



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Gunnison Basin HPP Committee

300 W. New York Ave, Gunnison CO 81230

March 15th, 2018

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; Shane Cox, Livestock Grower

Guests: J Wenum, CPW; Brooke Vasquez, Bradley Wigginton

Introductions, Budget, & Old Business:

1. Committee members were introduced. Shane Cox was introduced as the new livestock grower representative, replacing Doug Washburn. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$95,718.36.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews

1. Bradley Wigginton presented a proposal for a weed control project with the Gunnison County Weed Management Program. There is a large infestation of cheatgrass on Sapinero Mesa, which reduces habitat quality for deer, elk, and pronghorn. The county is testing a pilot program for cheatgrass control, which treats infestations with the herbicide Plateau followed a 5-year root inhibitor called Esplanade. This 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 initial test project includes approximately 6 acres along CR 26, which cuts through Sapinero Mesa. The project was approved for \$967.68 for seed purchase.

2. The committee reviewed two annual weed control projects from the USFS for FY2019. The projects will target toadflax and oxeye infestations in Soap Creek and Alkali Basin. The area provides big game winter range, and experiences year-round use by deer. Soap Creek is highly utilized by hunters and horse traffic, which results in large weed dispersal. The USFS has decommissioned several roads in the area to try to prevent this spread, however user-created trails have made this control method ineffective. The Alkali Basin experiences heavy use by elk, and previous weed treatments have been observed to result in much smaller pockets of toadflax. This weed. The committee reiterated the need for thorough follow-up and reporting of weed control results, including maps and continued monitoring. Additionally, the committee noted that they would like to tour these areas as a potential summer project tour. The Soap Creek project was approved for \$2,500, and the Alkali Basin project was approved for \$3,000.
3. Brooke Vasquez presented an updated proposal on the virtual fence collar project. The committee had previously considered the project for funding, but had asked the Gunnison Conservation District to find other cooperators to help reduce the cost to HPP. The new proposal included approximately \$20,000 of cooperator funds. The project involves purchasing virtual fence “shock” collars for livestock, as well as the software and base station for the technology. The virtual fence is controlled in real-time by the landowner, and can be set up and/or moved to rotate grazing, protect recent habitat treatments, exclude livestock from wildlife buffer zones, or contain livestock on allotments without constructing permanent fences. If this project is successful, the NRCS will begin to implement the technology with support from the BLM for more widespread deployment throughout the area. The committee approved the project for \$20,000 to purchase collars.

Roundtable:

1. J Wenum gave updates for the area, including discussion on upcoming license setting meetings and difficulties with elk captures for Kevin Blecha’s collaring project.

Next Meeting: May 10th, 2018 – 11:00am