



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

HPP State Council Committee

June 21, 2022 1pm – 5pm; June, 22 2022 8am – 12pm

In Person/Zoom Virtual Meeting; Homewood Suites, 15 Girard Street, Durango, CO

State Council HPP Members Present: Ty Bevan, Brian Dreher, John Hardwick, Sheila Lamb, Todd Peterson, Hunter Seim, Gary Visintainer, Michael Blanck, Teri Polley

Additional Attendees & Guests: Garrett Watson, Kim Berscheid, Katie Richman, Marian Cole, Andrew Taylor, Eric Bergman, Cedric Damby, Ty Smith, Adrian Archuleta, Noah Daniels, Shawn Kelly

### **June 21 1:00 – 5:00 Summer Field Trip**

The State Council toured the San Juan Basin FY2016 & 2017 Fosset Gulch Burn Project / Yellowjacket guided by Ty Smith CPW Rep San Juan Basin, Noah Daniels Assistant Fuels Manager, Shawn Kelly, Columbine Range Specialist, USFS. Additionally, Steve Pargin, landowner, shared with the council about the pond cleaning projects he completed on the USFS grazing allotments.

### **June 22 8:00 – Noon**

**HPP Reauthorization Bill 22-1072:** Colorado's legislature reauthorized funding for the Habitat Partnership Program and removed the sunset clause. The bill also expanded the program to include migration corridor enhancement, assistance with private land conservation efforts, and operation statewide, outside of committee boundaries, term limits, and emphasis of HPP focusing on ungulate conflicts. The council discussed the pitfalls and opportunities of the reauthorization. Regarding migration corridor enhancement, Michael used the example of wildlife crossings and how HPP can proactively assist in reducing future conflicts and facilitating wildlife. In regard to assisting private land conservation efforts, HPP might provide professional grant writing assistance. HPP state council can expend funds statewide and is no longer restricted to a local committee boundary. The state council will need to address term limits and set up a staggering process for them. It will give the council an opportunity to evaluate committee participation. The director will now appoint committee representatives and no longer wait for the parks and wildlife commission consent agenda.

**Brian Dreher, CPW Terrestrial Section Manager:** CPW once had a habitat unit. The staff was converted over to species conservation work that deals with inventory and declining species. After the agency merged with parks, CPW added four habitat coordinators with no supervisor, and these positions dispersed to the regions. This year, a habitat unit was brought back to the agency and a new habitat unit supervisor will be hired and will work for Brian. This unit will have a dedicated focus on habitat and additionally will hire four habitat biologists for the execution of a habitat connectivity conservation plan. Also, CPW has land use positions for the regions to deal with all the land use issues. The agency is making progress with additional staff and will be

able to assist local HPP committees. With the habitat connectivity conservation plan, CPW will identify places of connectivity in Colorado, and prioritize our resources. This plan is also important because of CPW's initiative called Outdoor Regional Partnerships where partnerships are being formed with recreation groups and communities to have the discussion about future trails and other forms of disturbance. Also, the Recovering America Wildlife Act (RAWA) bill, was voted and passed in the House. RAWA forms a fund of \$1.3B annual dedicated funding for the conservation of rare and endangered species – less common species. This fund is similar to the Pittman Robertson fund. If this passes the Senate, Colorado will get a total of \$34M annual dedicated funding. CPW will be able to do things in the species conservation realm that we have never been able to do before. This would focus on all the species that are in our state wildlife action plan. Ray Aberle has been working to move Ranching for Wildlife towards a habitat program and will be happy to connect the local HPP committees with conservation districts. Brian also updated the council about wolves and the stakeholder advisory group.

**FY2022 Recap & FY2023 Committee Budget:** Michael has been generous with his additional spending authority of up to \$20,000 per project. The 10 percent to the committee base budgets were very well received in FY22. The committees have increased their volume and interest but this has not resulted in new projects. The council approved a 15% increase to the individual committee base budgets. The council will take time to have a coordinated plan for the committee that expands their base budget plus 15% early in the spending year. For the time being, any additional funding needed for projects will be presented to the state council.

**Special Project: North Park Elk Herd Distribution Study – Eric Bergman:** The state council approved \$97,900 for this project.

**Special Project McCluskey SWA/BLM Habitat Treatment – Andrew Taylor:** The state council approved \$94,251.00 for this project in addition to \$20,000 from the local committee.

**Virtual Fence Projects:** The state council discussed virtual fence projects. Michael inherited a moratorium on HPP participating in virtual fence projects. The council acknowledges this is legitimate technology and HPP should participate in these projects on the local committee level.

**Gunnison Basin: County Weed Treatment Coordinator:** The state council discussed partnering with Gunnison County and their Weed Treatment Coordinator. In addition to providing weed spray for the local committee, the county is asking for payment of the position. All were in agreement to partner with the project, but not the funding of the position.

**Implementation of HB22:1072 expansion of HPP:** Michael shared with the council his vision for the program – he wants HPP to help families stay in production agriculture – landowners and lessees. If it wasn't for the quality habitat on private land, and the tolerance of animals on their property, we would not have the wildlife we have in Colorado. Statewide projects no longer need to be approved by the local committees before being presented to the state council. Michael will be developing some guidelines regarding term limits. The local committee attendance is poor and contribution from the appointed committee members is needed.

**BiAnnual Meeting:** The council discussed and changed the biannual meeting from Jan. 4, 5, 6 to January 4<sup>th</sup> 1:00 – 5:00; evening banquet and January 5<sup>th</sup> 8:00 – 12:00 in Grand Junction.

**Next Meeting:** The state council will meet in Buena Vista September 27 & 28