



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

### Lower Colorado River HPP Committee Zoom Video Conference February 1, 2022 1:00 pm

**Lower Colorado HPP Members Present:** Darren Chacon- CPW, Scot Dodero- Livestock Grower, Pat Luark- Livestock Grower, Jim Nieslanik- Livestock Grower, Rick Bumgardner- Sportsperson, Hilary Boyd- BLM, Phil Nyland- USFS (proxy)

**Guests:** Michael Blanck- CPW, Matt Yamashita- CPW, Brian Wodrich- CPW, Peter Boyatt- CPW, Layton Stutsman- CPW, Brian Gray- CPW, Ivan Archer- CPW, Genevieve Fuller- CPW, Kristy Wallner- BLM, Nick Jaramillo- BLM, Joe Hood

**Introductions:** Committee members and guests were introduced.

**General Public Comments:** Hilary shared that she had accepted a new position as Assistant Field Manager with the BLM and would continue in her role on the committee until her previous position was filled. The committee congratulated her on the promotion and thanked her for her time and continued dedication to HPP.

**Budget Report:** The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$143,250.60.

**Old Business:** The minutes from the August 12<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> meetings were approved as written.

#### **New Business:**

1. Hood Ranch Habitat Improvement- Joe Hood presented a continuation of aspen thinning projects approved in previous years. Joe shared photos of the completed project areas and the success of opening up additional habitat that was previously inaccessible. The cleared areas have more available forage and expand upon available habitat on the property that was hard to access. The project entails cutting, stacking, and burning of dead and down aspen trees. Additionally, the project area is maintained through weed spraying, mowing, and seeding to reduce noxious weeds and promote the growth of good forage and habitat for wildlife and livestock. The project was approved for up to \$8,610.00.
2. BLM Big Cedar Hill Aerial Seeding- Kristy Wallner presented a seeding project on the Trail Gulch allotment in an area called Big Cedar Hill. In the fall of 2021, BLM and permittee, Pat Luark, mowed 258 acres of pinyon-juniper and dense sagebrush. The understory lacks production in some areas and there is a need to seed the project area to accelerate forage production and prevent the establishment of cheatgrass and

noxious weeds. The project will aerial seed 258 acres with a highly palatable seed mix for both livestock and wildlife. This project is part of a large multiphase project that includes water projects, mowing, and stabilization of areas where erosion has occurred. With the addition of seeding, the habitat and forage within this area will greatly improve for wildlife and livestock. Additionally, the permittee will rest rotational grazing for 2 years. Hilary Boyd and Pat Luark abstained from the approval decision. The project was approved for up to \$24,510.00.

3. USFS Braderich Creek Prescribed Burn- The committee reviewed a prescribed burn project for the Braderich Creek area that serves as winter range for deer and elk. The mountain shrub community in the project area is over-mature and clubbed due to intensive browsing pressure. Aspen vegetation shows poor regeneration and young shoots are heavily browsed. Poor forage conditions result in less forage availability, palatability, digestibility, and less nutrient content. This project will aid in achieving the goal of improving winter range for mule deer and elk as listed in both the DAU plan and the White River National Forest Plan. The project will entail a prescribed fire across approximately 1,000 acres of over-mature mountain shrubs and aspen to set back succession and encourage new growth. This will target approximately 50 to 75% of over-mature vegetation in a mosaic pattern. This will aid game management objects for deer and elk and provide better winter range habitat and forage in the area. Phil Nyland abstained from the approval decision. The project was approved for up to \$10,000.00.
4. USFS E16 Prescribed Burn- The committee reviewed a prescribed burn project within E16 that would target Cattle Creek, Seven Castles, and Little Woody/Hannon Creek areas. The mountain shrub community in the project area is over-mature and clubbed due to intensive browsing pressure. Aspen vegetation shows poor regeneration and young shoots are heavily browsed. Poor forage conditions result in less forage availability, palatability, digestibility, and less nutrient content. This project will aid in achieving the goal of improving winter range for mule deer and elk as listed in both the DAU plan and the White River National Forest Plan. The project will entail prescribed fire across approximately 3,000 acres of over-mature mountain shrubs and aspen to set back succession and encourage new growth. This will target approximately 50 to 75% of over-mature vegetation in a mosaic pattern. This will aid game management objects for deer and elk and provide better winter range habitat and forage in the area. Phil Nyland abstained from the approval decision. The project was approved for up to \$30,000.00.
5. USFS E16 Weed Control- The committee reviewed the weed spraying portion of the E16 Prescribed Burn project. The weed spraying work would be conducted post fire starting in July of 2022. For this reason, the committee separated this portion of the project into its own individual project. This project will conduct post-fire horseback weed spraying on the prescribed burn areas of Cattle Creek, Seven Castles, and Little Woody/Hannon Creek to aid in the control the spread of weeds as a result of fire disturbance. This will assist in the improvement of forage conditions and improve range conditions that provide for good elk and deer habitat. This will promote native vegetation composition, palatability, and nutrient content. Phil Nyland abstained from the approval decision. The project was approved for up to \$10,000.00 for FY23.
6. CPW West Rifle Creek SWA Fence- Ivan Archer presented a fence replacement project on the West Rifle Creek State Wildlife Area. The existing fence line is in disrepair and does not effectively serve as a boundary fence for livestock. The lack of a functioning fence line enables neighboring cattle to graze on the State Wildlife Area and decrease forage availability for wildlife in the area. Additionally, the existing fence line is made up of woven wire which poses an entanglement hazard for big game species. The removal of the old fence and installation of a new wildlife-friendly fence will protect

wildlife habitat from trespass cattle and will aid in the prevention of wildlife entanglements. Darren Chacon abstained from the approval decision. The project was approved for up to \$40,500.00 from the State Council funds.

**Remaining Committee Business/Other Discussion:**

1. D-42 Herd Management Plan- Genevieve Fuller presented the draft Rifle Creek Deer Herd Management Plan and the proposed objectives. The committee discussed the HMP and shared a variety of thoughts and opinions on the proposed plan. After further discussion, the committee supported the draft alternative to keep the current population objective and current sex ratio. The committee drafted a comment letter to support the status quo objectives.
2. Wire Accessories Inventory- The committee discussed maintaining an inventory of safety loop connectors and kiwi strainers to assist in the installation of the white vinyl wire already in inventory. The committee approved the purchase of the wire accessories for up to \$500.00.
3. Upcoming Meetings- The committee tentatively approved the following meeting dates and associated locations:  
April 6, 2022 - Eagle  
May 4, 2022 - Glenwood Springs

**Roundtable:** The committee discussed the potential of expanding the current pond voucher program to include ponds on private lands. The committee ultimately decided to keep the voucher program as is through the end of the fiscal year and would reevaluate for the next fiscal year. In addition, the committee noted that there were still several vouchers available for all voucher programs and liked the idea of making a post on the CPW Area 8 Facebook page.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.