



## **HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES**

### **Montelores HPP Committee**

**Dolores Public Lands Center, Dolores, CO**

**February 11th, 2020**

**5:30 p.m.**

**HPP Members Present:** Andy Brown, CPW; John Sheek, Sportsman; George West, Livestock Grower; Nate West, BLM; Ivan Messinger, USFS; Eldon Simmons, Livestock Grower; Tanner Young, Livestock Grower

**Guests:** Larry Copeland, Garth Nelson – BLM, Oma Fleming- Dove Creek Weed District, Ray Millich, Gary Young

#### **Introductions & Budget Report:**

Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$73,300.00

#### **New Business:**

1. The Young pond application was not completed and the project was tabled for the next meeting.
2. Oma Fleming presented the annual herbicide cost-share program for Dove Creek Weed Control District. The county funds herbicide cost-share on properties west of the Dolores River, however there is no funding for the east side. Oma noted that the program has been especially successful with absentee landowners. Last year HPP funding went towards over 20 cost-shares on large parcels with good wildlife habitat and use. The proposal is to continue funding the program in FY20. The project was approved for \$5,000.
3. Ivan Messinger presented a USFS burn project. This is a multi-phased project, with the first phase including ~8,000 acres on Haycamp Mesa and Boggy Draw. The burn will be accomplished with aerial ignition, which can treat more acres per day with better distribution and a lower overall cost than hand crews. One burn unit is a second entry reburn (originally burned 5 years ago), and this fire will establish a good return interval. The other units are a first entry burn to eliminate needle cast and litter. All prescribed fire in this area are designed to reduce fuel loads, but will also have major benefits for wildlife by removing thinning overgrown stands in a mosaic pattern and removing ground cover to rejuvenate forage production. The total HPP request was for \$232,000. The committee

approved \$32,000 for FY20 (Ivan Messinger abstained from voting), and will request the rest of the funding from the State Council.

4. Garth Nelson briefly presented a BLM proposal for tamarisk and Russian olive removal in McElmo Creek. The project was not on the agenda and so it was tabled until it could be properly noticed. Additionally, the State Council recently gave updated guidance to local committees concerning tamarisk/riparian restoration projects, and it is likely that this project will not meet the scope of HPP with this guidance in mind.
5. Fertilizer applications were approved as follows (Tanner Young abstained from voting): Lonnie Hensley, \$1200 (80 acres). Gary Young, \$750 (50 acres). Tanner Young, \$1500 (100 acres). Ray Millich, \$4000 (390 acres). Larry Copeland, \$1695 (113 acres).
6. Sarah Bangert presented a brush management project for Joe Lanier on his Pleasant View property near the Dolores River Canyon. Several years ago large portions of the property were masticated to cut back oakbrush and improve forage and grazing conditions. The regrowth is now due for retreatment. The project proposal involves implementing intensive goat grazing on 300+ acres to strip emerging oakbrush leaves and reduce regeneration. Goat grazing is expected to create mosaic patterns in the oakbrush stands by removing younger clumps while leaving older stands for cover. While the goats may also graze on desirable forbes, as much as 50% of their intake will be oakbrush, and the forage species will have sufficient time to recover through the rest of the growing season to be available for wildlife.

Initial treatment requires intensive grazing over a 2-3 year period, and the retreatment interval is expected to be every 7 years. This type of treatment has some history of success in other test situations, however this will be a new test for this application. If successful, it may be implemented across larger landscape projects on public or private lands in southwest Colorado. Monitoring will be completed with vegetation trend studies, soil samples, and visual inspection.

The committee was interested in the treatment but noted several concerns with the project, including the potential for game damage claims and the cost per acre when several years of retreatment were considered. The project application also noted that there was very little landowner match. The project was tabled for the next meeting to give committee members time to consider the project further and obtain additional information.

#### **Other Business/Roundtable:**

1. The committee reviewed the final draft of the HMP and made several minor revisions.
2. The management plan for E24 is in the revision process and will be presented to the committee for a comment letter at the April meeting.

**Next Meeting: April 21st, 6:30pm**