AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

AgendaTitle:
Application for Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Trust Funds; Gunnison Conservation District Noxious/Invasive Weed Partnership Employee; $6,000

Action Requested: Motion

Parties to the Agreement: Gunnison County - Gunnison Conservation District

Term Begins: Summer 2014 **Term Ends:** 12/31/2014 **Grant Contract #:** N/A

Summary:
The Sage Grouse Mitigation Committee approved a request by the Gunnison Conservation District for $6,000 to fund a position to work with private landowners within sage grouse habitat on control of noxious weeds and conservation plans.

Fiscal Impact: $6,000

Submitted by: Marlene D. Crosby **Submitter's Email Address:** mcrosby@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: (●) Required ( ) Not Required

Comments:

Funding decisions are added as budget amendments during the year, there is sufficient fund balance to cover this request.

Reviewed by: GUNCOUNTY1\lNienhueser Discharge Date: 4/9/2014

County Attorney Review: (●) Required ( ) Not Required

Comments:

ok db 4/10/14

Reviewed by: GUNCOUNTY1\dBaumgarten Discharge Date: 4/10/2014 Certificate of Insurance Required Yes ( ) No (●)

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reviewed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 4/10/2014

( ) Consent Agenda (●) Regular Agenda ( ) Worksession Time Allotted: 5 minutes

Agenda Date: 4/15/2014 Follow Up Agenda Date:

Revised April 2013

APPLICATION FOR
GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION TRUST FUNDS

Provide a project map in addition to this application. The map should identify the project site, its relationship to adjacent lands, land ownership, and general location. Include significant sage grouse habitat features in and around the project area.

PART I – Applicant Information

Must be completed for all applications.

Name/Title of Proposed Project: Gunnison Conservation District Noxious/Invasive Weed Partnership Employee

Applicant: (Who will actually receive the grant funds)

Name: Nicki Anderson, Gunnison Conservation District
Mailing Address: 216 North Colorado St., Gunnison, CO 81230

Telephone Number: 642-4461 Fax 641-4425

E-mail Address: nicki.anderson@co.usda.gov

Lead Jurisdiction / Agency: (DOW, NRCS, BLM, etc. In the case of a multi-jurisdictional/agency application, please provide the names of all of the participating agencies and/or individuals)

1. See above for Gunnison Conservation District

Other Partners:

Contact Person: Liz With Agency: NRCS
Mailing Address:216 North Colorado Street, Gunnison, CO 81230
Telephone Number: 642-4463_____
E-mail Address: john.scott@co.usda.gov

2. Contact Person: Jim Cochran Agency: Gunnison County
Mailing Address:200 East Virginia, Gunnison, CO 81230
Telephone Number: 641-7604_____
E-mail Address:JCochran@gunnisoncounty.org

3. Contact Person: Russ Japuntich Agency: BLM
Mailing Address: 650 South 11th St., Gunnison, CO 81230
Telephone Number: 642-4949_____
E-mail Address: rjapunti@blm.gov

PART II: Project Information

Must be completed for all applications.

Project Summary: Please provide a brief description of the proposed project, including total acres protected or enhanced, and a description of the affected habitat.

For the past several years, the sage grouse mitigation fund committee has approved funding for the Gunnison Conservation District to use matching grant funds for a seasonal position. This seasonal has proven to be a great asset in improving and maintaining sage grouse habitat in the Gunnison Basin. Attached to this proposal is the accomplishments from 2013's field season.

The Gunnison Conservation District (District) has a 3 year grant funding approved through the Colorado State Conservation Board to hire a seasonal position, a District Conservation Technician (DCT), to work in the Gunnison Field Office. NRCS has secured funding for 61% of the project and another 28% is a landowner match leaving the need for an 11% match from a non-federal entity.

The main duties of this position are to work with private landowners on education about noxious/invasive weeds, treatment of these weeds, and mapping/monitoring invasives on private lands. The technician will also help write conservation plans for the properties.

The money used from the Mitigation fund would be targeting private lands within sage grouse habitat focusing entirely on sage grouse occupied habitat. There have been many increases of noxious/invasive weeds across the Basin over the last ten years. The spread of these weeds decreases the productivity of sage grouse habitat and cheatgrass can speed up fire regimes that can devastate productive sage grouse habitat. BLM and Forest Service have mapped and started weed treatments in these areas, however, most of these efforts are within public land boundaries. This position could help to complete these mapping efforts, gain private land owner support, and treatment across boundaries to effectively tackle weed issues in sage grouse habitat while providing land owners assistance in conservation plans and monitoring of private land plans.

The hourly rate of the technician will be divided by the amount of money the mitigation committee awards to ensure the work is directly related to sage grouse habitat in the Ohio Creek drainage. BLM also agrees to provide equipment and technicians to help with the cost of spraying (Canada thistle and cheatgrass) in these areas on both public and private lands. This position is similar in context of using Mitigation funds to pay the County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator. It is difficult to determine exact acres of conserved land, but the project is leading to direct conservation of lands in sage grouse habitat. Without the match dollars, the Conservation District will not be able to employ a technician for the amount of time identified in the agreement and much of the needed work would not be completed.

Goals:

What are the specific goals or objectives of the project?

1. Educate and inform private landowners of the risks of noxious/invasive weeds
2. Map occurrences of weeds on private lands in sage grouse habitat
3. Treat weed occurrences on private land to maintain and improve sage grouse habitat
4. Be able to partner with BLM to ensure complete treatment of problem areas
5. Additional employee working with the Gunnison County Weed Commission to further efforts within the Basin.
6. Help landowners in the development of conservation plans, inventory, monitoring, and proper development of water sources with wildlife as a main objective.

If the proponent is not the landowner, what project objectives provide incentive for (a) landowner's cooperation, as well as for the success of the project?

Need:
Describe the pre-project and anticipated post-project condition of the habitat affected by the project.

Areas will be mapped for invasive/noxious weeds and density/cover estimates will be done to determine infestation rates. Monitoring will be conducted after treatment to determine success of treatment along with determining need to re-spray areas to ensure success.

Does the past and current habitat condition of the project area meet the Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Plan objectives?

In 1997 there was little known about the occurrence of weeds across the Basin and cheatgrass was not thought of as a threat. Weeds were brought up as an issue or factor that affects habitat quality and could be an increasing threat in the future. Invasive/noxious weeds displace native vegetation sage grouse rely on and therefore, vegetation conditions would not be meeting objectives.

How does the project address the purposed of the Sage Grouse Mitigation Committee? What management action is in place to meet Conservation Easement (past and current)?

This project will directly focus on improving sage grouse habitat through treatment of noxious/invasive weeds. It will also help educate private landowners on the consequences on habitat and sage grouse of increases of weeds. This treatment will maintain and improve current sage grouse habitat for both short and long term habitat goals. If there are conservation easements in place on these properties, mapping and treatment will be the priority. This position can also help educate private landowners on the benefits of conservation easements and important contacts to find out more information.

Describe local support for the project.

Last the last several years, this position was supported by Gunnison County, NRCS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, BLM, several private landowners, and several other groups who helped fund parts of the projects such as Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Habitat Partnership Program.

PART III - Budget Information

Must be completed for all applications.

Project Costs and Funding Sources:

Project Activities	Project Funding						
	Total Cost	Sage-Grouse Conservation Trust Funding	In-Kind Contributions		Other Funds Requested or Committed		
			Value	Type	Amount	Source	Status
Landowner Contacts & inventory/resource concern identification	$20,500				$20,500.00	CSCB DCT Grant and NFWF Keystone grant	CSCB secured NFWF approved
Treatment	$35,000	$6,000	$15,500	Through Landowner Match	$13,500	CSCB SG Habitat improve. Project grant	CSCB Improvement Project grant-secured
Totals	$55,500.00	$6,000	$15,500.00		$34,000.00		

NRCS=Natural Resources Conservation Service CSCB= Colorado State Conservation Board NFWF=National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Percentage of Sage Grouse Conservation Trust fund to Total Cost: 11%

How were the total financial needs estimated? Total cost of employee. Herbicide costs and equipment are not figured into these costs and will be provided by NRCS and the Gunnison Conservation District.

PART IV – Other Project Information

Must be completed for all applications.

General:

Is there, or will there be a CCAA on the property? Yes _X*____ No _____

*=Some of the properties up Ohio Creek that will be focused on have a current CCAA

Is the project located on or adjacent to open space or public lands in sage grouse habitat?
Yes ___X__ No _____ If yes, please describe: All lands are within occupied sage grouse habitat and most are adjacent to BLM and Forest Service lands.

Is this project location and adjacent land uses compatible with sage grouse conservation?
Yes __X___ No _____ If yes, please describe:
Most of the private bordering forest service and BLM offer important sage grouse lekking, nesting, and brood rearing habitat and are managed for such. The adjacent public lands also are managed with sage grouse as a main component.

Does this project afford strategic control to protect a larger piece of desired habitat?
Yes __X___ No _____ If yes, please describe:

We are targeting watershed areas for the mapping and treatment of noxious/invasive weeds and all are in sage grouse habitat.

Is the project located in current or historic sage grouse habitat? Yes ___X__ No _____
If yes, please answer the following question:

a) What type of habitat is being protected? (Describe in terms of leks, nesting, brood rearing and winter habitat) Much of the private lands contain an important hay meadow/sage interface that is extremely important for brood rearing. Much of the sage is also used as nesting and winter habitat.

Are there water resources and/or water rights that may be available to develop or improve sage grouse habitat?
We will not be focusing on water rights/resources for this project.

Maintenance & Management:

Must be completed for all applications.

Describe the long term monitoring and maintenance for project success.

Areas will be monitored for treatment response and re-occurrence of weeds. Weeds will be re-treated when needed to ensure a long term benefit to sage grouse habitat.

If there are additional maintenance costs, what is the applicant's plan for funding these?

There should be no additional cost for this project that are unaccounted for.

Is the landowner/applicant willing to do necessary long term maintenance?
NRCS, BLM, and the Gunnison Conservation District are devoted to the long term success of this project and will make it a priority in the future if additional work is needed.

Are insecticides and/or herbicides used in project area? Yes ___X__ No _____
If yes, please describe:
All chemicals used will be applied at federal NRCS standards to ensure proper application rates. Chemical names and spray rates will be provided for each targeted species.

Is there a noxious weeds management plan for the project property? Yes _____ No __X___
If yes, attach a copy of the management plan.
If no management plan has been developed, provide information about the type of herbicides that have been used, if any, and the results obtained.
These areas are yet to be sprayed under this project. All chemical applications will be mapped and recorded with spray rates, area, and targeted species.

Is the introduction on non-native birds permitted?
NO

Are there overhead utility lines or other raptor perches in the project area?
Yes _____ No __X___ If yes, please provide a map indicating locations.

Livestock & Grazing:
Complete this section if livestock grazing is or will be allowed in the project area.

Grazing occurs in (check all that apply) Past ___X__, Present ___X__, Future ___X__.

Do current/future grazing practices meet Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Plan conservation actions and objectives? Yes __X___ No _____ Since these are private lands, exact information on practices is unknown but most of these landowners have been part of the Conservation Plan process since the beginning and are advocates for proper grazing management.

Will "Livestock Best Management Practices" be included in this project for future livestock grazing of the area? Yes ___X__ No _____
In any of the properties that have an easement or CCAA, grazing practices are monitored for compliance.
Will physical disturbance of sage grouse by grazing animals be minimized to the maximum extent possible on a year round basis? Yes _X____ No _____

Describe current/future grazing practices as they relate to the Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Plan.

Is there any additional proposed fencing? Yes _____ No ___X__
If yes, please describe:

Additional Information: Please see accomplishments from 2013

Conservation Plan.

Does the project meet the disturbance regulations? Yes __X___ No _____

Have the Rangewide Guidelines been reviewed regarding this project? Yes _X_ No___

Part V - Signatory

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all statements in this application are true and correct.

Signature (Principal Official): __/S:/ *Russell Japuntich*

Name (Typed or Printed): Russell Japuntich
Title: Wildlife Biologist, BLM Gunnison Field Office

Date: 3/3/2014

Please submit one (1) copy electronically to:

mcrosby@gunnisoncounty.org

For assistance, please call (970) 641-0044.