

STATE OF COLORADO

John Hickenlooper, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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*For Wildlife-
For People*

HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
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I. Organization

- a. Authorized in Colorado Statutes (33-1-110 and 33-1-112)
- b. Program oversight provided for by State Council.
- c. Program intent is to be a responsive and fast effort to resolve big game problems without “normal” government oversight and restrictions.
- d. 19 local committees with 3 members from livestock growers and 1 member from the federal land managing agencies, sportsmen and the Division of Wildlife in the area.
- e. Local committees operate by authority of a Wildlife Commission plan. All committee plans have been updated within the last 5 years and are now valid for 10 years.
- f. Committees have authority to solicit, review, approve, fund, implement and evaluate projects.
- g. 1 full time DOW person assigned as program coordinator with shared assistance from 1 program assistant.

II. Purpose

- a. Original purpose was to resolve fence and forage conflicts that game damage laws existing at the time were unable to do.
- b. In 2002, statute was changed to “resolve wildlife conflicts, particularly those associated with fence and forage, and to assist the Division in meeting game management objectives, through duties deemed appropriate by the Director.”
- c. Focus is on conflicts caused by big game ungulates (deer, elk, moose, pronghorn) to agricultural operators.
- d. New statute wording also provides for HPP to become involved in those issues that can affect agriculture and big game, ie. habitat improvements for sage grouse.
- e. Ensures private landowner consideration in big game herd sizes and management.
- f. HPP provides an opportunity for dialogue between landowners, land managers, sportsmen and the DOW. Relationships have been greatly improved because of this forum.

III. Funding

- a. Statutes provide for 5% of big game licenses (deer, elk, pronghorn, moose) used in HPP committee areas to be transferred to the HPP program each year.
- b. HPP State Council allocates that money to the 19 committees.
- c. HPP is allowed to carry over money each year but amount is capped at the 5% total the program received in the beginning of the year.
 - i. This money is a combination of both money obligated for in progress projects and unobligated money available for new opportunities or issues that arise.
 - ii. Intent was/is to provide for larger scale projects that cost more and which couldn't be done in a single year.

- d. Funding has declined \$536,000 in past 2 years due to 1) decrease in hunting license sales/participation and 2) herd population objectives being reached in many areas which means fewer licenses needed to keep populations at desired levels.
- e. On July 1, 2010, HPP received \$2,061,477 as the annual 5% of big game license fees. In contrast, on July 1, 2008, HPP received \$2,598,144.
- f. Statutes pertaining to the 5% funding level and carryover are repealed in June 2015 and requires legislative approval to continue them.
- g. Partnerships are usually a requirement for projects to be approved and results in the leveraging of HPP money to get more accomplished at a lower cost to everyone. Level and type of partnership is at the approving committee's discretion.

IV. Projects

- a. Committees have flexibility to approve projects which accomplish the HPP purpose in II b above.
- b. Main project categories are habitat manipulation, fencing, game damage, information/education, monitoring/research, equipment, conservation easement transaction costs, NEPA clearances and administrative necessities.
- c. Committees have both an immediate, short term focus on problems as well as projects that will solve a conflict for a longer term.
- d. Short term projects are usually designed to solve an immediate conflict, ie. fence materials, stackyards.
- e. Long term habitat treatment projects, despite the cost, planning time and longer time for results to reach fruition, are a priority with all HPP committees.
- f. Projects can be done on both public lands and private property.

V. Benefits

- a. Landowners get a more responsive and quicker way to resolve conflicts; financial assistance for needed projects; improvement of both public and private range resources and structures.
- b. Sportsmen get larger big game herds due to the higher tolerance for those herds by private landowners; less political conflicts; hunting opportunities when identified by the local committees.
- c. Federal agencies are able to leverage limited/shrinking funds; work towards meeting agency targets; help in resolving resource and resource user problems; overall improvement of range conditions.
- d. Division of Wildlife gets improved relationships among all interested parties; increased tolerance for big game herds; political acceptance and support; decreased game damage claims for fence and forage damages; habitat projects that benefit many wildlife species.

VI. Challenges

- a. Funding - decline of HPP funding during recent two years is cause for concern.
- b. Habitat projects are recognized as a key tool and critical for wildlife but they are expensive and require much planning, especially on the scale needed to be done to be effective.
- c. Administrative – current state rules regarding purchasing, accounting and hiring have caused HPP to be a less responsive, slower and a more bureaucratic program than it was intended to be. This creates problems with our partners as well as longer time to get projects done and may require legislative action to address.

Additional information about the Habitat Partnership Program can be gained by calling your local DOW office or on the DOW's website, <http://wildlife.state.co.us/landwater>