



**HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
STATE COUNCIL MEETING
October 30 and 31, 2018, Glenwood Springs, CO**

Attendees:

State Council - Robbie LeValley, Sheila Lamb, Gary Visintainer, Hunter Seim, Ken Morgan, Mick Davis, Terry Everhart, Greg Jungman.

CPW – Pat Tucker, Dean Riggs, Teri Polley, Samantha Sorensen, Hanna Cook, Katie Richman

Guests: Emily Orbanek, Chris Yuan-Farrell, Tiffany Rublacaba, Andrew Archuleta

Absent: John Hardwick

October 30 – 1 pm to 5 pm

Introductions

Colorado Cattleman's Land Trust highlighted the Knorr conservation easement north of Silverthorne in their fall newsletter. HPP was recognized as helping fund transaction costs on this project.

Committee Updates:

1. Katie: Committees have been scheduling meetings ahead of time; there has been much discussion about water
 - Gunnison – weed control projects and high dollar fence projects
 - Montelores – small fence repair and pond cleanout projects; large weed project
 - North Fork – large annual weed projects and herbicide projects; pond cleanout projects
 - Grand Mesa - influx of small fencing projects around hobby farms; pond cleanout projects; fertilizer& fencing voucher projects
 - San Juan Basin – fencing & fertilizer projects; FS burn project; helicopter project; pond cleanout project, 1-member vacancy; tour with Southern Ute Indian tribe
 - Uncompahgre – fertilizer projects, fence project
2. Hanna: DWM's need to be involved in HPP with the local committees
 - Republican Rivers – water projects; working on DMP renewal; livestock grower vacancy;
 - Larimer County – big elk collaring project
 - South Park – quiet; projects on the horizon
 - Arkansas River – allocated 2/3s of their budget; one vacancy application approved
 - San Luis Valley – arch clearance backlog effecting projects

- Mount Blanca – wildlife friendly fencing projects; forage purchases & hunt coordinators...committee changing direction; BLM rep vacancy
- Sangre de Cristo – working on DMP renewal by February

3. Samantha:

- White River – annual monitoring project; 1 seeding & 5 water development projects; 2 noxious weed projects, bulk vinyl wire purchase; updating DMP that expires November 2019
- North Park – slow start; Tiffany Rublacaba nominated as new member
- Northwest Colorado – mechanical treatment, noxious weed & fencing projects, fencing vouchers; 3 seeding projects; a water improvement project; updating DMP that expires November 2019
- Lower Colorado river – prescribed burn; 10 projects on the books – wildlife friendly fencing & irrigation projects, pond development projects, fencing & herbicide vouchers; noxious weed project
- Middle Park - weed treatment; reclamation seeding; conservation easement; hunt coordinators; Gary Horine new sportsman's rep
- Upper Yampa River - cattle guard project; 2 habitat improvement projects; pond development; fencing and herbicide projects; vinyl wire and pond development project; working on DMP renewal that expires May 2019; Kelsey Cane new FS rep

Committee DMP updates – Four plans were completed last year and five are coming due in May. These will be to the State Council in April and rolled to the consent agenda in May for approval. Additionally, if the ones for November are completed ahead of time, these could be added in May. The updated template has made this update process easier. The commission was fine with the first bunch of plans submitted last year.

Summary of Committee Finances – The council reviewed a committee spreadsheet comparing committee budgets vs. expenses for the past three years. In general, most committees for most years do not spend their entire budgets. Unspent money goes back to the State Council that then goes back to CPW if the HPP fund is full. The discussion has always been to give the committees more money to spend, but this 3 year comparison shows that it likely would go unspent. If the State Council gives the committees more money at the end of the year, there isn't time for the committees to react before the end of the fiscal year.

Nationally, the Forest Service recognized there is no staff to do archeology. This has since filtered down to the Rocky Mountain Region. The regional direction is that the states will pursue programmatic agreements with their individual SHIPO's. Through sampling, these agreements are able to say that multiple similar beetle kill projects can be reviewed in acre plots – slopes & close proximity to water - the factors that drive the sampling methods. Depending on the type of project, the state has signed off that these samplings are agreeable. There was discussion whether HPP could fund the clearance at whatever level is needed. Then the Forest Service could credit HPP for the money spent on the clearance and use this to match and then put it into project implementation.

FY18 Draft Report – State Council approved this report, which is similar in content and format from past years. There was discussion about the FY17 reversion to game cash of \$664,626 and the \$421,228 in salary and benefits that HPP paid for. Pat advised the Council that HPP pays for anyone in the agency who charges time to HPP.

Pat related the history of HPP money and how it was handled by DOW and now CPW. Historically, internal HPP operations were paid for entirely by the Terrestrial section of the agency using game cash. In 2002, the 5% allocation went into effect and that funded committee projects while game cash continued to fund internal operations. In 2006, HPP was transferred from terrestrial to the Northwest Region. When that happened, all the operating costs that took to administer the program (coordinator expenses) began to be paid by HPP. In 2015, State Council agreed to pay for the 3 admins salaries/benefits/operating in order to get the positions. Prior to this, HPP never had the ability to pay for personal services. When CPW got this ability, they also got the authority to charge HPP for all employee time charged to HPP. In FY18, HPP began paying for everyone's time, salary and benefits to anyone who works on the program.

On principle, this wasn't how HPP was run in the past or intended to be run but it's hard to argue when HPP is reverting \$664,626 of unspent money. Also, CPW was looking for budget flexibility and having HPP pay for personal services frees up game cash money. The CFO has assured Dean and Pat that HPP funds will always be available. HPP now has to go through budget and request a decision item if money is needed for the following year and compete with everyone else that needs this money.

This is strictly an accounting decision. The council felt the history and commitment is being lost and the reasons why there is 5% and local committees. Staff turnover and nearly 30 years later, memories are fading about the reasons behind HPP. The issue for the state council is when thinking about the thresholds and caps, the state council does not believe DNR when they state their money will be there if needed and are wanting an agreement in place. Now that everything has been explained to the council, if the council desires a change, the council will need to request it.

Even with the FY17 reversion and the FY18 personal services, HPP was still over the limit on June 30th and reverted an additional \$56,000 to game cash. This led to more discussions about what the council could do to try and take some of this excess off? Do you change the partnership level? Do you take on more projects? Statute certainly is broad but is that where we should go?

New Brochure – The two-page flyer is available for distribution.

High visibility fence wire – Annually most committees purchase white vinyl fencing wire. This results in a lot of paperwork for each committee and admin asst. Pat proposed that the State Council should purchase \$100,000 of white vinyl wire at the beginning of each year instead of local committees purchasing individually. The Council agreed and will pay for this and so committee budgets will be unaffected. Hopefully, this will help get this wire on the ground where it has been extremely effective.

Mapping Project – Pat showed the Council a draft project map for the Lower Colorado River HPP area for FY18. This project originally started as being a digital map but the GIS section felt a paper version was better for several reasons, namely cost and time for them plus there are a manageable number of projects each year and it doesn't need constant updating. The purpose was for a visual to the committees and to our partners to highlight the areas that work is being done in and to overlay cumulative years to get a more complete picture of projects. One issue that had been raised is concern over using landowner information that was protected by CORA.

October 31 - 8:00 am to noon

Followup Discussion re: HPP money: The State Council requested a meeting with the director and Justin Rutter. Pat will look into invitations for the March Council meeting.

The white wire and tire tanks are the only inventory items HPP committees stockpile with the intent being to have these desirable items on hand, avoid freight charges for smaller orders and to not become a warehouse under DNR standards. Ideally, committees use their stockpile each year and so are not carrying over very many/none each year.

The question was asked about game damage claims and HPP. There is a box on the game damage claim form re: HPP contact but there is not a requirement for HPP to be involved. Some landowners choose not to be involved with HPP, preferring game damage even with the extra paperwork and time it takes.

Drought Outlook Discussion - There was discussion about the high hay prices, elk herds in the Northwest, black water – call on the rivers, ranchers are starting to talk with their DWM's – the elk herds are larger than normal. Some forward thinking project ideas to share with the local committees might be pond cleaning; partnering with NRCS for larger water development projects; let people know HPP has resources available to assist the landowners. For the FS & BLM, an Arch Clearance on their property usually takes about 12 months for a water project.

There was also a discussion from Mick Davis about a water project that HPP participated in. Last year, there was no permittee on that allotment and so the water system was never turned on. While livestock was one purpose, wildlife use was also a purpose and without it being turned on, wildlife didn't benefit. Pat expressed that if HPP has invested in a water system with a land management agency, the system needed to be turned on, maintained and winterized, regardless of whether there was a permittee operating there. If no permittee, the agency needed to do it. HPP didn't pay for it to have it sit idle.

The council will further this drought discussion at their next meeting to help the committees in FY20.

2019 State Meeting Ideas – The first week in December, three days at the Doubletree in Grand Junction works exceptionally well for the council. All agreed to continue letting the committees invite two additional people giving them an opportunity for information or reward them for their involvement with the committee. This can give people exposure and increase the attendance. Additionally, the council would like to invite Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule deer Foundation, NRCS and State Land Board. For the committees, the council will offer two positions, with backups and more notice to those invited. Water was decided to be a major part of the agenda. Some specific discussions may include Grand Mesa & North Fork pond cleaning, the well permit process and solar water projects.

Andrew Archuleta, BLM District Manager, Silt, - Habitat Grant Discussion – Pat described the idea discussed at a previous meeting to utilize large sums of money in the next five years in a joint habitat project around the state between HPP, the BLM and the FS. Andrew Archuleta, the BLM district manager, discussed this with the Council and what it would take for the BLM to be involved. The BLM recently completed a work force planning effort. Nineteen positions were identified in the Northwest district that are not going to be filled in the next few years. When the BLM talks about capacity to do projects, it becomes real to how they are going to put money on the ground. Although

much of this work is contracted, BLM still has to have employees overseeing the projects and the BLM staff is at capacity. With reduction in staff, how does the BLM get the people to get work done on the ground?

The BLM state director will allow Andrew to hire term employees. These people would not be permanent BLM staff; usually a two or four-year term. Andrew addressed the council asking if HPP funds could be used to fund these people for BLM/HPP habitat projects. An example might be for the BLM to hire a person to design projects and HPP could partially fund this person - using a model like state trails program for funding people. There are no legislative sideboards for staffing, it would be a contract expense. The State Council historically has never paid for agency staffing. Andrew asked the council if they would be willing to go out on a limb and partner with the BLM to hire someone for one district but work statewide on habitat projects. One suggestion maybe a joint BLM, Forest Service position for strictly habitat large scale projects. The bottleneck is arch clearance; is it possible to hire someone just to do cultural clearances? Unless HPP can find a way to participate in hiring staff, the BLM would likely be unable to participate in this effort.

The initial discussion was for HPP to commit \$250,000 to both the BLM and Forest Service for five years constantly planning two to three years ahead to move around the state doing jointly identified high priority projects. HPP currently has contracts in place through Task Orders. This position is similar to the Fish and Wildlife Service private lands biologist, or for HPP, it may be a project manager type person to oversee the project to be sure the planning and clearance are ready to go in order to implement the project. Maybe the BLM could expand on the grouse mastication projects, water or weed projects in the northwest. The agency currently has this model in place with the private lands biologist position with NRCS. Under this agreement, the agency designates what the work plan looks like, who has the authority to monitor it, who manages their day to day activities. Another thought, to just ease some of the restrictions with a percent match; this could be worthwhile. In this discussion, the council is taking a set amount of money that we have always tried to do this much project with.

Some of the council wanted to see money on the ground with no administrative funding. Administrative costs are rising. We have always paid to help get projects along. The sportsman and forest service reps were hesitant funding a person and some of the council felt they should give this full consideration. Others thought it was definitely worth trying and the council would never know unless they tried funding a person. They thought this was a low risk and had high rewards. Pat will continue to have discussion with both the BLM and Forest service on behalf of the council. In conclusion, the council is willing to explore this some more; being careful. Pat will also review the Private Lands Biologist and State Parks Trails to understand how they fund a person.

GOCO Stewardship Program, Emily Orbanek & Chris Yuan-Farrell – HPP has an opportunity to partner with GOCO on larger scale habitat restoration projects across the state. As a funder, we want to take the burden off grantees to have to go and raise funds from various different sources to build a match and put that burden on GOCO to get the match. They will create a collaborate pool of funding where you have one application period, one reporting requirement to do your project. The matches would all be built in. This is one way to create efficiencies within a system. Currently, GOCO does not know what that funding need looks like. They are just trying to pull funders in to see if they want to participate in. So far they have spoken with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, who has agreed to handle administrative duties, the GOCO Board has committed a million dollars in the next year as a pilot initiative and with that funding National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is going to bring in a million dollars. GOCO has talked with the Gates Family Foundation to bring in \$250,000. GOCO is

modelling this after the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative that is spinning off ten to twenty million dollars a year for habitat projects around the state. It could be fire fuels mitigation work, across the board any habitat work. What GOCO wants to do in 2019 is to establish this collective funding, demonstrate that everyone can play nicely together as funders and get good projects done on the ground. It might look like a specific set of habitat priorities this first year. It could be spread out across the state, but the problem GOCO has seen in their existing habitat restoration program is when you start spreading the money around, you are less effective at addressing a singular problem. You get to these projects that you are doing really great work at a very localized level but not addressing the comprehensive scope that would take to eradicate a large issue. GOCO is trying to pitch this as a pilot initiative, get some funders involved and on board, and run it similar as they do with other grant programs. Have the funders do the scoring and have a single reporting requirement.

There is a huge need for fire restoration and for the Western Slope Mule Deer Strategy. Habitat restoration is a statewide need. This could be built on a larger landscape of habitat work that has taken place or maybe the project itself is basin wide. It could be range wide going after the most highly prioritized projects. As a staff and a board, they've tried to loosen their sideboards; GOCO is restricted by what is in the constitution that defines where they can spend their money and on what. Eco systems do not exist within municipal and political boundaries, so GOCO can now fund projects on federal land. They are no longer restricted to working on private property and those effected by conservation easements and state land. This opens up the opportunity to make this comprehensive and start to get to the basin wide scope. All the GOCO grants are run with a selection criterion that formulates the questions that are asked on an application...focusing on the outcomes paying less attention how you achieved that. Currently the grant application for habitat work is in the air in terms of how GOCO structures this grant application. All the funders will be represented for the grant application. You will be able to say it's a great project, but HPP cannot participate and that funding will not be considered for that applicant. GOCO is asking that you commit to the partnership, commit to the collaboration with a certain dollar amount and GOCO will iron out the details. The funders GOCO is attracting have a very broad ability to fund habitat projects. The concept is the match, partnership and leverage is all built in and everyone is committed as a collaborative partnership to make a process more efficient both for the grantee and ourselves as the funders. GOCO did not ask for any money.

The state council agreed this could be a valuable partnership to get habitat restoration done. They committed to GOCO to let them know how much HPP would contribute at our March 2019 state council meeting.

Roundtable:

- Greg – Coming around to Andrews discussion, but still think all the other things we talked about we should also give serious consideration
- Ken – when we see a problem at this magnitude with the committee continually returning money, everything should be put forward and dwindled down. I think we have done that. I continue to be impressed by this council.
- Mick – Informational; Interesting; I did learn some things.
- Hunter – Great discussion; I feel we can move forward with Andrew's discussion. This deserves our full attention.
- Katie – Previous discussion items have been interesting, but this discussion was scary but good.
- Samantha – appreciate the opportunity to sit in on all the discussions; thank you

- Hanna – interesting for us to see what is on the horizon; excited to see what comes of it
- Sheila – appreciate being a part of this council; good ideas to move forward with especially on the landscape
- Gary – happy we are getting outside of the box to get money spent; good discussion – private land is extremely important to the wildlife
- Terry – One of the more interesting meetings I've ever attended; HPP admins are outstanding – good job on their committee updates!
- Pat – Thanks, this is one of those important meetings that is terrifying. 2023 will be here before you know it. We need to be cognizant of the landowner's perspective and as we broaden HPP into these new things, there is a reassurance that we are not doing so at the expense of what our program was set up for. These things we have discussed are not by statute, but it certainly broadens HPP.

March 19-20 next meeting