



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES
Uncompahgre HPP Committee
2300 S. Townsend, Montrose
February 7th, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Uncompahgre HPP Members Present: Mike Surber, USFS; Kelly Crane, CPW; Bobby Gray, Sportsman; Todd Stewart, Livestock Grower; Bob Black, Livestock Grower; Angela LoSasso, BLM

Guests: Loren Paulson, USFS; Pat Tucker, Tony Bonacquista, Mark Caddy, Matt Ortega, Gregory Hunt, Dean Stindt, Pat Willits, Garret Watson

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. Mike Surber is retiring at the end of March, and will be replaced by Loren Paulson. Loren is the recreation specialist for the GMUG, and has spent most of his career working on the Grand Mesa and the Uncompahgre Plateau.

The current remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$50,085.60.

Old Business:

1. Brad Banulis' update on the elk study was tabled for the May meeting.

New Business:

1. Gregory Hunt gave a presentation on Sweet Water Systems, a company in Cedaredge that installs underground water catchment and filtration systems. The catchments fill during runoff and heavy flow/storm events, and act as a reservoir throughout the rest of the year. The filtered water can be piped to drinkers in a discrete area for wildlife use, or can fill tanks for livestock use. When tanks or drinkers are appropriately spread throughout an area, livestock and big game can be better distributed across the landscape. The overall cost for a system is similar to a traditional water catchment and tank setup; however Sweet Water Systems require exceedingly low maintenance costs and are expected to last for approximately 50 years or more. The committee is interested in exploring this option for future water development projects.
2. The committee selected Bobby Gray as the new chairperson to replace Mike Surber.
3. **Project Application Proposals and Reviews:**
 1. Dean Stindt gave a review of the recent hydroax work on Tom Flynn's property in Maibox Park. The treatments occurred in a mosaic pattern to open the canopy and improve spacing, while maintaining the integrity of the sage parks. It is too early to judge overall success, but early vegetation responses are positive.

Mr. Stindt presented a proposal for installing guzzlers on the property. The area is very dry and large numbers of deer and elk utilize nearby agricultural operations on Wright's Mesa for water. The landowner, Mr. Flynn, would like to improve water supply on Mailbox Park to help hold deer and elk on the adjacent BLM and USFS, and recently treated private ground, for longer periods of time, and reduce the damage done to irrigated fields. The committee heard concerns that increasing water availability might bring more big game into the area instead of improving existing distribution, but ultimately felt that water could be a limiting factor in this area, especially on winter range, and that increasing water would be beneficial overall. The committee approved the project for up to \$4,000.00, although a lesser amount (\$2,666.00) will be utilized if additional funding from Water for Wildlife is awarded.

2. Pat Willits presented a fencing proposal for the A Bar D Ranch. This project is Phase 3 of an ongoing effort to replace existing degraded fencing with wildlife-friendly fence. Large numbers of elk and deer migrate through the ranch and utilize the area during fall, winter, and spring. The ranch has done a large portion of work already without assistance, and HPP has also participated in previous fencing projects. This proposal includes removing approximately 4,000 feet of old woven wire sheep fence and installing new wildlife-friendly fencing to HPP specs. The committee approved the project for \$10,500.00.

3. The committee reviewed a fence repair project from Dale Osborn. The proposal is to repair a ½-mile section of fence, or rebuild where necessary. The existing T posts are mostly in good shape and could be re-used. The committee discussed the use of fence vouchers for this type of small repair project, but in the past fence repair vouchers had become too cumbersome for the DWMs. The committee and the area feel that individual applications for fence projects are more appropriate. The project was approved for \$428.60 for materials.

4. The committee reviewed FY18 fertilizer applications. This year was particularly mild with very little snow, and the committee discussed whether the fertilizer budget should be changed to reflect this. The committee and DWMs feel that many of the usual applicants likely did not experience the same levels of big game damage as in the past. Additionally, the committee wondered if the current system for fertilizer (an across-the-board price per acre derived from the total budget divided by the amount of acres applied for) was unfair in that landowners with fewer acres may realize a larger percent of their total fertilizer budget being supplied by HPP, whereas larger landowners (presumably with more game damage concerns) receive a smaller percent, even though their actual reimbursement may be larger. The history of the fertilizer program, particularly its origins in the Unaweep Canyon, was reviewed, and several DWMs provided feedback from landowners that confirmed that the program was a highly valued gesture from HPP.

Ultimately, the committee felt that the fertilizer budget should not change from year to year. By keeping the budget the same in mild winters, the committee felt that the continued assistance should help offset harder years where there is more severe game damage and the budget would not be increased to reflect those conditions. The committee will adopt an individual recipient cap of \$5,000.00 for future years, and if the number of applicants becomes overwhelming in the future, the committee may consider implementing rotating years of eligibility. The FY18 cost per acre was approved for \$10.13.

5. The committee also discussed the use of Emergency Game Damage Funds. Previously, the committee had approved \$5,000 to be set aside to help supplement individual fertilizer reimbursements in cases of excessive game damage. However, it became apparent that there was no way to fairly implement this program. Fertilizer may not be an appropriate avenue for all landowners, who may need to seek compensation from Game Damage instead if their costs exceed the amount allowed by the fertilizer program.

Other Business/Roundtable:

1. The committee discussed requiring additional vendor quotes for high-dollar projects. In an effort to ensure accurate and fair pricing, and to promote responsibility with public funds, the committee will require at least two quotes for any project in which HPP's share is more than \$10,000. Project applications that do not have the required quotes will be tabled for the next meeting. This information will be disseminated to landowners in the yearly letter in July.
2. Pat Tucker gave a review of the Future Generations financial bill.

Next Meeting: May 2nd, 6:30pm – Montrose CPW Office