



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

San Juan Basin HPP Committee

San Juan Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Ct., Durango
February 10th, 2020
6:00 p.m.

San Juan Basin HPP Members Present: Dan Huntington, Livestock Grower; Phil Craig, Livestock Grower; Mike Schmidt, BLM; John Gardner, Sportsmen; Anthony Garcia, USFS; Aran Johnson, SUIT; Adrian Archuleta, CPW; Jesse Montoya, Livestock Grower

Guests: Brad Weinmeister, CPW; Sarah Bangert (phone)

Introduction: Committee members and guests were introduced. The November 2019 meeting minutes were approved. The remaining budget at the beginning of the meeting was \$38,400.00.

Old Business:

1. The committee reviewed the previously-considered habitat improvement project from Bo Pitman. The local DWM noted that the area is very dry and houses significant numbers of big game throughout the winter. The deer and elk in this area generally migrate to public land and are available for public hunters. The committee approved \$3,500 for purchase of the guzzlers and herbicide.

New Business:

1. Sarah Bangert presented a brush management project for the Valley View Ranch/Patchek family. Several years ago large portions of the property were masticated to cut back oakbrush and improve forage and grazing conditions. The regrowth is now due for retreatment. The project proposal involves implementing intensive goat grazing on 300 acres to strip emerging oakbrush leaves and reduce regeneration. Goat grazing is expected to create mosaic patterns in the oakbrush stands by removing younger clumps while leaving older stands for cover. While the goats may also graze on desirable forbes, as much as 50% of their intake will be oakbrush, and the forage species will have sufficient time to recover through the rest of the growing season to be available for wildlife.

While initial treatment requires intensive grazing over a 2-3 year period, the retreatment interval is expected to be every 7 years. This type of treatment has some history of success in other test situations, however this will be a new test for this application. If successful, it may be implemented across larger landscape projects on public or private lands in southwest Colorado. Monitoring will be completed with vegetation trend studies, soil samples, and visual inspection. The committee noted that this type of prescribed grazing might be able to accomplish similar results as mechanical treatment at lower costs, and with less ground disturbance in sensitive areas. The committee approved the project for \$5,850 in FY21. Regular updates with results and continued monitoring will be required.

2. The committee reviewed fertilizer project proposals. There were 16 applicants this year for a total of 1684 acres. The committee approved \$21.25 per acre with a \$5,000 cap on individual recipients, for a total project cost of \$32,036.25.
3. Aran Johnson presented an elk collaring project for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. There has been an ongoing monitoring effort to track changes in annual elk movement and distribution patterns across tribal and public lands, especially during migration events. This data is needed to help inform CPW decision-making processes on management objectives, and to assist HPP in supporting management objectives and reducing conflicts with private landowners. 30 new collars purchased for this project will be deployed in new areas of the reservation, where very little data is available. The project was approved for \$14,775.

Other Discussion:

1. Brad Weinmeister presented the draft herd management plan for D30. The committee discussed the preferred alternatives for population size and buck:doe ratios, and supported the 'status quo' current population objective range of 23,000-27,000, with a buck:doe ratio of 26:30. This plan has been a good working model since the last revision, and the committee feels that it responsibly balances local range and habitat conditions with sportsmen desires and landowner concerns. The proposed objectives will allow CPW to effectively manage yearly fluctuations in population numbers and quality buck hunting opportunity due to the newly implemented 5-year season structure or due to impacts from Chronic Wasting Disease if it becomes prevalent in the committee area. A support letter from the committee will be drafted and submitted.
2. The committee briefly discussed the status of the E30 and E31 HMP revisions, and updates regarding the lion management plan.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting April 21st @ 6:00pm