



HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEETING MINUTES

Uncompahgre HPP Committee

2300 S. Townsend, Montrose

May 5th, 2021

6:30 p.m.

Uncompahgre HPP Members Present: Todd Stewart, Livestock Producer (by proxy); Loren Paulson, USFS; Kelly Crane, CPW; Bobby Gray, Sportsman; Dave Alexander, Livestock Producer; Bob Black, Livestock Producer; Thane Stranathan, BLM

Guests: Tony Abel, Pat Tucker, David Svenson, Pat Willits

Introduction: Committee members were introduced. The current remaining budget at the start of the meeting was \$59,444.41.

Old Business:

1. The committee resumed discussion on the Cimarron Ridge Brush Management project. The overall project objectives include large-scale mastication, however there is a significant weed infestation that must be treated prior to disturbing the soil. The current proposal includes spraying musk and Canada thistle with Milestone to reduce the presence and spread of the weeds, and inhibit reestablishment after the mastication work. Some of the contractor quote included pricing for boom spraying, which the committee noted was a concern due to the potential for overspray and accidental treatment of nontarget, desirable vegetation. Mr. Abel agreed to proceed with spot spraying instead of using the boom spray, and will also reseed after the mastication work is completed to help reestablish any affected nontarget vegetation. The committee approved up to \$15,525.00 for contractor costs.
2. The committee resumed discussion on Kevin Quintana's pond development project. The property is located in a major migration corridor for deer and elk, and previous habitat enhancements have been completed on the property, including food plots and another pond development. The current proposal includes installing a second pond at the lower edge of a series of hayfields, and is intended to help catch and hold irrigation run-off to provide additional water for deer and elk. Currently the runoff spills over the edge of the property into steep draws, where it causes erosion problems and does not contribute towards forage or water availability. The project was approved for \$9,657.81.
3. The committee reviewed an add-on proposal to Bruce Irvine's existing fence project. That section of fence has been completed, however two additional gates are needed to install crossings at high traffic points. The project was approved for \$200 from CPW Game

Damage.

4. Multiple projects were approved for FY21; however for a variety of reasons some were not implemented and will not be completed this year. These projects include Harold Fence Phase 3 (\$12,540.00); Thorpe Fence (\$6,270.00); Cowboy Cave Fence (\$17,718.60); and Marolf Water Development (\$7,700.00). Because the circumstances were unforeseeable or out of the landowner's control, Cowboy Cave Fence and Marolf Water Development were reapproved for FY22. Harold Fence and Thorpe Fence will need to reapply for funding in FY22.

New Business:

Project Application Proposals and Reviews:

1. Pat Willits a fencing proposal from A Bar D Ranch. HPP has participated in multiple phases of fence projects on the ranch, utilizing a modified design with all smooth wires. However, the landowner has found that the smooth middle wires do not properly contain livestock, particularly in drought years. The proposal includes removing approximately 12,000 feet of the smooth middle wires and replacing it with barbed. The total proposed cost was \$19,980, with the HPP request at \$9,900.00. The committee supported the work, but felt that the cost was too high on fence that was previously built with HPP funds. The project was approved for \$2,500.
2. David Svenson presented a forage purchase project. Resident elk utilize private irrigated hayfields between Colona and Ridgway throughout the winter, causing damage to fences and consuming forage. Many neighboring landowners in the area are not tolerant of big game and the associated damages. Pasture rent for livestock grazing in the fall would typically cost up to \$6,000 based on \$1/head x 200 cattle x 30 days; however after this intensive livestock grazing, there is little forage left for wildlife. The proposal involves continuing to irrigate a 70 acre field after the first cutting in August. 8-12" minimum of forage will be left standing, and Mr. Svenson will allow elk to freely graze on the hayfield from September 15, 2021 through March 21, 2022. Allowing elk to remain on this hayfield will reduce the time spent and forage consumed on other fields, thereby reducing conflicts with less tolerant landowners. The project was approved for \$6,000.00 in FY22. The committee noted that this project model is compensation for the landowner for allowing elk to graze with a minimum required amount of quality forage, with the aim of alleviating game damage claims on neighboring parcels. This is a trial for FY22 with no guarantees of continuing in the future, particularly if range conditions change, or neighboring grazing practices change in such a way that reduces conflicts on those fields.
3. The committee reviewed a fencing project proposal from Ella Marolf. The property is located in winter range, and experiences year-round use by deer. Frequent wildlife crossing has damaged the existing fence, which is in severe disrepair. The fence no longer contains livestock and may injure big game as they move through the property. Portions of the fence that are in disrepair will be replaced with new materials, including high visibility wire. Some old fence that is too damaged will be removed and all-new fence will be constructed in those sections. This will keep livestock confined in proper areas, as well as help prevent future big game damage or injury. The project was approved for \$3,850.00 for materials.
4. The committee reviewed a pond expansion project from Paul Enstrom. The property is located in important big game transitional and winter range, and experiences year-round use by deer. Water is a limiting factor in the area. An existing pond is partially silted in and does not hold water well, and some water is lost during filling because the pond's capacity is insufficient. The proposal includes enlarging the existing pond with heavy equipment, as well as cleaning and removing any silted-in portions. Increasing the size of the pond will allow for greater water

storage capacity, resulting in more water being available to livestock and wildlife for longer periods of time. The project was approved for \$4,000.00.

5. The committee reviewed a proposal for weed treatment on Cliff Bankston's property on Disappointment Creek. Previous weed treatment had initial success, and the landowner would like to continue treating the infestation of knapweed and whitetop to bring irrigated fields back into production. The area is important winter range for big game, and deer and elk contributed to the overall degradation of the field. The project was approved for \$700.00 in FY22.
6. The committee reviewed a fencing proposal from Joe Scriffiny. The application was unclear about the length of fence being proposed, and the two contractor quotes had conflicting footages. The project was tabled for clarification and more information.

Other Business:

1. The committee resumed discussion about a pond cleanout program for the spring and/or next fiscal year. The BLM Grazing Advisory Board currently has a program that pays permittees \$500 for ponds completed on BLM permits. HPP may be able to partner with the GAB to provide additional funding for this program. For USFS permits, NEPA issues present a barrier to pond cleanouts, as many of the ponds predate NEPA and so are not allowed to be treated without working with USFS staff to obtain clearances for each pond. HPP may need to explore alternate options, such as paying for arc clearances to obtain NEPA on large batches of ponds in the area, and/or partnering with NRCS. For USFS permit ponds that do already have clearances, HPP may be able to fund pond cleanouts if those permit holders can be contacted.
2. The Distribution Management Plan is due for revision. The committee reviewed the current plan and identified areas and ideas for major updates. The first draft of the revised plan will be reviewed at the fall meeting.

Next Meeting: Project Tour - TBD