



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Northwest Colorado HPP Committee

Zoom Video Conference

May 4th, 2021

7:00 p.m.

NWCO HPP Members Present: Evan Jones, Toni Toelle, Gary Nichols, Sean Durham, Chad Green, Curtis Keetch, Gary Visintainer

Guests: Jonathan Lambert, Pat Tucker, Wayne Counts, John Allen, Garrett Smith, Andy & Melissa Misner

Introduction: Committee members were introduced. The remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$86,967.82.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews:

1. Wayne Counts presented a water development proposal. An existing water source on the property has sufficient water, but the old windmill structure no longer operates properly. Livestock and wildlife compete for limited water resources and distribution/utilization of habitat is poor. The project involves replacing the windmill structure with a solar pump and tank. This will allow the landowner to better distribute water and livestock across the area, and help reduce competition with big game for water sources. The project was approved for \$5,000.00 for solar pump materials.
2. Andy and Melissa Misner presented a water development project for Z/C Ranch. The property receives heavy elk use during migration and in the spring, and additionally up to 100 resident elk use the area year-round. Water is a limiting factor for wildlife in the area, and livestock compete with big game for water sources. 5 holes have already been drilled and hit water, but still need the well infrastructure to bring water to the surface for big game and livestock use. The project involves developing four of the well sites with infrastructure to produce functional wells. Water will be piped into tanks for wildlife and livestock use. Increasing water availability throughout the project area will improve big game and livestock distribution and result in more even utilization of forage and habitat.

The committee noted that the project would be beneficial to wildlife and habitat, but questioned whether improving water availability would also increase conflict potential on the ranch. The landowners generally felt that if they could improve big game distribution with water developments, they would be able to hold the elk outside of the hay production areas and direct the grazing pressure towards brome, which can sustain that early spring grazing. The project

may not reduce conflict, but isn't expected to increase it either given the proximity to the Yampa River.

The committee also discussed timing issues with the end of the fiscal year. Realistically only two of the wells could be completed before the end of June. The committee approved \$40,448.00 for two developments, and asked the landowners to reapply for the remaining two in the new fiscal year.

3. John Allen presented a pond lining project. Livestock and wildlife compete for the limited water resource as well as for forage on the property. Four existing ponds do not hold water well despite sufficient runoff to fill, and need to be sealed to improve water retention. The ponds are each located .25 - .5 miles from any other water sources. The project involves compacting and sealing the ponds with bentonite to improve water storage capacity. Increasing water availability for longer periods of time will help improve big game and livestock distribution and allow for improved grazing rotation.

The committee supported the project, and noted that this was a follow-up project to previous pond construction work that improved habitat and water availability for livestock and big game. With limited time left in the fiscal year, two ponds were approved for 50% of costs up to \$8,500.00. The remaining two ponds were also approved for 50% up to \$8,500 for FY2022.

Next Meeting: TBD