



## **HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES**

### **Gunnison Basin HPP Committee**

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

**April 15, 2019**

**11:00 a.m.**

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

**Guests:** Aleshia Rummel, NRCS; James Ramirez, USFS; Pat Tucker, CPW; Jamie Nogle, NWTF; Ryan Kay, BLM; Jon Mugglestone, Gunnison County; Bradley Wigginton, Gunnison County

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

1. Committee members and guests were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$116,860.07.

#### **New Business:**

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

1. Bradley Wigginton reviewed the Gunnison County Weed Control project from last fiscal year. The county treated cheatgrass infestations along County Road 26 with pre- and post-emergent herbicide, then hydroseeded with native species. The initial results are promising and seem to offer long-term cheatgrass reduction after the first application. The county is continuing to develop the protocol, and if it is successful, it could become a treatment option for cheatgrass infestations across the western slope.  
The county is implementing a second phase of testing along the remaining portion of CR 26, and is requesting HPP funds for the seed and equipment time. The committee was concerned about domestic sheep grazing in the area. While sheep may damage the newly established seed and early growth, the larger issue is preventing the infestation, which is currently primarily in the road right-of-ways, from escaping into the adjacent habitat. The project was approved for \$2,790.68.
2. The committee reviewed a USFS proposal for weed control work in the Soap Creek drainage. The project will target toadflax and oxeye daisy infestations. The area provides big game winter range, and experiences year-round use by deer. Soap Creek is highly utilized by hunters and recreational road traffic, which results in widespread weed dispersal. USFS has

decommissioned several roads in the area to try and prevent this spread; however user-created trails have made this control method ineffective. USFS is seeing a reduction in known weed infestations, however new pockets are appearing on the landscape. The committee is planning a tour of this area for the summer, and reiterated the need for ongoing treatment efforts to keep existing infestations under control. The project was approved for \$3,500.00.

3. Aleshia Rummel presented a weed control project for the Gunnison Conservation District. The District is implementing an herbicide cost-share program to improve weed control on private lands throughout the county. NRCS has some seed mixes on hand for post-treatment seeding to encourage native species reestablishment. The committee stipulated that herbicide purchased with HPP funds must meet certain requirements, including minimum acreage, location in a wildlife corridor, history of or potential for wildlife damage to agriculture, and proximity to public lands. The committee also requested that hi-lite be included with the herbicide to help landowners track treatment locations. The project was approved for \$4,992.00 for herbicide, and the committee requested follow-up from NRCS next spring to present results.
4. Jamie Nogle presented a stewardship project for NTWF on behalf of the GMUG National Forest. The project involves multiple treatment efforts, including fuels reductions and wet meadow restorations across several areas. NTWF requested HPP funds for a fuels reduction project in the Rainbow/Tin Cup/Soap Creek area. The project will open the understory, regenerate aspen stands, and increase forage production for big game on public lands. Most of the thinned timber will be burned in slash piles, although some may be masticated if the terrain and desired vegetation reestablishment permits this. Thinning efforts will also assist USFS in implementing future burns, especially along public/private land interfaces. The project was approved for \$10,800.00.
5. Jim Ramirez presented a USFS burn project for the Soap Creek/West Elk/Rainbow Lake area. Previously elk were over objective in this area, and agency efforts concentrated on reducing elk numbers. However, more recently elk numbers have been below objective, and wildlife managers are struggling to pull elk back into GMU 54. The area has seemingly good habitat for deer and elk, but there are large pockets of highly under-utilized areas. 5 burn units are planned to regenerate aspen and increase forage production, with the hopeful result of improving elk distribution across the area. The burn area is large enough to prevent concentrating elk in any one particular area of emerging aspen; and will be implemented in a mosaic pattern to integrate old and new aspen stands. The project was approved for \$50,000.00.
6. Tom Grant presented a wet meadow restoration project for the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservation District. The project involves re-engineering channels to slow the flow of water through the landscape, which will increase soil retention of water and improve forage production for wildlife and livestock. The committee was supportive of the project; however the proposal includes work on the Van Tuyl SWA, which requires agency approval before it may be formally considered by the committee.
7. The Eisen fence project had no new updates and was tabled for the next meeting.
8. Dayle Funka called in to present a fencing proposal for the Taylor Park permittee pool. The pool collectively runs ~1,200 cattle across the group of allotments, and the existing buck and pole fence is in severe disrepair and does not properly contain livestock. USFS will

provide materials to construct a new wildlife-friendly fence. The permittees are seeking HPP funds to help with the costs associated with removing the old fence and constructing a new fence. The committee has seen an influx of fence projects lately and discussed setting a standard price per foot to help ensure consistent pricing on future projects. \$1.50 was established as the price per foot, and the committee approved \$19,800.00 for the project.

**Roundtable:**

1. The committee Distribution Management Plan is due for revision in FY2020. Future meetings in the fall and winter will involve work on the plan.

**Next Meeting: TBD**