



## HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Republican Rivers HPP Committee Meeting

August 15, 2023 at 6:00 pm

Bank of Colorado - Yuma, CO

### Committee Members Present:

- Josh Melby - CPW
- Chris Craig - Livestock Grower
- Clayt Cooper - Livestock Grower
- Vacant - Livestock Grower
- Vacant - Sportsperson

### Administrative Assistant Present:

Kimberly Berscheid

### Attendees Present:

John Hardwick - Applicant (Phone)  
Josh Herz - CPW  
Noe Marymor - NRCS  
Todd Cozad - CPW  
Peyton Burt - Pheasants Forever  
Michael Blanck - CPW (Virtual)

### Introductions

The committee members and guests were introduced.

### Budget Report

The remaining budget balance at the start of the meeting was \$50,000.

### Old Business

The March 6, 2023, meeting minutes were approved as written.

### New Business

#### Hardwick Pipeline and Tank Project-

John Hardwick is asking the committee for \$5,000 for materials to install a pipeline and a water tank on his property. The area provides cover and critical habitat for deer and pronghorn.

**The project was approved for \$5,000 for water development materials.**

#### CRP SAFE Sign-Up Incentives - Trent Verquer

Trent presented the CRP SAFE Sign-up Incentive program. He is asking the committee for support to present his ask to the State Council. Due to a 2018 change in the Farm Bill, acreage enrolled in CRP has significantly reduced. This reduction has a direct impact on deer and pronghorn populations. Incentivizing the program will encourage landowners in Yuma and Phillips counties to enroll their properties and convert marginal croplands to diverse mixtures of grasses, forbs, and legumes for a 10-15 contract period. Enrolled properties will be targeted for CPW's Walk-in Access

Program and will increase hunting opportunities in the area. The project aims to increase enrollments by 170,000 acres in the designated counties. This significant increase will provide critical habitat for wildlife. **The committee supported the CRP SAFE Sign-up Incentives to be presented to the State Council at their next meeting.**

#### NE Colorado Cheatgrass Project - Noe Marymor

The Yuma County Conservation District is asking the committee for \$25,000 for cheatgrass treatment in Yuma County. Cheatgrass is common on the eastern plains and reduces habitat, forage, and habitat quality for big game animals. Treatment will help reduce the amount of cheatgrass and allow native flora to regenerate in its place. The existing control methods for cheatgrass have been limited and inefficient. YCCD has piloted and is now supporting landowners in implementing operational-scale treatments of Rejuvra herbicide to deplete the cheatgrass seed bank and restore native plant communities. The treatment will prevent winter annual grasses from germinating for 4-5 years.

YCCD is partnering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, CPW, and Envu Vegetation Management to acquire grant funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service - Regional Conservation Partnership Program to provide Rejuvra applications to landowners at a reduced cost. If successful, the grant will offer cost-share at approximately \$42/acre for aerial application to Yuma County landowners and then expand to several neighboring counties. Half of the treated acres will be mapped by RangeView, the digital tool that maps cheatgrass in pastures versus other annual and perennial vegetation. RangeView maps will be created before treatment to establish a baseline of cheatgrass abundance and a growing season after treatment to monitor effectiveness.

**The project was approved for \$15,000 from the RRHPP Budget and \$10,000 from Michael Blank's discretionary fund (verbal approval during the meeting) for the Cheatgrass Treatment project in Yuma County.**

#### FY24 Meeting Meals & Committee Operating Expenses-

**The committee voted to allocate \$500 for working meeting meals and \$250 for operating expenses, including committee member recognition.**

#### FY24 Fencing and Guzzler Voucher Program -

**The committee voted to continue providing vouchers for white-vinyl wire and guzzlers. DWMs or committee members can approve vouchers, which must be returned to Kimberly Berscheid upon delivery or pick up.**

#### FY24 Materials Order -

**The committee voted to allocate \$5,000 to purchase inventory items (i.e., water development materials, tools, etc.) to be stored at the Wray Fish Hatchery and provided to landowners who qualify for a voucher. Vouchers must be returned to Kimberly Berscheid upon delivery or pick up.**

Committee Interviews -

The committee discussed the two vacancies as Dustin Wise and Don Fritzler have resigned from their positions. Committee members will work to recruit applicants for the Livestock Grower and Sportsman vacancies. Interviews will be held at the next meeting.

Remaining Committee Business

Meeting Schedule-

The next committee meeting is TBD.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:55 p.m.

DRAFT