

NORTHWEST COLORADO HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

2009-2013

**Approved Colorado Wildlife Commission November 12, 2009
This plan is valid for 10 years from the approval date.**

Northwest Colorado HPP Area 2009

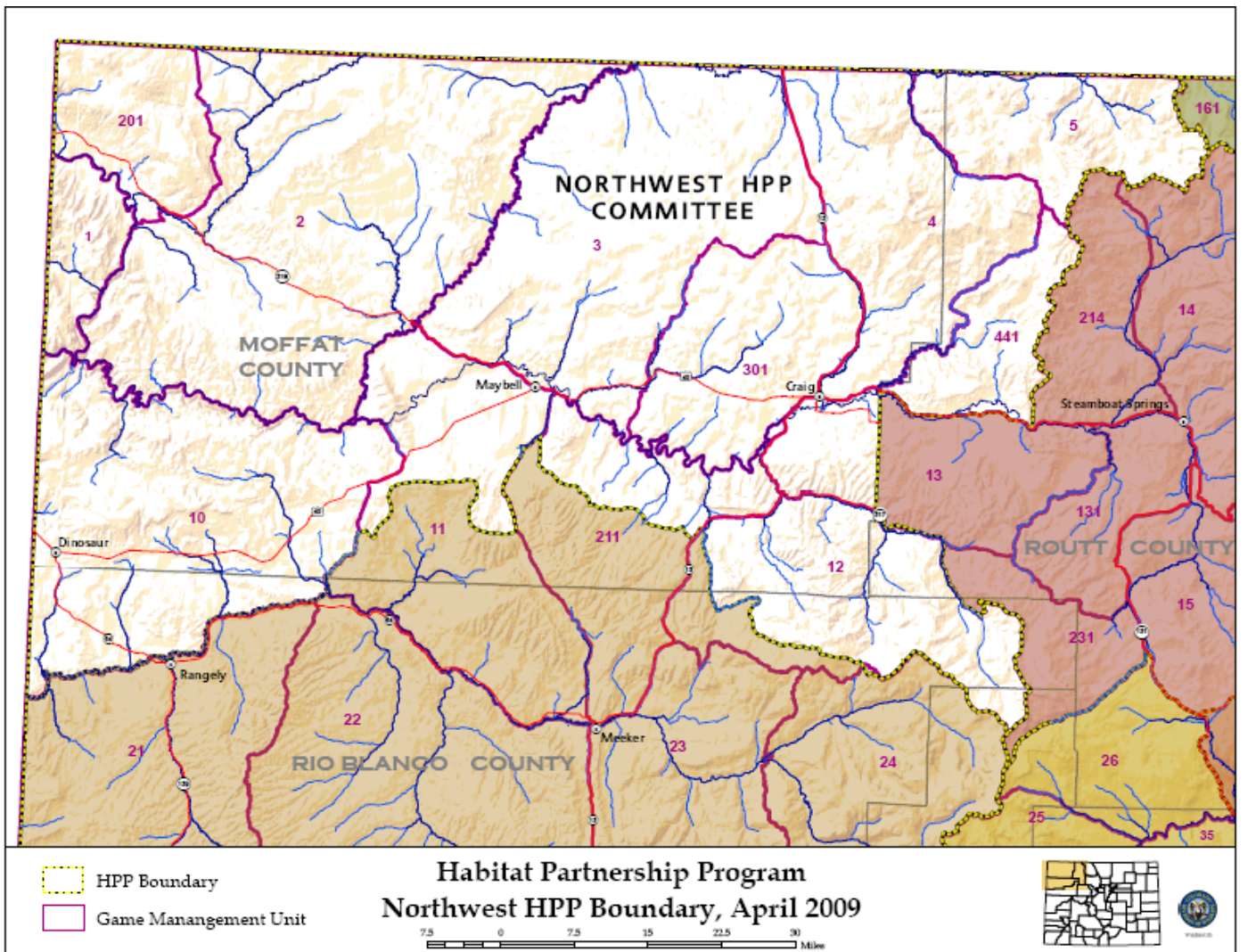


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**NORTHWEST COLORADO
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Ken Scott	Sportsmen Representative Since 01/2008
Gary Visintainer	Livestock Grower Representative Since 07/1991
Scott Brennise	Livestock Grower Representative Since 08/2004
Chad Green	Livestock Grower Representative Since 02/2002
Tim Novotny (Chairman)	Bureau of Land Management Representative Since 02/2002
Erik Taylor	U.S. Forest Service Representative Since 03/2002
Garett Watson	Colorado Division of Wildlife Representative Since 01/2008
Kelli Scott	Committee Administrative Assistant Since 08/2004

INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

The Northwest Colorado Habitat Partnership Program Committee (NWHPP) was started in 1991 to address big game rangeland forage and fence conflicts occurring in Northwest Colorado. The area assigned includes all of the land north of the Yampa River, west of the Continental Divide, west of the drainage divide between the Elk River and Elkhead River, and runs to the Utah border on the west and the Wyoming border on the north.

However, in 2006, in cooperation with the White River HPP committee, the geographic boundaries were revised between the two adjacent HPP committee areas. The Northwest HPP and White River HPP Committees both felt that landowners along the Yampa and Williams Fork River drainages would be better served by the HPP program if the assigned geographic areas for each HPP committee were modified. In addition, the landowners in the Rangely area (units 10 and 21) were not currently participating in the HPP program and it was felt that some changes needed to be made to address those concerns as well. The areas of greatest concern to both HPP committees were the Williams Fork River area (unit 13 and majority of unit 12), the Axial Basin area (northern portion of unit 211), the Bitterbrush/Maybell area (northern portion of unit 11), and the Rangely area (units 10 and 21). Therefore, in March, 2006, permanent HPP area/boundary changes were implemented to address these concerns within this area of northwestern Colorado. Yampa River drainage including the Williams Fork area was included within the Northwest HPP committee's area after 2006.

In March, 2009, additional minor modifications were again proposed to the HPP boundary between the White River and the Northwest HPP committees in order to simplify matters for those areas along the southern portion of the NWHPP area where the HPP boundary did not follow or coincide with specific Game Management Unit (GMU) boundaries. The two proposed boundary changes only impacted two areas in particular where the HPP boundary split units 11 and 12 between the HPP committee areas. This includes moving the boundary a little farther north of the county line between Wolf Creek and MCR 57 in unit 11 and moving the boundary so that it simply follows the GMU 12/24 boundary. This modification keeps all the lands both private and public that drain into the Yampa River part of the NWHPP committee's boundary.

As of February 2009 the NWHPP area includes game management units 1, 2, 201, 3, 301, 4, 441,5,10, and the Northern portions of units 11,211 and 12 and western portion of unit 13. The majority of the NWHPP area falls within Moffat County but also includes small portions of Routt, Rio Blanco and Garfield Counties. The land types within this area encompass 3,522,982 acres, or 5,507.6 square miles and range from mountain aspen and spruce/fir to high country desert, with large amounts of pasture and wheat land in between. A significant portion of the wheat cropland has been enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This vegetation change has altered the winter distribution of elk in game management units 3, 301,4, and 441 from more traditional winter habitat to the established grassland types. The area is a checkerboard of private and public ownership, with National Forest, BLM and State lands making up a substantial portion. The area has large herds of elk, deer and antelope, and a human population of less than 25,000.

The Committee solicited public input with special public meetings, open working meetings, and written questionnaires to all landowners with more than 160 acres. Representatives of the hunting public and the outfitters association also participated in identifying conflicts and possible solutions.

With all identified conflicts, current grazing management practice will be reviewed to see if alternatives, consistent with public and private allotment goals, exist to help reduce negative big game impacts.

The area within the Northwest HPP committee boundary includes the two largest elk herds in Colorado (White River herd and Bear's Ears herd). The conflicts identified for elk involve several different components. First,

early movement toward summer ranges in the spring result in premature forage depletion causing delays of livestock pasture usage. Secondly, premature migration from National Forest lands onto adjoining private property is resulting in significant loss of livestock forage available for fall use. Thirdly, early and sustained migration has also begun to cause significant impacts to critical big game winter range. Lastly, elk distributions and concentrations during the winter have caused conflicts with livestock winter feeding grounds.

Fence damage was identified as a chronic problem and the Committee plans to continue to take a proactive role in seeking out new fencing methods, which could provide relief.

The success of the management plan will depend heavily on the Committee's ability to foster cooperation between the landowners and the hunting public, since a major tool for moving the animals from the conflict areas, and decreasing the numbers will be the public hunters. Landowners have been reluctant in the past to open their private lands to the general public, for reasons ranging from protection of their property to attempts to manage the property for hunting income. This lack of hunting access to private property, which seems to have increased over the years, has meant that the animals have found a haven on private lands, increasing the herd numbers and increasing the problems caused by those herd numbers on the private property

The NWHPP feels strongly in the idea of working as a partnership with other entities and landowners. Our Committee would also like to encourage people to leverage the monies available in order to implement as many projects as possible. For that reason, our Committee will generally fund all approved projects at a 50/50 cost share. We also require each participating landowner or agency to submit a completed Conflict Form prior to considering proposed projects.

We currently have seven committee members: three representing local livestock growers, one representing U.S. Forest Service, one representing Bureau of Land Management, one representing Colorado Division of Wildlife, and one representing sportsmen of Colorado. The NWHPP is also fortunate to have four members who have served seven years or more: Tim Novotny (chairperson and Bureau of Land Management Representative), Gary Visintainer (livestock grower representative), Chad Green (livestock grower representative) and Erik Taylor (U.S Forest Service Representative). We believe this is an indication of the dedication of our Committee.

Special projects we have been working on and support are:

1. Dixie harrow/Lawson aerator/rangeland drill treatments: NWHPP Committee purchased a Dixie harrow as a treatment method to thin sagebrush and bitterbrush and to improve habitat for sage grouse, deer, elk, and antelope. The Committee has also purchased a rangeland drill to be utilized for projects by landowners or other agencies.
2. Weed Control: NWHPP has participated in the Moffat County Weed Management Plan.
3. Game Damage Dispersal Hunts : These hunts have been used to help disperse big game animals and to help alleviate game damage conflicts.
4. Fences: NWHPP promotes the use of high tensile wire fence in place of barbed and woven wire fences. Bulk fence materials are offered to all participating landowners for annual fence maintenance. In the spring of 2009 the bulk fence materials were increased to further help landowners with annual fence maintenance.
5. Testing of the DAU computer model: The NWHPP has agreed to work with the Statewide Council to test a new model that was developed to meet the statewide criteria for big game carrying capacity. The Habitat Data Summary and Evaluation Section of this plan and comments on DAU or other Species Management

Plans will be provided after the DAU Habitat Evaluation model has been completed. The committee has helped fund the use and development of the Habitat Model.

6. Water development: The NWHPP has been active in several water development projects throughout the area.
7. Prescribed burns: Thousands of acres have been burned for habitat manipulation in projects with the NWHPP.
8. Education: NWHPP has help fund and support educational programs such as the local 4-H WHEP program, workshops, brochures, seminars, and an educational kiosk.
9. Game Damage Panels: NWHPP purchased 60— 7x12' panels to loan to landowners until permanent structures can be built.
10. Stackyards – the committee will consider stackyard requests from landowners.
11. Elk migration and survival study: The NWHPP has funded the purchase of 70 radio collars to be put on adult cow elk on winter ranges by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. This was to help the DOW study elk migrations, seasonal ranges and survival. The project also helps DOW identify elk conflicts.
12. The NWHPP helped support game damage efforts in the winter of 2007/2008 by approving a special project. The committee purchased 100 tons of hay to help out to landowners who had suffered significant damages by elk during the winter.

SCOPE OF PLAN

NORTHWEST HPP COMMITTEE VISION:

TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH LANDOWNERS AND LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES TO ESTABLISH STRATEGIES TO RESOLVE IMMEDIATE FENCE, WATER AND FORAGE CONFLICTS CAUSED BY BIG GAME; AND TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT LONG-TERM STRATEGIES THAT RESOLVE CONFLICTS WHILE MAINTAINING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE RANGELANDS.

NORTHWEST HPP COMMITTEE GOALS:

GOAL: TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES TO IMPROVE HABITAT CONDITIONS AND TO REDUCE CONFLICTS WITH FENCING, FORAGE AND BIG GAME.

GOAL: TO IMPROVE BIG GAME DISTRIBUTION AND HARVEST TO MINIMIZE CONFLICTS WITH LOCAL LANDOWNERS AND TO PROVIDE A QUALITY HUNTING EXPERIENCE.

GOAL: TO IMPROVE HABITAT CONDITIONS TO ENSURE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE RANGELANDS.

GOAL: TO MITIGATE LANDOWNER FENCE CONFLICTS DUE TO DAMAGE CAUSED BY BIG GAME.

GOAL: TO MONITOR ALL PROJECTS TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS.

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE HPP PROGRAM.

GOAL: TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO PLANS THAT REDUCE FENCE AND FORAGE CONFLICTS AND ALSO POSITIVELY AFFECT OTHER SPECIES OF WILDLIFE.

GOAL: TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF HABITAT CONDITIONS AND FACILITATE HEALTHY RANGELANDS.

GOAL: TO HELP THE DOW ACHIEVE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND TO ASSIST IN RESEARCH EFFORTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BIG GAME POPULATIONS TO HELP INFLUENCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS.

GOAL: TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES TO IMPROVE HABITAT CONDITIONS AND TO REDUCE CONFLICTS WITH FENCING, FORAGE AND BIG GAME.

Objectives:

1. Conduct habitat management projects to attract and hold wildlife in preferred areas.
2. Conduct habitat management projects to control timing of migration to and from winter range.
3. Implement grazing management strategies to sustain livestock grazing and wildlife use.
4. Alternative fence design that is wildlife friendly and reduces potential future projects.
5. Disperse excessive concentrations of animals to reduce conflicts.
6. Cooperate to reduce noxious weeds.

Strategies:

- A. Utilize distribution and harvest hunts primarily to move animals away from conflict areas.
- B. Fertilization and seeding to improve forage quality and quantity.
- C. Develop grazing systems through associated projects such as water development, fence construction. etc.
- D. Burning, mechanical, chemical, and silvicultural treatments to control noxious weeds and shrubs, increase forage, and enhance wildlife habitat.
- E. High-tensile fence.
- F. Lay down fence.
- G. Reduced wire height and increased spacing.
- H. Remove fencing impeding migration routes.

GOAL: TO IMPROVE BIG GAME DISTRIBUTION AND HARVEST TO MINIMIZE CONFLICTS WITH LOCAL LANDOWNERS AND TO PROVIDE A QUALITY HUNTING EXPERIENCE.

Objectives:

1. Develop and maintain quality big game herds in Northwest Colorado through dispersal of concentrated herds and change in season structure.
2. Travel management/controlled access to distribute big game.
3. Reduce big game conflicts with winter livestock feeding grounds.
4. Timely responses to landowners who are suffering immediate big game conflicts.

Strategies:

- A. Utilize distribution and harvest hunts primarily to move animals away from conflict areas.
- B. Manage critical big game winter range to the appropriate level of use.
- C. Implement coordinated cow hunts on private and public lands.
- D. Make recommendations to DOW about possible harvest strategies.
- E. Establish lists of landowners for hunters to be referred to.
- F. Work with landowners that harbor elk during hunting season.
- G. Work with Ranching For Wildlife entities to increase and overall harvest during regular big game seasons.
- H. Encourage management of motor vehicles to maintain big game population on public lands.
- I. Hold special meetings or discussions to respond timely to immediate big game conflicts.

GOAL: TO IMPROVE HABITAT CONDITIONS TO ENSURE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE RANGELANDS.

Objectives:

1. Conduct habitat management projects to attract and hold wildlife in preferred areas.
2. Conduct habitat management projects to control timing of migration to and from winter range.
3. Implement grazing management strategies to sustain livestock grazing and wildlife use.

4. Develop partnerships with groups that deal with wildlife habitat issues.
5. Focus on long-term protection of critical wildlife habitats.

Strategies:

- A. Fertilization and seeding to improve forage quality and quantity.
- B. Develop grazing systems through associated projects such as water development, fence construction, etc.
- C. Burning, mechanical, chemical, and silvicultural treatments to control shrubs and weeds, increase forage and enhance wildlife habitat.
- D. Work with groups on joint projects to improve habitat including, but not limited to: Moffat County Sage Grouse Working Group, Moffat County Pest Control, Sharptail Grouse Conservation Plan, Northwest Colorado Stewardship Partnership, NRCS, BLM, and USFS.
- E. Support appropriate conservation easements on critical wildlife habitats.
- F. Baiting efforts to re-distribute big-game populations.
- G. Work with projects to improve and protect critical mule deer habitat.
- H. Enhance and develop available water for wildlife and domestic grazing animals.

GOAL: TO MITIGATE LANDOWNER FENCE CONFLICTS DUE TO DAMAGE CAUSED BY BIG GAME.

Objectives:

1. Alternative fence design that is wildlife friendly and reduces potential future projects.
2. Reduce annual maintenance costs.

Strategies:

- A. High-tensile fence.
- B. Gate Options.
- C. Wildlife Crossing Passes.
- D. Lay down fence.
- E. Reduced wire height and increased spacing.
- F. Provide damaged fence repair materials.
- G. Hire fence contractors for repair.
- H. Visible top wire.
- I. Provide information on low maintenance fence design.

GOAL: MONITOR ALL PROJECTS TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS.

Objectives:

1. Follow a monitoring protocol to provide consistent data collection to analyze the effectiveness of projects.
2. Maintain the cost effectiveness of all projects.
3. Record project locations and completion of projects.
4. Track overall progress toward Habitat Management Plan goals.
5. Hire contractors/consultants to monitor large scale projects.

Strategies:

- A. Develop and implement a protocol that is easily understandable and repeatable by anyone.
- B. Evaluate how monies are spent.
- C. Send required surveys to project participants to evaluate project effectiveness for minimum 10 years, characterized in general terms and include, as a minimum, an assessment of landowner

and Committee satisfaction; the short and long term impact on target animals and environment; and project utility, quality and cost.

- D. Utilize photos, video, and photo points to record project completion.
- E. Maintain file on each project with cooperative agreement outlining roles and responsibilities, locations, dimensions, and timing of implementation. Also, included will be photos, maps, budget, actual expenses, in-kind cost share information, and all monitoring information.
- F. Utilize Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP) through 4-H to conduct monitoring on projects completed at yearly intervals.
- G. Complete annual reports

GOAL: DEVELOP AN INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE HPP PROGRAM.

Objectives:

- 1. Keep community and land managers informed about the Habitat Partnership Program.

Strategies:

- A. Sponsor workshops to assist landowners and land managers and to inform the community about land use issues.
- B. Develop brochures, newsletters, demonstrations, and tours to further understanding about livestock/big game needs and interactions, and land health issues.
- C. Work with the Statewide HPP Council to test the DAU computer model to assess its appropriateness for HPP.

GOAL: TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO PLANS THAT REDUCE FENCE AND FORAGE CONFLICTS AND ALSO POSITIVELY AFFECT OTHER SPECIES OF WILDLIFE.

Objectives:

- 1. Encourage cooperators to assist in the conservation of species of wildlife that are of special concern.

Strategies:

- A. Work to build fences that reduce perches for raptors in sage grouse habitat.
- B. Water projects with guzzlers for wildlife species.
- C. Habitat treatments to increase critical winter forage for all wildlife.
- D. Design projects that maintain adequate habitat for other species.

GOAL: TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF HABITAT CONDITIONS AND FACILITATE HEALTHY RANGELANDS.

Objectives:

- 1. Provide educational opportunities to promote understanding of wildlife habitat needs and facilitate healthy rangelands.

Strategies:

- A. Utilize Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP), through 4-H, to conduct monitoring on projects completed at yearly intervals.
- B. Sponsor workshops and cooperatively fund educational training for landowners, as examples: range management, fence design, etc.

GOAL: TO HELP THE DOW ACHIEVE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND TO ASSIST IN

RESEARCH EFFORTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BIG GAME POPULATIONS TO INFLUENCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Objective:

1. Provide recommendations and funding to big game research and objectives that will maintain healthy herds but help reduce conflicts.
2. Utilize the hunter resource as a big game management tool.

Strategies:

- A. Provide input to Wildlife Commission regarding season structure.
- B. Work with local landowners for access onto private property.
- C. Encourage hunting at specific times and places to reduce big game conflicts through dispersal and game damage hunts, as well as regular big game season hunts.
- D. Assist DOW in researching big game populations and behaviors by helping fund projects.

STRATEGY OPTIONS FOR DISTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT HUNTS

The NW CO Plan will utilize distribution and harvest hunts primarily to move animals away from conflict areas. The following criteria will be applied:

1. The NW CO HPP committee will work closely with the Division of Wildlife to recommend distribution management hunts for specific conflict areas. Such recommendations include number of licenses needed, time/date for hunt to occur in, specific private land locations to be included, etc.
2. Hunts will be conducted as provided for in Wildlife Commission regulations and in HPP guidelines approved by the Wildlife Commission.
3. As the number of licenses available for these hunts is restricted by the Division of Wildlife, this strategy will be used in most cases not to reduce big game populations per say, but only to effect positive animal distribution. Where practiced, ranch specific population decreases will be accomplished through the use of the hunter referral system.
4. As these hunts are designed to provide conflict resolution, participating ranches will be considered only if they do not charge a fee of any kind to hunters with these special licenses. This also includes guides or outfitters or any other representative of the property owner.
5. Other harvest strategies include providing recommendations to the Colorado Division of Wildlife on a variety of subjects, including season structure, antlerless harvest limits, PLO hunts, harvest strategies, and review and comment on land use activities.
6. HPP could be used for the coordination of distribution management hunts.

STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATED BIG GAME MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this strategy is to provide for coordinated management of big game herds which cross State, Data Analysis Unit and Habitat Partnership Program boundaries. Wildlife populations are dynamic and do not recognize political boundaries in habitat utilization. Numerous identified conflicts involve big game populations that seasonally migrate. Conflict resolution mandates a coordinated approach to species management.

STRATEGIES FOR PURCHASE OF STANDING FORAGE:

1. The purpose of this management strategy is to provide forage, cover, and/or holding areas for big game animals.
2. Standing Forage purchases will be a low priority and will be entered into by the Committee when other management strategies are deemed ineffective or when purchasing standing forage in connection with other management strategies is necessary to resolve a conflict.

PROJECT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Step 1: The need for the proposed project is clearly described and includes a discussion of the conflict and the effects of the proposed project on big-game distribution (i.e. completed application form).

Step 2: The NWHPP Committee sets priority for the proposed project based on the following criteria:

1. Will the proposed project distribute the conflicting animals to preferred areas?
2. Will the proposed project enhance/improve habitat conditions on preferred areas and effectively address the conflict over the long run by attracting conflicting animals to a preferred area?
3. Does the proposed project address a recurring conflict that involves a herd unit or a significant number of animals?
4. Will the proposed project benefit the landowners, agencies, big game, and the public? (i.e. is constructing a tall fence at a known big-game crossing point asking for failure?)
5. Have non-structural solutions been tried, such as distribution hunts, propane cannons, management changes, new seasons, etc.?
6. Does the proposed project replace or maintain an existing fence? If so, what is the age and condition of the existing fence? Is the fence design wildlife friendly? Does the project identify and address a recurring maintenance conflict?
7. Does the applicant/landowner allow low-fee or no-fee public hunting such as PLO (private land only) licenses, big game distribution hunts, or general public access?
8. Is the landowner willing to participate financially (direct funds and/or labor) in the project?
9. Is the proposed project experimental?
10. Is the project and its design cost effective?
11. Is the applicant willing to assist in monitoring efforts of the proposed project? Project participants must agree to maintain the project for a minimum of 10 years and provide reports to the Committee.
12. Fence projects are required to follow and implement the recommendations by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the NWHPP committee.
13. Projects on Ranching For Wildlife properties will be considered on a case by case basis.
14. Stackyards may be considered by the committee.
15. In most proposals, projects will be discussed at the meeting and a committee member will contact the presenter within a week of the decision about concerning the final decision.
16. The committee will not participate in projects that are underway or that have already been completed without committee input, review or approval.

PROJECT TYPES AND PRIORITIES

In order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the NW CO HPP committee, the following types of projects may be utilized.

Habitat Manipulation – to include, but not limited to

Prescribed burning Water Developments Weed Control
Fertilization Seeding
Mechanical (chaining, rollerchopping, hydro axing, etc.)

Fencing Projects – to include, but not limited to

Fence vouchers distributed to landowners for materials
Construction of new fences (usually > ¼ mile in length)
Landowner reimbursement for fencing materials purchased
Prototype or experimental fence designs for livestock and wildlife issues
Wildlife crossings or retrofitting of fences to make more wildlife friendly

Game Damage Projects – to include, but not limited to

Stackyard Repairs – materials and/or labor
New stackyards – materials and/or labor
Distribution hunts
Hunt coordinators for distribution hunts, youth hunts, etc
Forage purchases
Baiting
Small game damage claims (last resort)

Information/Education Projects – to include, but not limited to

Seminars
Workshops
Brochures
Electronic media (websites, etc)

Research/Monitoring Projects – to include, but not limited to

Habitat
Population
Inventory
Movement

Conservation Easements (transaction costs only)

Archaeological Clearances (and other NEPA required clearances)

PROJECT LOCATIONS:

HPP projects may be undertaken on public lands, private lands or a combination of both as needed wherever the local committee believes the project has the best chance to effectively reduce, minimize or eliminate the big game/livestock conflict.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

The base-operating budget for the State HPP program is based on 5% of total annual revenues for big game license sales in the HPP areas. The Statewide HPP Council allocates funding to the individual HPP committees. The Northwest Colorado HPP budget was developed to best meet the goals and objectives outlined earlier in the plan, while maintaining the flexibility to deal with emergencies and take advantage of opportunities.

Our budgets are determined yearly based on current needs and requests for projects. Now that funding is more flexible, our Committee intends to work on more long term treatment projects based on common goals and objectives of landowners, agencies, and groups within the NW CO HPP area.

The statewide HPP financial system allows local HPP committees to carry specific project dollars over from year to year if the project is ongoing or the funds have been committed. This allows us to better address long-term management and larger, more complicated projects as well as giving us the flexibility to more efficiently prioritize our projects.

Additional funds are also available through the Statewide HPP Council and the HPP Coordinator for special projects or unforeseen opportunities outside of the capacity of the local committees. These dollars supplement our existing budget and allow us to take on special projects from time to time.

NORTHWEST HPP COMMITTEE HPP BUDGET

The Northwest HPP Committee has developed a budget allocation in line with our vision, which allows for short-term strategies to deal with immediate fence and forage conflicts caused by big game, but concentrates on adaptive, long-term management strategies leading to the establishment of healthy and sustainable rangelands. Our budget for the five-year period has been broken down as follows:

Habitat Manipulation	60 %
Fencing	10 %
Game damage	10 %
Information/Education Outreach (public meeting, etc.)	5 %
Monitoring/Research	10%
Administration	<u>5%</u>
TOTAL	100%

It is important to acknowledge that the budget allocation is based on past projects, future projects that are likely to be proposed as well as committee emphasis in funding certain project types. While these are desired and/or likely allocations, the committee retains the ability to shift funds as needed between categories as projects and opportunities arise or as situations dictate.

PRIORITY AREAS

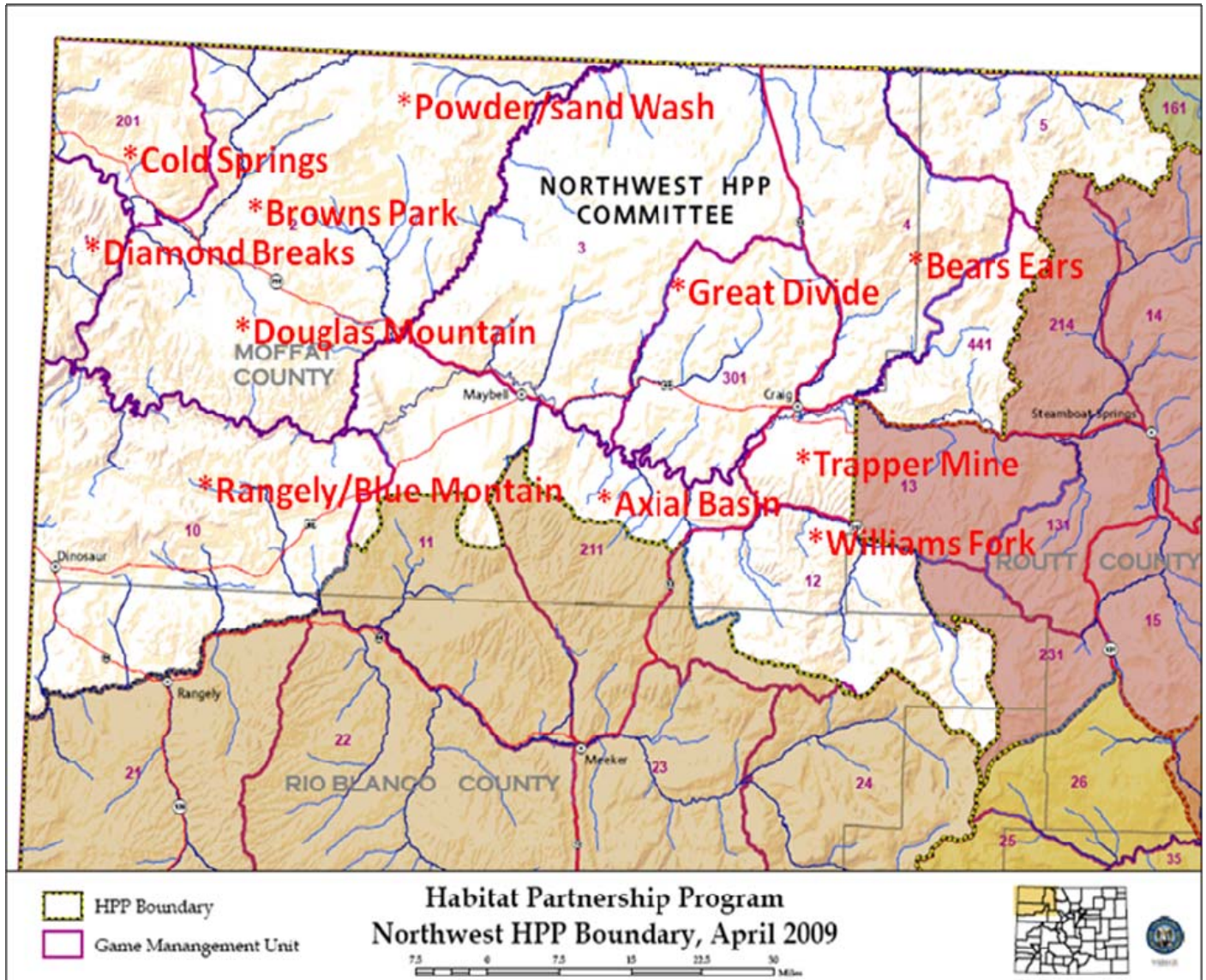
This plan does not prioritize conflict areas in which to expend allocated resources. No conflict area within the plan boundary has a higher priority over another.

The committee will consider all projects that meet the HPP goals within the area. Our plan provides for implementation of the identified management strategies over a broad geographic area based on meeting the objectives of the defined goals. This will be accomplished by implementing the identified management strategies throughout the NWHPP area as specific issues or conflicts are identified and brought to the attention of the Committee.

However, emphasis and priority will be given to areas that the Committee feels will lead to long-term solutions.

NORTHWEST COLORADO HPP AREA

CONFLICT AREAS



IDENTIFIED CONFLICTS/BIG GAME POPULATIONS STATUS

Bears Ears Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	4,441	E-2
Deer	4,441	D-2
Antelope	4	PH-9

Boundary Description: From the intersection of the California Park Road and the Yampa River west along the Yampa River to Craig; then north along State Highway 13-789 to County Road 40; then east along County Road 40 to the Little Snake/Yampa River Divide; then east along the Divide to the California Park Road; then south to the beginning. Also, including the Fourmile Basin area for antelope.

D.A.U. Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated Population</u>	<u>Recommended Population Objectives</u>	<u>Current Estimated Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-2)	17,311	15,000-18,000	29.6
Deer (D-2)	36,603	37,800	22.6
Antelope (PH-9)	14,651	15,800	60.3

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The identified problems with elk in the Bears Ears Conflict Area involve significant fence and forage conflicts. Both forms of damage were identified as being most significant during the spring and fall migration periods on private lands. The Routt National Forest identified excessive forage usage on keys species by elk, during early summer, as an important management concern.

The Bears Ears elk herd exhibits strong migratory patterns leaving high elevation summer ranges on the Routt National Forest for winter ranges to the south and west. Most southern winter ranges consist of large Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields, while winter ranges to the west consist of rolling sagebrush and CRP habitats.

The apparent cause of most of the rangeland forage problems on private land appears to be very early movement from National Forest lands onto private land in the fall and early return to impacted private lands in the spring. Forage conflict resolution will center on programs aimed at keeping elk on National Forest land later in the fall and on winter and transition habitats later in the spring. Totally limiting archery and muzzleloading licenses in this area has caused a significant improvement to harvesting more elk and to holding the elk on the National Forest land longer in the fall.

Most fence damage is caused by elk movement during the migration period in the fall. As large herds of elk appear in open areas south and west of the Forest, they become very visible to the large numbers of hunters in the area. As these herds are pursued, the elk cause significant damage to the many pasture and boundary fences found in the area. Fence design modification will significantly reduce damage on impacted ranches.

Deer: The identified conflicts with deer include both forage and fence damage. Some ranches report damage to rangeland forage caused by resident and migrating herds of deer. Concern was expressed by the BLM that extensive winter use by deer in the Fourmile Basin was causing potential habitat degradation. Fence damage is caused primarily during spring and fall migration.

Resolution strategies will center on fence design and dispersal programs.

Antelope: The Bears Ears antelope herd has increased dramatically east of Highway 13. This year-round antelope range is also important as winter range for deer and elk. Primary conflicts identified involve spring and fall rangeland forage.

During the winter of 1983-84, a small herd of antelope pioneered habitation in primarily agricultural lands northeast of Craig. This herd has grown significantly since, and has been identified as causing rangeland forage problems. Limited fence damage has also been identified. Occupied habitat to the south of Fourmile Basin is considered poor winter range. During moderate to heavy snow winters, this herd may become isolated on ranges incapable of sustaining these animals.

Resolution programs will center on modified fence designs and more focused harvest.

Great Divide Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	3,301	E-2
Deer	3,301	D-2
Antelope	3,301	PH-9

Boundary Description: From the Wyoming border and Highway 13-789 south along said highway to Craig; then west along the Yampa River to Highway 318; northwest along Highway 318 to the Little Snake River; then north along said river to the Wyoming border (including the Sevenmile Ridge area); then east along this border to the beginning.

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The Great Divide area is primarily used as winter range by elk migrating from summer range found on the Routt National Forest to the east. A recent elk Study done by the DOW has shown that some elk that are wintering in the Great Divide Conflict area come from the White River elk herd. This winter range is primarily composed of rolling sagebrush and juniper habitat with large acres of Conservation Reserve Program grass types interspersed.

Large wintering concentrations of elk are generally found on CRP areas in the eastern portion of the conflict area and in the western vicinity near Godiva Rim and Bald Mountain. A small herd of elk are considered year-round residents within the Great Divide area. This herd is causing damage to growing hay crops, rangeland forage and critical big game winter range. Another herd of elk has pioneered and become year-round residents in the Sevenmile Ridge area. These elk are causing significant damage and critical deer and antelope winter range and are causing conflicts with sheep allotments and BLM wild horse interests. The BLM has reduced wild horse numbers in the area.

Identified conflicts include both fence and forage damage types. Primary fence damage occurs during the spring and fall migration periods and also during late cow hunting seasons in December. Most forage conflicts are reported to occur in the winter on sheep ranges in the Godiva Rim/Bald Mountain area and in the spring on sheep/cattle ranges throughout the Great Divide Conflict Area. Spring and summer conflicts are starting to become more prevalent to growing hay crops in areas occupied by year-round elk.

Problem resolution will center on fence design and rangeland modification, as well as dispersal programs. Coordinated dispersal hunts will be utilized in this area along with hunts, which help to force animals to the east.

Deer: Conflicts identified include both rangeland forage and fence damage. Most ranches reported only limited damage caused by deer in the Great Divide area. Most forage loss occurs during the spring/summer/fall period while fence damage primarily is during the fall/spring migration period.

Antelope: The antelope population in the Great Divide Unit has been reduced in the last several years, reducing most conflicts that historically occurred. However, identified conflicts were reported over a wide area within the Great Divide Unit. Most ranches reported rangeland forage problems associated with year-round antelope use. Poor distribution within available ranges appears to be the cause of most problems rather than excessive population numbers. Limited fence damage was also identified. Damage to growing crops was also reported across the conflict area.

Conflict resolution will focus on greater harvest on private land, as well as varied emphasis on dispersal strategies.

Douglas Mountain Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	2	E-1

Boundary Description: From the intersection of Moffat County roads 10 and 116, east on 10 to the divide east of Weller Draw; northeast along that divide to Hwy 318; west along the highway and County Road 34 to the Dinosaur National Monument boundary; south and east along that boundary to Browns Draw; then north along Browns Draw to the intersection of Moffat County roads 10 and 116.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimate</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Current Estimate</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population Objectives</u>	<u>Sex Ratio</u>
Elk(E-1)	2,052	950	54.9

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The Douglas Mountain elk herd is managed as a quality elk herd. All elk licenses are limited and bull license numbers are set to provide hunters the opportunity to harvest a quality bull. The unit borders Dinosaur National Monument. Identified conflicts are spring/summer/fall forage conflicts and fence damage. Some of the fence damage occurs as elk move toward the Monument boundary prior to hunting season. This movement also removes those animals from the hunted population, making population control more difficult. Other ranches report generalized fence damage and winter forage conflicts in Conway Draw, spring forage conflicts in the Jack Springs area and summer forage conflicts on top of Douglas Mountain. Fence design modifications will be used to correct perennial fence damage problems. Habitat improvement, particularly on public lands, and hunter access improvement will be used to reduce the forage conflict by creating habitat and reducing elk numbers. Distribution management hunts will be used to correct spot problems.

Browns Park Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Deer	1,201	D-1

Boundary Description: From the mouth of Beaver Creek Canyon east along the base of Cold Springs Mountain to Moffat County Road ION; south along Moffat County ION to Vermillion Creek; then southwesterly along Vermillion Creek to the base of Diamond Mountain; then west along the base of said mountain to the Utah state line; then north along the Utah state line to Beaver Creek Canyon.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	Current Estimated <u>Population</u>	Recommended <u>Population Objectives</u>	Current Estimated <u>Sex Ratio</u>
Deer(D-1)	1,839	13,500	35.9

Identified Conflicts:

Deer: Deer populations in this area have been reduced and many of the historical conflicts have subsided. Browns Park provides winter habitat for a large deer herd. The basin floor is covered with sagebrush and saltbrush communities. Many of these habitat types have been reduced due to drought related impacts. Deer winter use varies greatly with the weather, but most years see a concentration of deer along the Green River. The area south of the river has sustained heavy browse usage over the years. Identified conflicts are excessive deer use of certain browse stands, creating a long-term habitat loss. There is no direct conflict with livestock in this DCA, but landowners have expressed concern over deteriorating browse stand condition. Habitat improvement will be looked at on public lands to rejuvenate selected browse stands and provide better long-term habitat. Distribution Management hunts will be available as a last resort if browse usage becomes excessive.

Diamond Breaks Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	1	E-47

Boundary Description: The Green River is the north, east and south boundaries. The west boundary is the Utah stateline.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	Current Estimated <u>Population</u>	Recommended <u>Population Objectives</u>	Current Estimated <u>Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-47)	170	170	23

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The Diamond Breaks elk herd is managed as a quality elk herd. All elk licenses are limited and bull license numbers are set to provide hunters the opportunity to harvest a quality bull. The unit borders Dinosaur National Monument and Utah. Identified conflicts are spring/fall forage conflicts and fence damage. Some of the fence damage occurs as elk move south and west to lower elevations during the winter. Movement also occurs into Dinosaur NM prior to and during hunting season. Fence design modifications will be used to correct perennial fence damage problems. Habitat improvement, particularly on public lands, and hunter access improvement will be used to reduce the forage conflict by creating habitat and reducing elk numbers. Distribution management hunts will be used to correct spot problems.

Powder Wash/Sand Wash Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Antelope	2	PH-I 1

Boundary Description: From the junction of Vermillion Creek and the Wyoming state line, east along said state line to the Little Snake River; south along the Little Snake River to Highway 318; west along Highway 318 to Moffat County Road 67; northwest along MCR 67, 48 and 46 to the Vermillion Bluff~ north along said bluff~ to Lookout Mountain; west to Vermillion Creek; and north along Vermillion Creek to the Wyoming state line.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated Population</u>	<u>Recommended Population Objectives</u>	<u>Current Estimated Sex Ratio</u>
Antelope (PH-11)	1,173	3,200	45.7

Identified Conflicts:

Antelope: The antelope herd in this area has significantly declined. The unit is far below objective. The reduction in population numbers has eliminated forage conflicts in this area. Antelope in this area are managed for trophy bucks and licenses are in high demand with a license taking about eight years to draw. This area supports a small resident herd of antelope, but also provides important critical winter range for several thousand more animals from Wyoming. These animals move south during hard winters, which tend to occur several times each decade. Problems are created when large numbers of these animals remain after those heavy winters. Winter/spring forage conflicts with domestic sheep and some cattle occur in Powder Wash, Sand Wash and Dry Creek Basin. Most of this problem, particularly in Sand Wash, occurs within the first few years after a hard winter. Water development in these desert areas has also changed annual antelope distribution, keeping antelope year-round in areas formerly reserved for winter range. Close cooperation with Wyoming will be essential to managing this antelope herd more closely.

Habitat improvement, largely through water development, will be considered to solve some of the more perennial distribution problems.

Elk: Growing elk numbers are causing conflicts between cattle and horse allotments. Most of these conflicts occur during the winter when these allotments are being utilized and elk have already utilized available forage. (See above for problem solutions.)

Cold Springs/West Bears Ears Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	2,201	E-1

Boundary Description: From the intersection of Colorado Highway 318 and the Utah state line north along that line to the Wyoming state line; then east along the Wyoming state line to the intersection with Moffat County Road ION; then south to Irish Canyon; then east through G Gap along Moffat County Road 46 and 48 to Phippen Hill; then south to Highway 318; then west along Highway 318 to the Utah state line.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Current Estimated</u>
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	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population Objectives</u>	<u>Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-1)	2,052	950	54.9

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: Elk in the Cold Springs area are managed for quality bulls and quality hunting experiences. Licenses are highly sought after with a 13 year wait for a license a common occurrence. The Cold Springs area is bounded by Utah and Wyoming, and elk move freely between the three states. Many elk from Cold Springs winter in the Little Bears Ears area. Identified conflicts include spring/fall forage conflicts on Cold Springs, and winter forage competition in the Bears Ears area. The Cold Springs problems revolve primarily around a bottleneck that occurs as elk and cattle move from winter to summer and summer to winter range. Habitat improvement projects on public lands will be considered to create additional forage for the critical periods. Rangeland use alternatives, including altered grazing systems, will be reviewed to try to alleviate the Cold Springs bottleneck. Close coordination of hunting seasons between the three states will be pursued to accomplish the needed herd reduction. Maintained and improved hunter access will also be important in achieving this goal, particularly since much of the Cold Springs area consists of private land and State Land Board lands. Opening private and State Land Board Lands through leases by the Colorado Division of Wildlife has significantly helped to increase antlerless elk harvest. Public use alternatives, such as vehicle management, will also be considered to reduce early movements to winter range and improve female harvest. Distribution Management Hunts will also be considered to slow movements to winter range.

Trapper Mine Conflict Area

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	13	E-6
Deer	13	D-7

Conflict Area: The main area of conflict is ranches and subdivisions located around Trappers Mine. Trappers Mine itself holds large numbers of deer, elk, and antelope and serves as a refuge and migration area. The Mine has a minimal amount of hunting pressure and a large forage base. Consequently, areas around the Mine have increased contact with big game animals that use the Mine. Areas of direct concern are current and new subdivisions along Moffat County Roads 33/35, Thompson Hill, and the Yampa River drainage below Trappers Mine.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Current Estimated</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population Objectives</u>	<u>Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-6)	38,539	32,000-39,000	26.2
Deer (D-7)	56,339	67,500	21.1

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The Trapper Mine and surrounding areas are primarily used as a winter range for elk migrating from the Upper Williams Fork Drainage. Large herds of elk in the winter congregate and it is not uncommon to see herds of 1,000 elk or more in a group on the Mine during the winter months.

Identified conflicts include both fence and forage damage types. Fence damage occurs during the spring and fall migration periods and also during late cow hunting seasons in December. Most forage conflicts occur on

unprotected hay and alfalfa used for livestock feeding in the winter. Conflicts also occur in winter on livestock feeding areas when livestock and elk compete for feed put out by operators.

Large elk herds also migrate back through the area in the spring and feed on early growth in alfalfa fields.

Problem resolution will consist of a combined effort of protecting livestock feed in the winter especially in the new subdivisions, varying winter feeding times of livestock, early hazing of problem elk, and dispersal hunts.

Other ideas include lay down fencing in areas that do not contain livestock in the winter, habitat manipulation on adjacent public or private land that favors winter elk use, and possibly compensation to landowners that leave their last cut of hay for wintering elk.

Deer: The area also serves as a migration area for deer. Some deer are also year round residents of the area. Deer have not been of major concern to residents in the area, but conflicts may increase with the increased amount of development.

Williams Fork Conflict Area

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	12/13	E-6

Conflict Area: The area of conflict is located on the lower end of the Williams Fork Drainage from Hamilton to the east approximately 10 miles along Hwy 317. Large ranches are located in this area that raise livestock and produce hay and alfalfa in their fields.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Current Estimated</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population Objectives</u>	<u>Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-6)	38,539	32,000-39,000	26.2

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: This area is primarily used by elk as a winter range and also as a fall and spring migration corridor. Identified conflicts include both fence and forage damage types. Fence damage occurs during the spring and fall migration periods. Most forage conflicts occur on early hay and alfalfa growth in the fields in spring as elk return up the Williams Fork to their summering and calving grounds. Conflicts also occur in winter on livestock feeding areas when livestock and elk compete for feed put out by operators.

Problem resolution will consist of varying winter feeding times of livestock, early hazing of problem elk, and dispersal hunts. Other ideas include lay down fencing in areas that do not contain livestock in the winter, habitat manipulation on adjacent public or private land that favors winter elk use, and possibly compensation to landowners that leave their last cut of hay for wintering elk.

Rangely / Blue Mountain Conflict Area:

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU:</u>	<u>DAU:</u>
Elk	10,11	E-21

Boundary Description:

Bounded on the north by the Green and Yampa Rivers; on the east by the Twelve-Mile Gulch Road, U.S. Highway 40 to mile marker 38.3 to Elk Springs Ridge to Drill Hole, Winter Valley Gulch, Coal Creek and Wolf Creek; on the south by the White River; and on the west by the Utah state line.

<u>Species Pop. Status:</u>	<u>Current Pop. Estimate</u>	<u>Pop. Objective</u>	<u>Sex Ratio Estimate</u>
Elk (E-21)	3,925	1200	33.7

Identified Conflicts:

Elk: The Rangely / Blue Mountain elk herd (E-21) is managed as a quality elk herd. All elk licenses are limited and bull license numbers are set to provide hunters with a unique opportunity to harvest a “quality” bull. The unit borders Dinosaur National Monument on the north and the Utah state line on the west. Elk hunting is prohibited in Dinosaur National Monument, thus providing elk a refuge from hunting pressure and providing challenges to wildlife managers attempting to reach population objectives. Current elk management practices in areas of Utah directly adjacent to E-21 contrast with elk management practices in E-21. While E-21 is managed for “quality” with reduced hunting opportunity for bull elk, neighboring areas of Utah are managed for significant opportunity over “quality.” The result is significant hunting pressure along the Utah state line during Utah’s hunting seasons.

Seasonal migrations occur within and between Dinosaur National Monument properties, Bureau of Land Management properties and private lands in the unit. Wildlife managers have attempted to find a balance in hunting opportunity for cow elk, which promotes harvest rates necessary to meet management objectives while discouraging the excessive use of private lands and Dinosaur National Monument properties as a refuge. Efforts by wildlife managers have included a variety of early and late public land hunting opportunities, private-land-only licenses valid from August 15 through January 15, and landowner programs that promote additional cow elk harvest from private lands within the unit. Despite these efforts, elk numbers remain above objective and seasonal conflicts with livestock producers and landowners occur.

Conflicts identified by wildlife managers in E-21 include fence damage and forage conflicts. Seasonal migrations of elk in the unit contribute to fence damage across the northern portions of the unit from Buckwater Draw and Moosehead Mountain, north to Dinosaur National Monument, east towards Bear Valley, and south into the Wolf Creek basin. Additional fence damage may occur as elk move towards Dinosaur National Monument, seeking refuge during hunting seasons. Winter forage conflicts occur as elk move to winter range along the Utah state line east of Dinosaur. Occasional winter forage conflicts also occur when elk move towards lower elevations near the Skull Creek, Massadona, and Wolf Creek areas. The majority of spring/fall forage conflicts involving E-21 elk occur along the White River east of Rangely. The White River is the boundary between E-21 and E-10. Conflicts originate from E-21 elk utilizing hay and grass pastures on both the north (E-21) and south (E-10) sides of the White River. Distribution management hunts have been used to address this problem during fall and winter periods.

Axial Basin Conflict Area

<u>Conflict Species:</u>	<u>GMU</u>	<u>DAU</u>
Elk	211	E-6

Conflict Area: The area of conflict is located on the upper portion of Game Management Unit 211 and encompasses Axial Basin, Temple Gulch out west to the Deception Creek area The northern boundary is the Yampa River.

Draft D.A.U. Plan Recommendation:

	<u>Current Estimated Population</u>	<u>Recommended Population Objectives</u>	<u>Current Estimated Sex Ratio</u>
Elk (E-6)	38,539	32,000-39,000	26.2

Identified Conflicts:

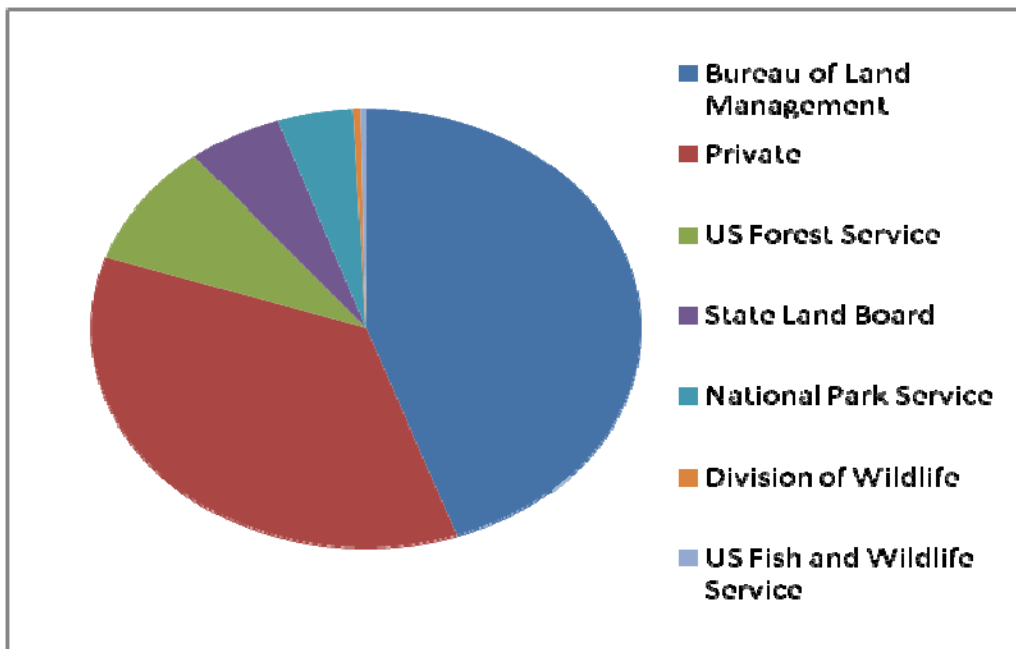
Elk: There are large numbers of elk that utilize the area as a migration corridor in the winter and spring. There are elk that winter in the area. The main conflicts occur in the spring on livestock feeding grounds. The elk are competing for livestock spring feed until they move back to summer ranges.

Appendix A

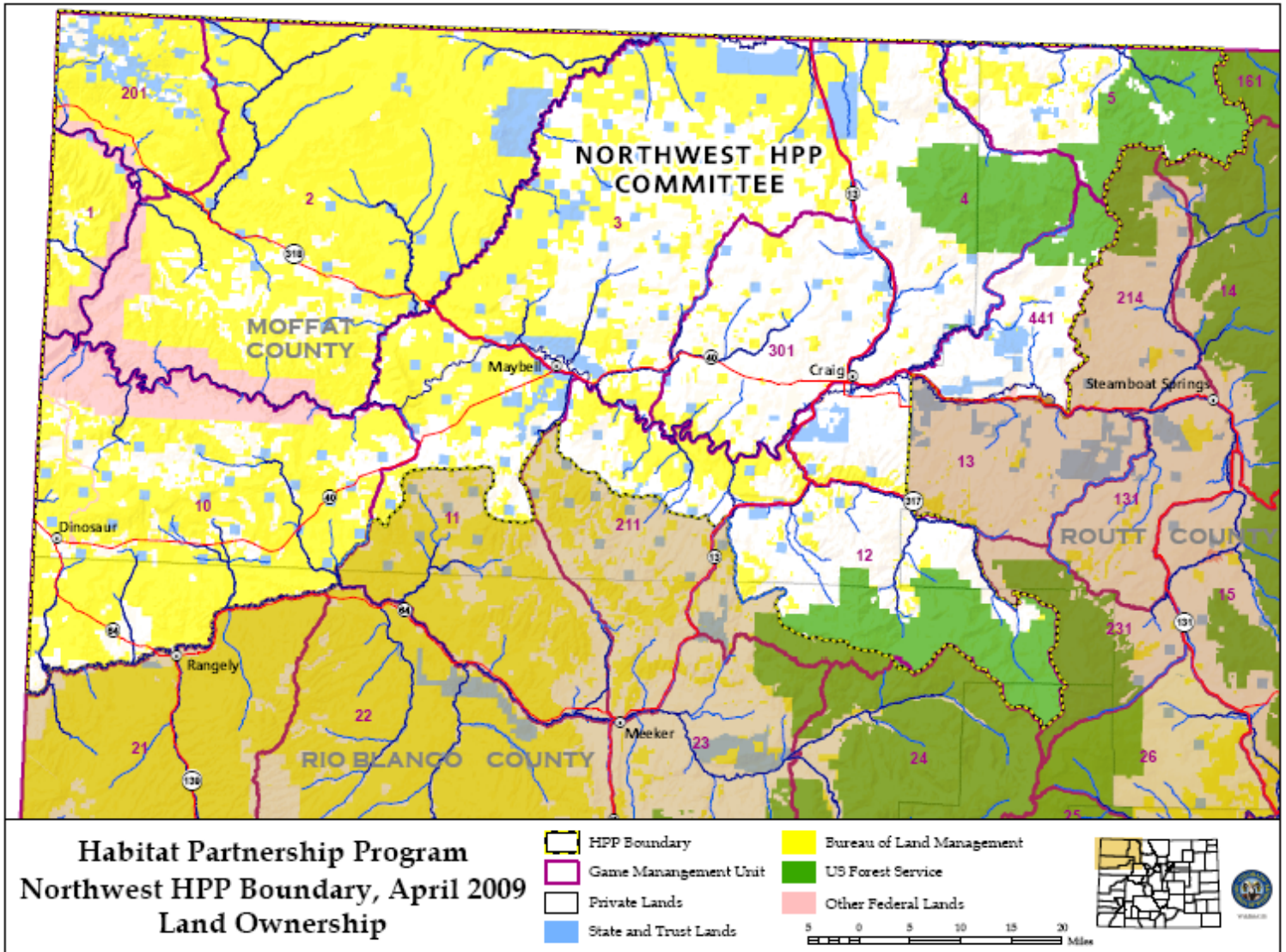
NORTHWEST COLORADO HPP AREA

Landownership Acreage

Bureau of Land Management	1,571,393	44.6%
Private	1,255,689	35.7%
US Forest Service	317,101	9%
State Land Board	193,884	5.5%
National Park Service	157,310	4.5%
Division of Wildlife	15,431	0.4%
US Fish and Wildlife Service	12,174	0.3%

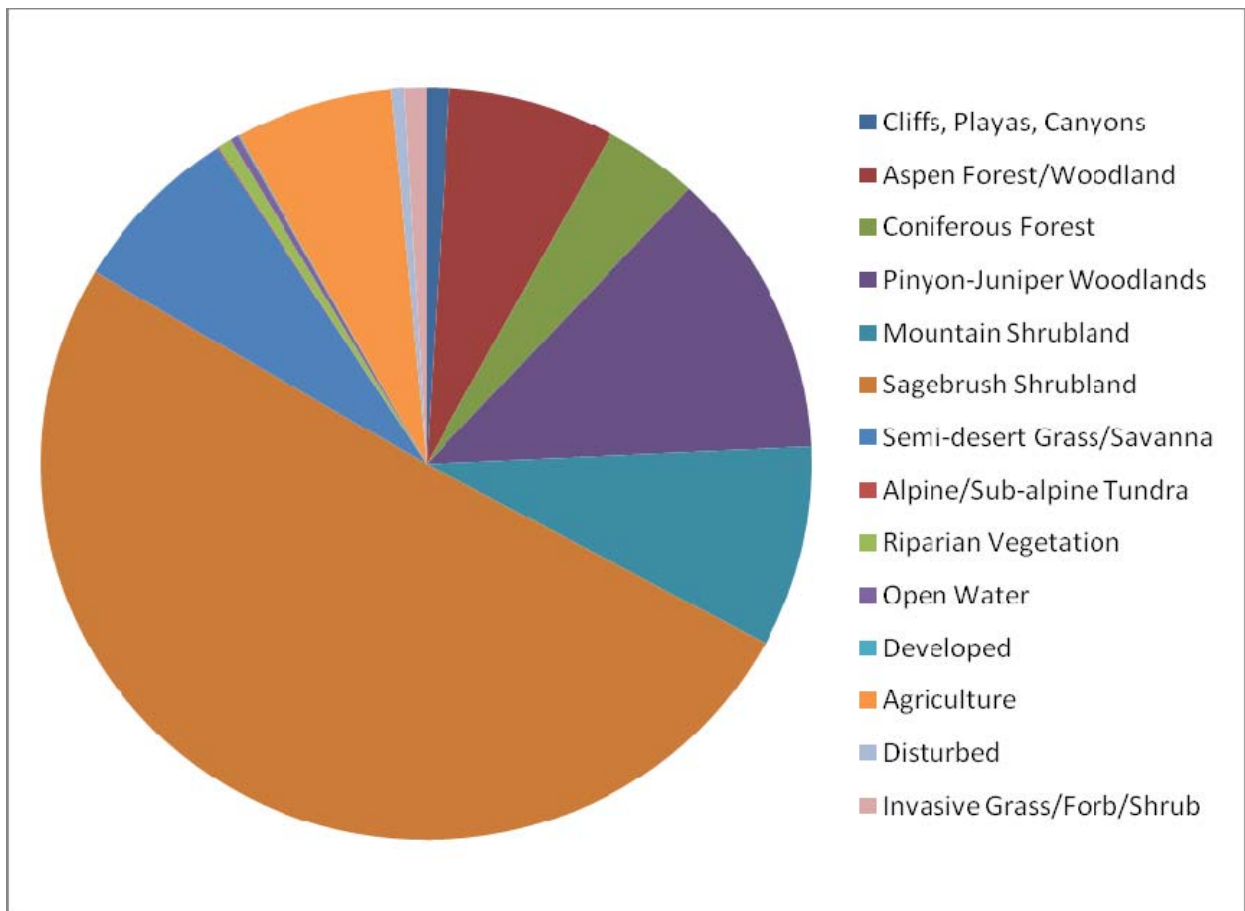


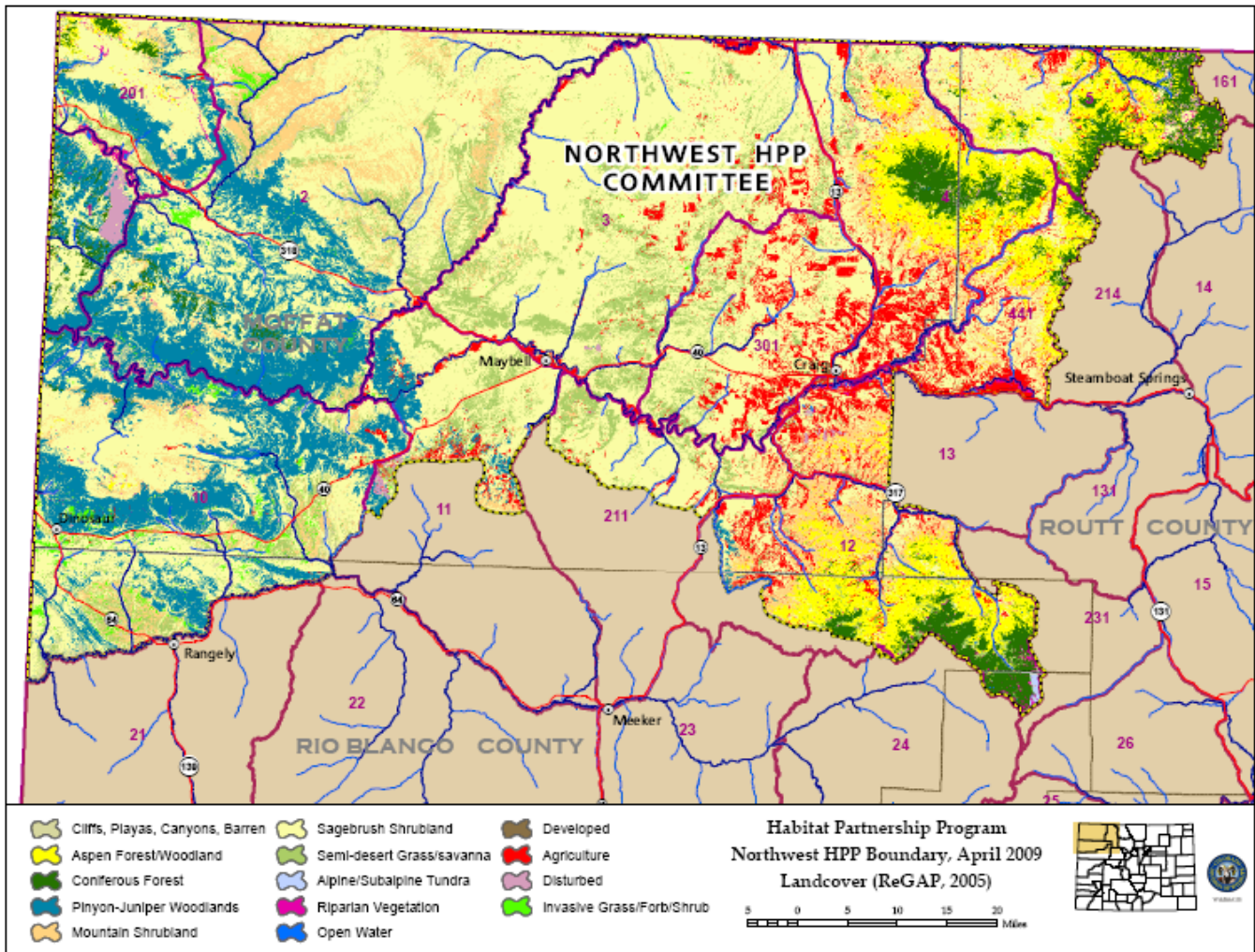
Northwest Colorado HPP Area Land Ownership



Appendix B
NORTHWEST COLORADO HPP AREA
Vegetation Type by Acreage

	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Cliffs, Playas, Canyons	34159	0.97
Aspen Forest/Woodland	246766	7.00
Coniferous Forest	139304	3.95
Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	434382	12.33
Mountain Shrubland	304692	8.65
Sagebrush Shrubland	1783420	50.62
Semi-desert Grass/Savanna	259115	7.35
Alpine/Sub-alpine Tundra	1960	0.06
Riparian Vegetation	20236	0.57
Open Water	12061	0.34
Developed	2354	0.07
Agriculture	232737	6.61
Disturbed	18487	0.52
Invasive Grass/Forb/Shrub	33309	0.95
Total Acreage	3,522,982 acres	100%





Vegetation Map

Appendix C
Northwest Colorado HPP Area
Maps

Elk Summer Range Activity Areas
Elk Winter Range Activity Areas
Mule Deer Summer Range Activity Areas
Mule Deer Winter Range Areas
Pronghorn Activity Areas
Greater Sage Grouse Activity Areas
DOW State Wildlife Areas

