



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Uncompahgre HPP Committee

CPW Office - 2300 S. Townsend Ave, Montrose
August 31st, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

Uncompahgre HPP Members Present: Thane Stranathan, BLM; Dave Alexander, Livestock Grower; Todd Stewart, Livestock Grower; Bob Black, Livestock Grower; Bobby Gray, Sportsperson; Kelly Crane, CPW; Loren Paulson, USFS

Guests: Michael Blanck, CPW; Ninette Richardson, Ella Marolf, Gerald Richardson, Bruce Irvine, Maddie Rehn, Bruce Norwood, Linda Ingo, Andrea Ingo, David Svenson, Luke Holguin, Rachel Sralla, Bruce Norwood

Introduction: Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$148,400.00.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews:

1. Bruce Irvine presented a pond construction proposal. The property experiences use by elk from fall through spring, as well as year-round deer use. Water is limited in the area, which causes competition between livestock and big game for water sources and poor distribution/utilization of habitat. The project consists of excavating a new pond and sealing it with bentonite. The pond will fill with runoff and monsoon moisture, and will significantly improve water availability for livestock and wildlife in the area. The project was approved for \$3,750.00.
2. Linda Ingo presented a stock tank construction project on the McKeever USFS allotment. The area experiences deer use during migration and winter, and holds elk in the spring. Water is a limiting factor in the area. The project would be a replacement of a bottomless stock tank, which is in severe disrepair and has lost structural integrity. The well consistently produces 4 gallons per minute; however the tank has not captured enough of the water to rely on for critical water during drought. The project was approved for 50% of costs up to \$7,500.00.
3. The committee reviewed a pond improvement project from Kevin Quintana. Last year the committee funded costs to excavate the pond, and the landowner match consisted of additional contractor costs as well as bentonite and seeding. The bentonite application was not entirely successful, and the pond does not hold water as well as it should. The project involves a second application of bentonite. The committee questioned if a pond liner would be more effective, and also discussed the issue of whether HPP or the landowner should pay for additional costs. The project was tabled.

4. David Svenson presented a forage purchase project. Resident elk utilize private irrigated hayfields between Colona and Ridgway throughout the winter, causing damage to fences and consuming forage. Many neighboring landowners in the area are not tolerant of big game and the associated damages. Pasture rent for livestock grazing in the fall would typically cost up to \$7,500 based on \$1.25/head x 200 cattle x 30 days; however after this intensive livestock grazing, there is little forage left for wildlife. The proposal involves continuing to irrigate a 70 acre field after the first cutting in August. 8-12" minimum of forage will be left standing, and Mr. Svenson will allow elk to freely graze on the hayfield from September 15, 2022 through March 31, 2023. Allowing elk to remain on this hayfield will reduce the time spent and forage consumed on other fields, thereby reducing conflicts with less tolerant landowners. This project was initiated as a trial in FY22, and seems to have been successful in reducing game damage complaints on neighboring landowners. The project was approved for \$7,500.00 in FY23. The committee noted that this project model is compensation for the landowner for allowing elk to graze with a minimum required amount of quality forage, with the aim of alleviating game damage claims on neighboring parcels. There is no guarantee of continuing the project in the future, particularly if range conditions change, or neighboring grazing practices change in such a way that reduces conflicts on those fields.
5. Ella Marolf presented a fencing project for a pipe fence. Livestock are present in the summer, and elk heavily utilize the are in the winter. Frequent use and fence crossing on the property cause constant damage and fences need annual repair. The project consists of removing old pole fence and replacing it with pipe fence, with posts set in concrete and pipe rails. The committee discussed the design specs, which are different from standard wildlife-friendly designs but still meet maximum height and ground spacing. The committee supported the project, but the cost of the project per foot was too high. The committee offered to fund \$1,250.00, which represents an average price of \$1.50/ft for materials, or to table the project for a potential redesign. The landowners decided to resubmit the project at the next meeting.
6. The committee considered a pipeline proposal from Oscar Massey. Continued drought has significantly impacted the water supply on the north end of the Uncompahgre Plateau, and the Masseys have been hauling water for several years. The project involves installing a pipeline to bring water from existing springs to areas where livestock could make better use of the habitat and forage. However, the project site is on USFS and archaeological clearances have not been obtained. The project was tabled.
7. Luke Holguin and Maddie Rehn introduced a comprehensive vegetation management plan for Baldy Mountain. Approximately 6,100 acres will be mechanically thinned and/or burned to help increase the quality of forage and the amount of edge habitat, and improve wildlife movement and utilization throughout the area. Treatments will occur on USFS, BLM, and private lands in Ouray County. The committee supported the project and asked Luke and Maddie to complete an application for funding from both the local committee and the State Council.

Other Business:

1. The committee reviewed the draft Herd Management Plans for E40 and E20. For both plans, the committee supported the proposed population objectives and the sex ratio objectives. Comment letters will be provided to the biologist.

Next Meeting: November 9 @ 6:30pm