



## **HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES**

### **Gunnison Basin HPP Committee**

**300 W. New York Ave, Gunnison CO 81230**

**December 11th, 2017**

**11:00 a.m.**

**Gunnison Basin HPP Members Present:** Paul Mowery, Livestock Grower; Navid Navidi, Sportsman; Steve Guerrieri, Livestock Grower; Nick Gallowich, CPW; Matt Vasquez, USFS; Kathy Brodhead, BLM

**Guests:** Pat Tucker, CPW; Brandon Diamond, CPW; Brooke Vasquez, Bradley Wigginton, Gunnison County; Jon Mugglestone, Gunnison County

#### **Introductions, Budget, & Old Business:**

1. Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$95,718.36.

#### **New Business:**

##### **Project Application Proposals and Reviews**

1. Brooke Vasquez presented a proposal for a virtual fence collar project for the Gunnison Conservation District. This is an experimental project that creates a virtual barrier for livestock with shock collars, which is controlled in real-time by the landowner. The test sites will be on the Allen Ranch USFS allotments and private lands within the Flat Top area. The virtual fence can be set up and/or moved to rotate grazing, protect recent habitat treatments on public and private lands, exclude livestock from wildlife buffer zones, and contain livestock on allotments without constructing permanent fences. The technology has been successful in other areas outside of Colorado, and this project will help determine if the technology can be implemented in the Gunnison Basin. The requested funds would be used to purchase the collars, and cooperator funds would be used to purchase remaining collars as well as the base station and software. The NRCS, USFS, and other groups are very

interested in this technology, and if it is determined to be effective, there is a large technology innovation grant that could be utilized with NRCS and other cooperators to implement virtual fences on a large scale within the Gunnison Basin.

The committee was very interested in this project, but wanted to see more information on the system base stations and how the technology operates. Additionally, while several other potential cooperators had indicated interest, the committee wanted to see more committed funds from other cooperators before approving HPP funding. The project was tabled for the next meeting so that these issues could be adequately addressed.

2. Bradley Wigginton presented a potential project to gauge interest for an experimental weed control treatment. There is a large infestation of cheatgrass on Sapinero Mesa, which reduces habitat quality for deer, elk, and pronghorn. Gunnison County Weed Department is testing a pilot program for cheatgrass control, which treats infestations with the herbicide Plateau followed a 5-year root inhibitor called Esplanade. This treatment kills existing infestations and prevents the seed bank from reestablishing. The treated areas are then seeded with a mix of native grasses, which helps restore the quality of forage for big game. If the method is successful, it will be integrated into the county's weed management protocols and funded with the county budget. The committee was supportive of this project, especially since more traditional types of weed treatments must be done annually to maintain control of infestations and this project offers a longer-term solution without the need for constant retreatment. Gunnison County Weed Department will develop a formal project application to submit to the committee at the next meeting.
3. The committee reviewed the draft plan for the West Elk Mountains elk herd. In conjunction with the North Fork HPP committee's comments, the Gunnison Basin committee agreed that the population objective should be increased according to the collaborative objective (Alternative #2), representing a 17% increase. The committee expressed concerns over increasing elk numbers within existing conflict areas, and noted that they would only support this objective if a disproportional license allocation (Alternative #1) was selected. This would allow CPW to utilize management strategies, including late season and/or PLO tags, to deal with agricultural conflicts with elk and refuge issues on private lands. The committee also supported managing the bull ratio according to the status quo objective (Alternative #2), which represents an objective of 23-28 bulls per 100 cows.

#### **Roundtable:**

1. Nick Gallowich gave a review of the HPP Statewide Meeting.

#### **Next Meeting: TBD**