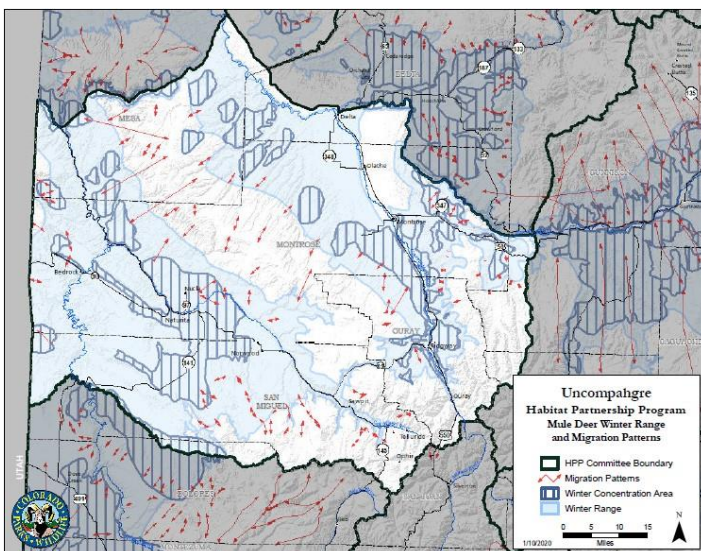
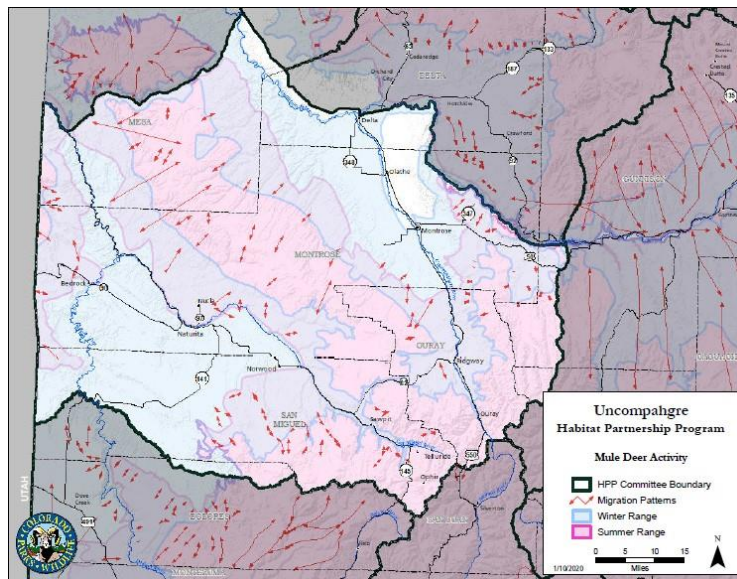
The climate of the Uncompahgre committee area varies depending on season and elevation. Areas below 6,500 ft are usually hot and dry during the summer and remain free of snow during most of the winter. Elevations from 6,500 to 8,000-ft usually have persistent snow between late November and March. Areas above 8,000 ft can receive heavy snowfall, and from December through late April are generally inaccessible except by foot or snowmobile. Average annual precipitation varies from less than 8 inches at lower elevations to over 30 inches on top of the Plateau. Snowfall accounts for the majority of the precipitation at the higher elevations. Monsoonal moisture between July and September can also be an important source of precipitation at all elevations.

Habitat quality within the committee area appears to be declining, particularly on winter ranges. Most of the winter range has experienced an aging process in the past 70-100 years, resulting in a decadent and unproductive vegetative community. This is due primarily to the lack of disturbance (primarily fire) which would normally reset vegetative succession. Recurring and extended drought periods also negatively affect forage quality and availability. Other vegetative issues include noxious weed invasion, low levels of forbs and grasses, decreased plant species diversity, and pinyon-juniper invasion into sagebrush and mountain shrub communities.

BIG GAME POPULATION SUMMARY

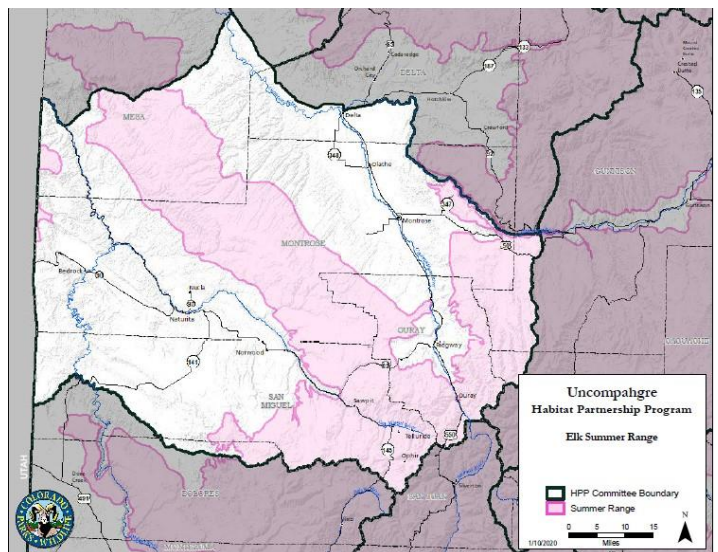
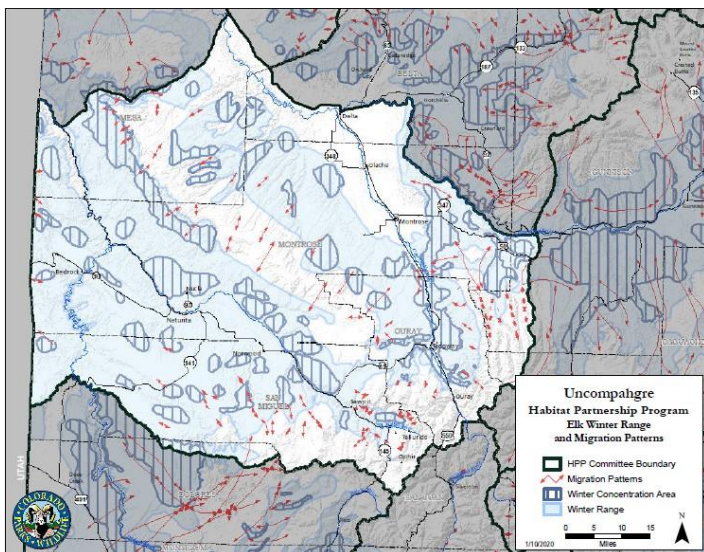
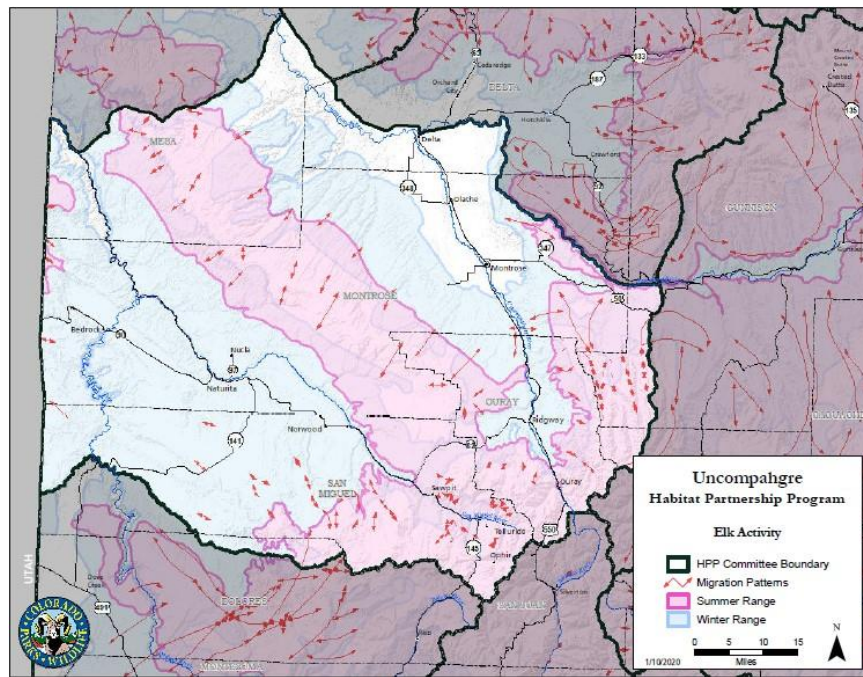
DEER - CPW data shows deer numbers declined throughout the late 80's and 90's, but have recently increased. The population had been holding steady on the upper end of the objective prior to the winter of 2007-2008, however, since then the population has fallen to below objective based on low winter survival during above average snowpack winters, drought conditions and poor recruitment since. It is likely that the mule deer status on the Uncompahgre Plateau is multi-factorial, with habitat loss and fragmentation, drought conditions, decadent and maturing habitats, increased human activity, predation, disease, vehicle collision and elk competition each playing a role. There is a resident deer herd in the Uncompahgre Valley associated with the agricultural fields which is being actively managed for herd reduction to minimize agricultural conflict and reduce Chronic Wasting Disease prevalence.

DEER RANGE MAPS



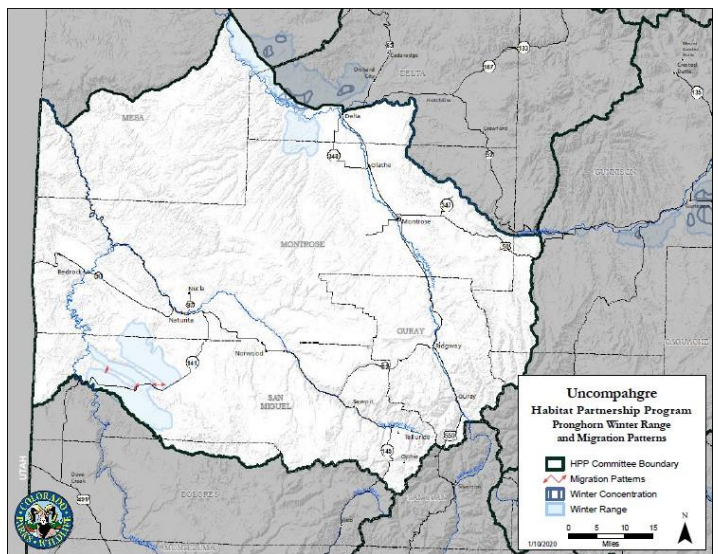
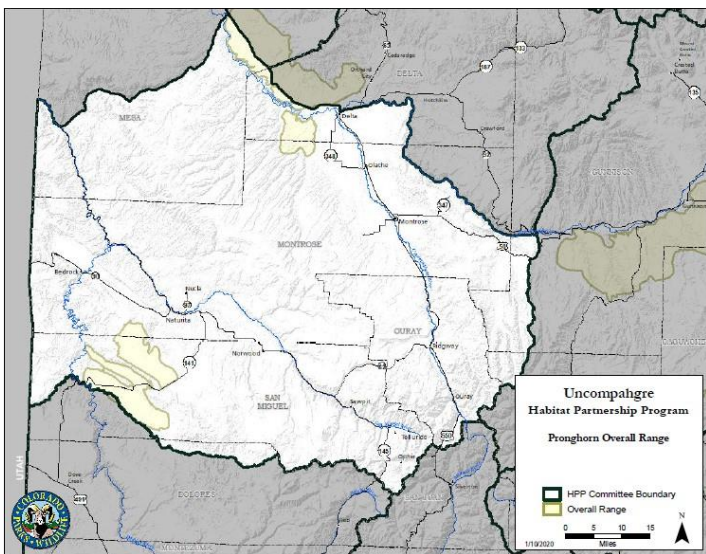
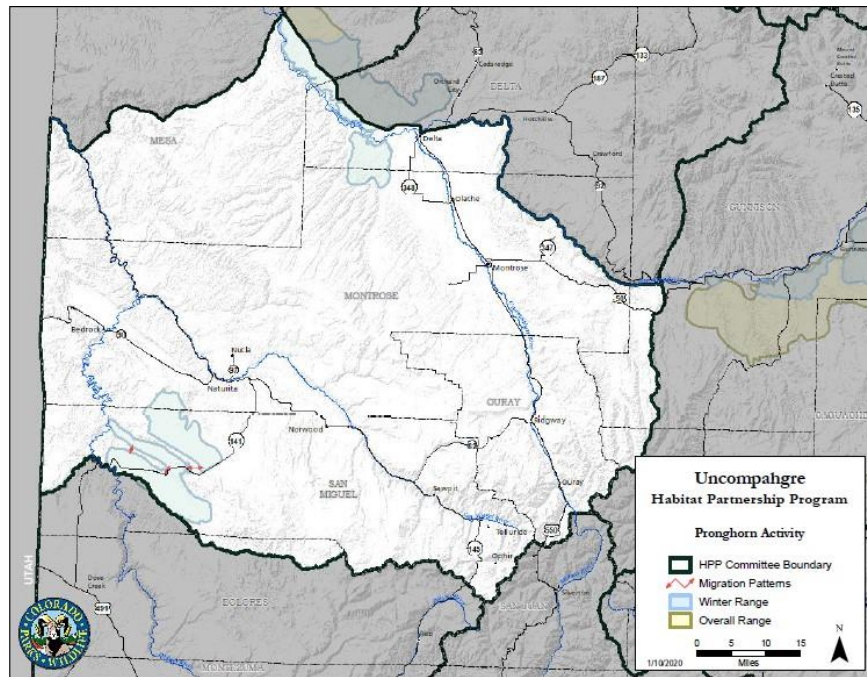
ELK - Elk populations had increased in the late 1990's and early 2000's, but have since been reduced to similar population numbers that were present in the early 1990's and are at objective. Harvest appears to have closely followed these trends, but harvest and low calf recruitment into the population have been major factors in the reduction of elk populations in the area. Factors affecting the number of elk harvested each year include: (1) hunting pressure from over-the-counter license holders (i.e., archery either-sex and general rifle bull hunters choosing to hunt in Unit 62); (2) the number of limited licenses issued (i.e., antlerless licenses in Unit 62 and all licenses in Unit 61); (3) season structure and antler point restrictions; (4) weather; (5) population size and structure, (6) increase of hunting restrictions on private lands and (7) private rangelands being subdivided for dwellings.

ELK RANGE MAPS



PRONGHORN - The pronghorn herd between Delta and Grand Junction had been productive and sustained hunting until the severe drought conditions of the early 2000's took place. Since then, drought conditions, hemorrhagic diseases, noxious weed encroachment, loss of shrub cover, and decreased water availability have contributed to low fawn survival and population decline to the point of closing the hunting season in 2012. Since then there have been several years of good summer moisture where fawn survival has improved and the population has grown, but it does seem to decline again when drought conditions persist.

PRONGHORN RANGE MAPS



MOOSE - Moose in the area appeared about ten years ago, initially with cow moose in the Dallas Creek area, but have begun to increase in the last six years in the Cimarron drainages. A single either-sex license is available in GMU 65 to provide hunting opportunity in the area. It is important to note that this moose population is spread across twelve GMUs; eleven of which are outside of the committee area. Conflict with moose in this area has been minimal.

MOOSE RANGE MAPS

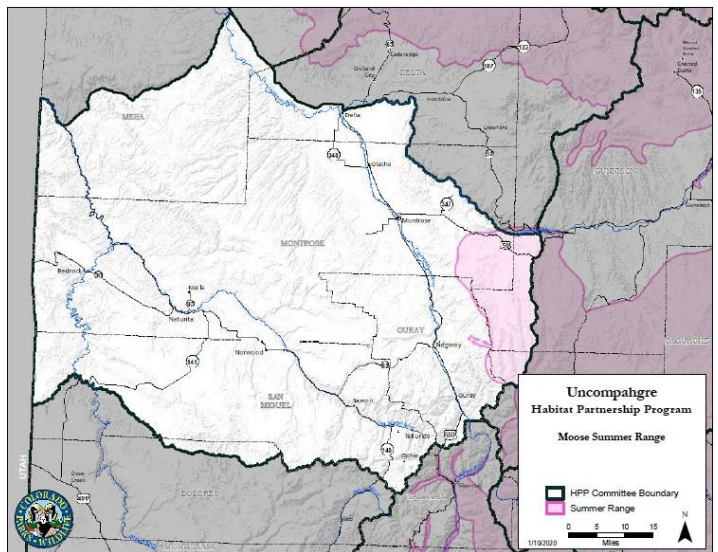
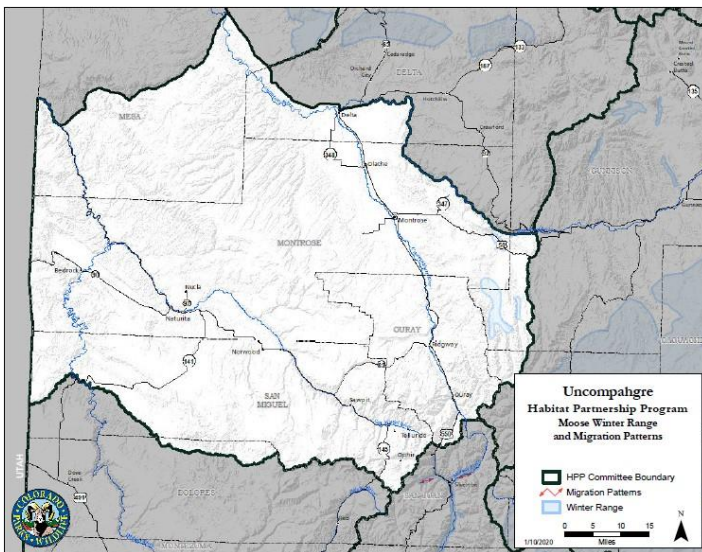
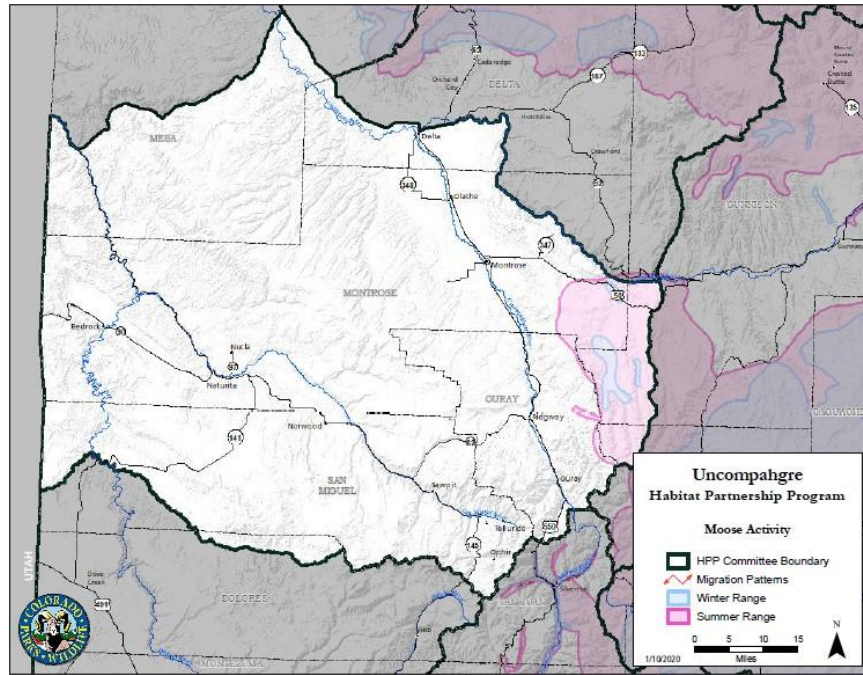


Table 1. Data Analysis Unit Summary for Uncompahgre HPP Area

Management Herd	1990s Population Average	2000s Population Average	2010 - 2018 Population Average	Current Population Management Objective
Deer - Uncompahgre (D19)	29,800	24,300	15,700	36000-38000
<i>Game Management Units: 61, 62</i>				
Deer - La Sal (D23)	1400	1300	1300	2500-3000
<i>Game Management Units: 60</i>				
Deer - Groundhog (D24)	27000	24200	15700	15000-19000
<i>Game Management Units: 70</i>				
Deer - Cimarron (D40)	10800	9300	7400	13500-15000
<i>Game Management Units: 64, 65</i>				
Elk - Uncompahgre (E20)	11000	13000	10100	8500-9500
<i>Game Management Units: 61, 62</i>				
Elk - Paradox (E40)	300	800	1900	9000-1100
<i>Game Management Units: 60</i>				
Elk - Disappointment Creek (E24)	18200	20900	18200	17000-19000
<i>Game Management Units: 70</i>				
Elk - Cimarron (E35)	6600	7000	5900	5000-5500
<i>Game Management Units: 64, 65</i>				
Pronghorn - Delta (A27)	200	100	125	*
<i>Game Management Units: 41, 411, 62 (only 62 is within UHPP area)</i>				
<i>*This population is too small to support hunting and does not have an HMP or population model</i>				
Moose - San Juan (M4)	450	350	450	400-500
<i>Game Management Units: 64, 65 and 11 GMUs outside of the committee area</i>				

IMPACT AREAS

The committee has identified specific areas where the majority of big game conflicts currently exist. Current impact areas include (not necessarily in order of priority):

- Bostwick Park
- Cedar Creek & Cimarrons
- Uncompahgre Valley
- Cow Creek
- Log Hill Mesa & McKenzie Butte
- Dallas Creek
- Horsefly
- Monitor Mesa
- Norwood, Sanborn Park, & Mailbox Park
- Wrights, Beaver, Wilson, Specie, and Hastings Mesas
- Dry Creek Basin
- Mesa Creek & Tabeguache
- Paradox & Sinbad Valleys
- Unaweep Canyon & Gateway

Within the Uncompahgre HPP committee area, the most serious categories of big game conflict are:

1. Damage to fences.
2. Spring, summer and fall damage to pastures and growing or harvested crops.
3. Elk use of early forage green-up ahead of cattle being moved to spring range.
4. Limited water sources and storage capacity.

The primary drivers for conflicts with big game are:

1. Fragmentation of habitat causing disruption to the natural movement patterns.
2. Trail development and the expansion of scope and timing of recreational activities.
3. Declining conditions, distribution, and availability of natural habitats, especially winter ranges.
4. Overlap of agricultural areas with natural big game winter ranges.
5. Undesirable distribution of deer and elk throughout the area.
6. Inadequate harvest of elk on private lands resulting in refuge areas.

These items are explained in greater detail on the following page.

Habitat fragmentation and loss due to residential development primarily occurs near the lower fringes of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The most rapid development is occurring on the west side of the Uncompahgre Valley between Delta and Ridgway. Some of these developments, such as those on Loghill Mesa and in the Government Springs area, occur in important wintering areas for elk. Other areas of increased residential development in big game habitat include the Norwood and Nucla areas, Dallas Divide, Iron Springs Mesa, and Unaweep Canyon. The upper portions of the Plateau are composed primarily of public BLM and USFS lands, and have been relatively unaffected by residential development. However, recreational traffic in these areas has increased significantly in the last several decades, due to both the increase in numbers of recreationists and the ever-expanding scope and timing of recreational activities.

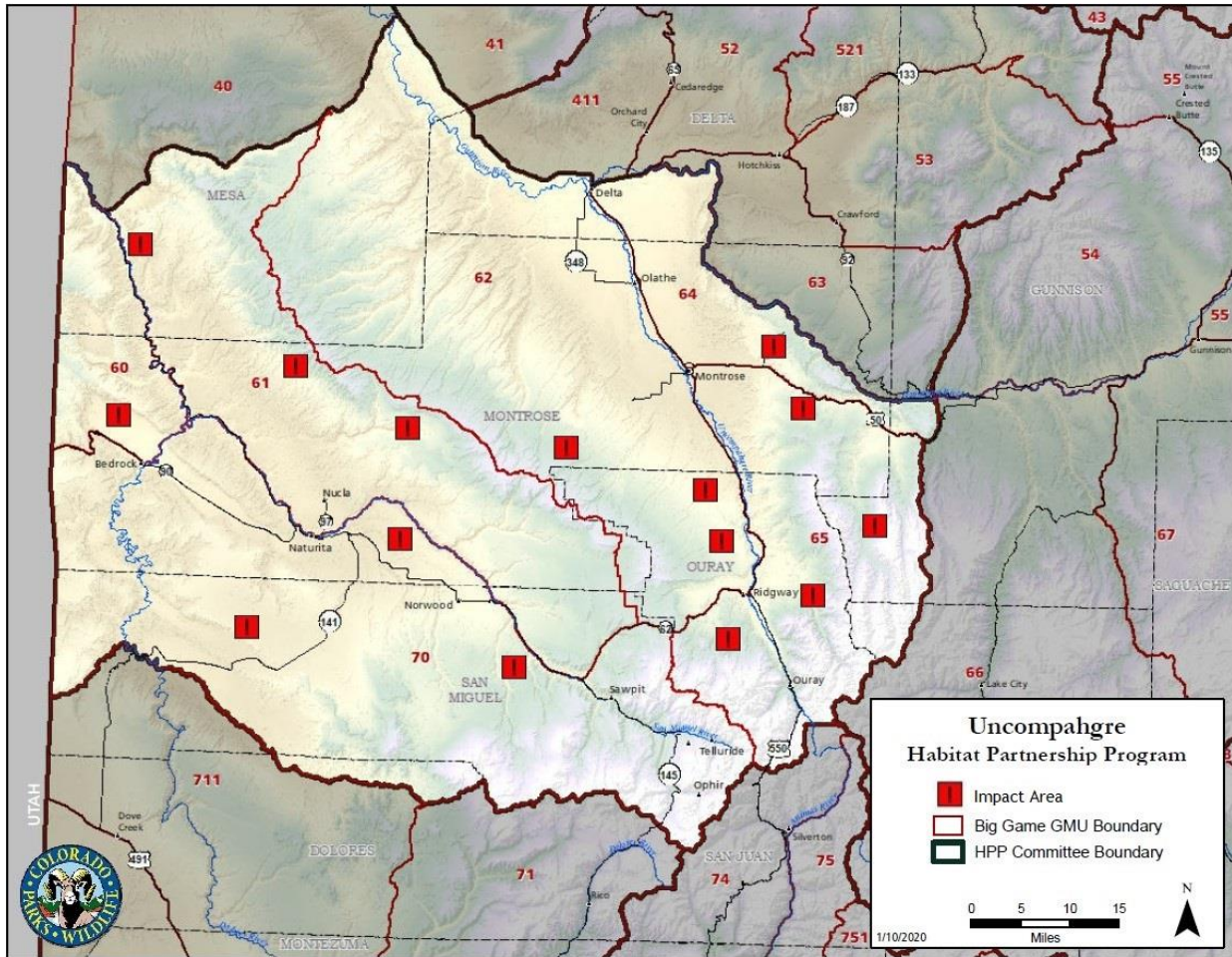
The amount and connectivity of winter range has also been negatively impacted by human disturbance. Conversion of winter range to housing developments and recreation areas drives wintering animals onto the progressively smaller areas of remaining winter range. However, the declining quality and availability of winter forage vegetation is increasingly inadequate to support wintering animals. These factors concentrate deer and elk onto agricultural areas where forage is available in greater abundance and quality compared to what the adjacent ranges can offer.

Deer and elk conflicts with agriculture appear to be due to distribution problems rather than overall population numbers. The lack of hunter access to large concentrations of big game on private lands, and elk moving to the lower elevations in the pinyon-juniper zone early in the season, make it difficult to achieve the harvest necessary to disperse herds from private lands.

DEER - A resident deer population has established itself in the irrigated lands of the Uncompahgre Valley. The deer in this population do not migrate. Hunting opportunities are limited in the valley due to safety and access reasons. Damage occurs to sweet corn and field corn crops. In the highest damage areas a concerted effort has been made to decrease or stabilize the deer population. Deer/vehicle accidents are a major concern on the east side of the Uncompahgre Plateau.

ELK - Many landowners in the Uncompahgre committee area have expressed concern about elk conflicts, both perceived and realized. On the other hand, it should be noted that many landowners realize significant economic benefits from elk by leasing hunting rights, selling priority landowner vouchers, guiding elk hunts, and charging hunter trespass fees. Elk conflicts include elk grazing spring pastures and hay meadows, fence damage, competition with domestic livestock for range forage on private and public lands, and damage to cured forage. Elk/vehicle accidents, although much less common than deer/vehicle accidents, are another concern.

IMPACT AREAS MAP



Resolving conflicts in these zones is a priority for the Uncompahgre committee. Projects within the targeted zones where the most severe conflicts occur will be given higher priority in funding decisions. However, while these areas are currently targeted for conflict resolution work, conflicts exist throughout the Uncompahgre committee area. It is likely that patterns of land ownership and land use will continue to change, resulting in new conflicts and challenges in the future. These may affect which areas the committee considers to be higher priority impact areas.

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 implemented on public lands, private lands, or a combination of both wherever the committee believes the project has the best chance to effectively reduce or eliminate big game conflicts, or to assist CPW in meeting big game management objectives.

OPERATING GUIDELINES

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. Projects that mitigate big game conflicts with agriculture will have higher priority than those that achieve big game management objectives. Project applications should adequately address the following questions:

1. 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.
2. Will the project improve conditions and/or big game distribution on large-scale, critical habitat ranges?
3. Does the project impact a significant number of big game animals?
4. Will the project benefit the landowners, management agencies, big game, and the public? (e.g. is constructing a tall fence at a known big-game crossing point asking for failure?)
5. Does the proposed project replace or maintain an existing exterior fence? If so, what is the condition of the existing fence? Have non-structural solutions been tried, such as distribution hunts, propane cannons, management changes, etc.?
6. Does the applicant/landowner allow hunting?
7. Is the landowner willing to contribute towards the project? Are other cooperator funds available for cost-share?
8. Has the project been developed in coordination the local DWM or appropriate land management agency?
9. Have the special considerations for Gunnison Sage Grouse populations & habitat been addressed?

PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Comprehensive project monitoring is critical for the long-term sustainability of HPP. To provide documentation, determine treatment effectiveness, and 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 local HPP committee and administrative assistant. At a minimum, applicant must agree to allow the Committee and the local Wildlife Manager or biologist access to the project site(s) to evaluate and monitor success of treatment(s) supported through this cooperative funding. Before-and-after photos and other measurable data will be required as part of

the application evaluation phase, as well as follow-up inspection and monitoring. Additional desirable monitoring protocols may include:

1. Evaluating habitat improvement projects for signs increased wildlife use by installing game cameras or establishing photo points, vegetation transects, etc.
2. Monitoring local perceptions of impact areas to determine the extent of conflict reduction and confirm whether the treatment was appropriate to reduce or eliminate conflict.
3. Compiling harvest data from distribution management hunts for all permit holders and providing data to the CPW terrestrial wildlife branch.
4. Committees can assist in the collection and analysis of habitat data on big game forage conditions and habitat capabilities on public lands where additional information is required to settle forage/utilization disputes and seasonal distribution problems between livestock and big game in specific allotments.
5. Committees are also encouraged to monitor the success or failure of their projects using methodology acceptable to the Committee.

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 and public lands attracts 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. Fence projects should result in the reduction of damage claims, overall habitat improvement, and improved distribution of big game. Fences will be wildlife-friendly to HPP specifications. Maintenance will be responsibility of the landowner.
3. **GAME DAMAGE PROJECTS:** Providing stackyards for landowners otherwise ineligible for them and using hunt coordinators and forage purchases to 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; or those that assist CPW in meeting management objectives. 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 protect a property’s conservation values, particularly agricultural productivity, wildlife habitat, and hunting access. Improving access to public and private lands improves harvest of big game animals in impact areas, and helps disperse problem animals.

The committee recognizes that future changes in human and big game populations, as well as habitat condition and availability, will require flexibility in dealing with new conflicts and management challenges. Any projects that are outside of these categories, but still meet the scope and purpose of HPP, may be submitted to the committee and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. These “non-typical” projects should utilize creative approaches to conflict resolution or management objectives.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

The operating budget for HPP is based on 5% of the total annual revenues from big game license sales in HPP areas. The HPP State Council allocates annual funding to the local HPP committees. Additional funds are also available through the HPP State Council for special projects or unforeseen opportunities that are beyond the capacity of the local committee. These funds supplement the existing budget and allow committees to occasionally participate in larger-scale special projects.

The Uncompahgre HPP Committee has developed a target budget allocation that emphasizes solutions to immediate fence and forage conflicts with big game, but also allows for adaptive, long-term strategies resulting in healthy and sustainable rangelands. It is important to acknowledge that the budget is intended to be flexible. While these are desired allocations based upon the priority level for different types of projects, the committee retains the ability to shift funds as needed between categories to effectively resolve big game conflicts.

Habitat Manipulation	50%
Game Damage	20%
Fencing	20%
Other (<i>-Includes research/monitoring, information/education, etc.</i>)	10%
<u>TOTAL ALLOCATION</u>	100%

CURRENT & FORESEEABLE ISSUES

The committee anticipates that multiple factors will influence big game populations and distribution in the future, which will drive conflicts with agriculture and may change management objectives. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

RECREATION

Many forms of outdoor recreation take place on public lands in important big game habitats, and have increasingly become year-round activities. Recreation on winter ranges is particularly concerning, and has severe negative impacts on big game at the population level. Motorized and non-motorized recreation influences big game distribution and movement patterns, as human activity pushes deer and elk onto private land refuges where conflicts occur with agricultural operations. As recreational access on public lands continues to expand and the number of users increase even with special closures and timing limitations enacted, wildlife conflicts will be exacerbated in existing areas and begin to occur in new areas.

DEVELOPMENT

Portions of the Uncompahgre HPP area are experiencing housing and road development as the human population continues to expand. Much of this development is occurring in big game winter range and replaces former agricultural fields, as well as impacting river bottoms and other big game habitat resources. Subdivisions, including those with larger or dispersed individual parcels, result in significant habitat fragmentation and loss. Continuing these patterns of human development will change big game movement, distribution, and conflict potential throughout the committee area.

OIL & GAS

Historically, there has been very little oil and gas development in this HPP area but the possibility of development in the future exist with the potential to displace big game and create conflicts in new areas. Additionally, mining operations in the area have the potential to expand and increase conflicts with big game.

AGRICULTURAL CHANGES

The committee area is experiencing a small shift in agricultural practices to include conversion of pastures and traditional crops to more novel products, including hemp. While the committee may not participate in conflicts directly related to hemp production, the loss of acres previously involved in forage production could shift or concentrate conflicts in other areas.

GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE

This HPP area currently has populations of Gunnison Sage Grouse that require additional levels of monitoring and project compliance to minimize potential impacts. The committee recognizes the importance of Gunnison Sage Grouse and will ensure that no HPP projects are detrimental to them.

DISEASE

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is present in the committee area, and will likely influence game management objectives in the future. The Uncompahgre Valley has been shown to be a hotspot for CWD with prevalence exceeding 10% based on 2017 mandatory testing.