

6/25/2025 CAC Meeting
Chaffee County's Common Ground Program

Attendance:

Committee: Ben Lenth, Sydney Schnurr, Paul Muelle, Jim LaRue, Joe Stone, Scott Gillilan

Staff: Gabe Hobson

CCCF: Betsy Dittenber, Anna Hendricks

14:01 – Meeting commences.

14:03 – Anna H. Shares Forest Health grant application scoring spreadsheet. CAC discusses briefly adjusting scoring based on new information. Anna H. begins discussion on the South Arkansas FPD Wildfire Mitigation & Community Resilience Education Initiative application, noting that it scored relatively high.

14:07 – Joe S. states that it is a good project but voices concerns about the project as it relates to fire science. Sydney S. expresses that she would prefer to see these types of projects focus more across the whole county rather than focus on the Salida area specifically. Ben L. notes that the project is a 3-year project with an equipment purchase in year one, but it's not clearly articulated in the budget. He encourages the CAC to look at their capital equipment and staff position policy as it relates to the Chief of Wildfire. The CAC agrees to review those policies as it relates to the grant application. Betsy D. notes that they indicated that they could only execute the project at the fully funded level and that there should be a follow up to ensure they can't make the project work with a reduced award.

14:13 – Syd S. Points out that the UTV is expensive and there are limited funds available for this year's competitive grant cycle.

14:16 – Anna H. begins discussion on the CPW Droney Gulch Mastication Project applications, noting that it scored a little bit lower than other Forest Health applications. Sydney S. asks Jim L. how it would affect agricultural operations. Jim L. states that it's a stretch to say that the project would benefit agricultural producers. Betsy D. asks if the project should be denied funding at this point. Joe S. brings up concerns the results of similar projects which have resulted in cheat grass infestations. Ben L. notes that the low score is relative to other Forest Health applications but not necessarily among projects from all applications. The group discussed adjusting scores and noted that score would drop significantly and that the grant may not be viable. Joe S. notes his concerns with this type of treatment. Betsy D. notes that there are further questions that need to be answered but there is significant skepticism among the CAC. Ben L. asks about matching funds.

14:27 – Anna H begins discussion on the Colorado Firecamp Community Forestry application, noting that it scored on the higher end. The CAC expressed the need for the applicant to provide more maps of the treatment areas, more information on the annual budget breakdown of the three year plan, and a review of the capitol equipment policy related to the portable saw mill. Ben L. notes that it may be worth considering whether the sawmill is appropriate to fund since they are reluctant to fund capitol equipment and there is a limited budget for this grant cycle. CAC members expressed skepticism about the saw mill due to local economic reasons as well.

14:32 – Anna H. begins discussion on the Trails System and Conservation Plan application noting that the scoring was consistently on the lower end. The CAC asked about how the plan would fit into the other plans such as the Outdoor Recreation Management Plan and how the staffing position is tied to the project outcomes. Joe S. points out that the motorized trail users were not as involved in phase 1 of the project as they should have been.

14:39 - Anna H. notes that she will get follow up signs assigned by the end of the day so they can get responses by July 7th and goes over logistics of site visits.

14:44 – Ben L. asks about committee member desire to go on specific site visits and the group discussed the preferences. Jim L. volunteered to go to any ditch or water diversion projects. Joe S. and Paul M. volunteer to visit Droney Gulch. Scot G. volunteers to visit any irrigation or riverbank stabilization projects. Sydney S. volunteered to do the Guidestone projects. Ben L. expressed interest in ditch projects.

14:49 – Ben L. asks for the mini-grant timeline will play out. Anna H. states that July 9th should also be the deadline for having min-grants reviewed by. Sydney S. asked about the requested additional \$100,000 in funding that the CAC requested be available for the competitive grant process from the Board of County Commissioners.

14:53 – Ben L. asks the group what questions they still have about the grants that have been reviewed previously. Sydney S. asks is the balance remaining in the budget to complete the Williams and Hamm ditch project. Ben L. notes that the balance is \$49,919. Ben L. notes the question of what they can, can't, and will do with the limited funding. The CAC wants the applicants to submit a revised budget of just the Common Ground funds and what they will be sued for. Scott G. asks about the required match under the NRCS grant. Betsy D. notes that in kind match is shown in their budget.

15:00 – Betsy D. asks how the percentages of allocations are tracked between the different categories in the Common Ground fund. Ben L. states that they have historically been tracked over the life of the fund as opposed to on an annual basis. Joe S. notes that according to the Common Ground Annual Report 52% has gone to Forest Health projects, 31% to Agriculture, and 17% to Recreation Management projects.

15:04 – Meeting is adjourned.