

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 9, 2007**

The February 9th, 2007 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the Commissioners Meeting Room in the Courthouse at 200 E. Virginia, Gunnison CO 81230.

Regular Members Present:

Gary Hausler, At-Large
Kenny McDaniel, BLM
Greg Peterson, GCSA
Sue Navy, HCCA
John Scott, NRCS
Jim Dawson, USFS

Erich Ferchau, At-Large/Development Community
J Wenum, DOW- in at noon
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County BOCC
Ken Stahlnecker, NPS
Al Pfister, USFWS

Staff Members Present:

Jim Cochran, Sage-grouse Conservation Coordinator
Keri Hodgin, Administrative Assistant III

Alternate Members Present in Audience: Sandy Guerrieri, Amy Seglund

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Chairman Stahlnecker.

QUORUM & PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Proof of publication was presented by Keri Hodgin. Quorum and public notice was confirmed by Chairman Stahlnecker.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Paula Swenson asked to give a report. Greg Peterson asked to add an item, and Chairman Stahlnecker asked Sue Navy to give a report. These three items were added to agenda item #4. The agenda was approved as amended.

MINUTES APPROVAL: December 13, 2006 minutes: Chairman Stahlnecker requested one correction at the top of page four. **Moved** by Greg Peterson, seconded by Paula Swenson to approve the December 13, 2006 minutes. Motion passed unanimously. Gary Hausler abstained from the vote, since he was absent at that meeting.

January 10, 2007 minutes: Sue Navy requested a spelling change on Page two. **Moved** by John Scott, seconded by Eric Ferchau to approve the January 10, 2007 minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously. Greg Peterson abstained from the vote, since he was absent at that meeting.

MEETING REPORT FROM PAULA SWENSON: Paula Swenson reported that she and Jim Cochran met with the Delta County Commissioners and the Montrose County Commissioners to update them on how Gunnison County is approaching preservation of the sage-grouse. She said they discussed different ways those counties could be involved with the efforts. She said Montrose and Delta Counties will likely pass resolutions in support of Gunnison County's efforts and she was encouraged that awareness is increasing in neighboring counties.

STOCKGROWERS UPDATE FROM GREG PETERSON: Greg Peterson reported that the Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association and other groups had recently decided to intervene in the lawsuit against the Fish and Wildlife Service decision to not list the sage-grouse. He said the fundamental reason for the Stockgrowers' decision was to "support and push pro-active grazing language in the eventual result of the law-suit". He said this decision will not offset the ongoing local conservation efforts which the Stockgrowers have been and will continue to be involved in. Peterson reported that the Stockgrowers are in the process of drafting a position paper and offered to get it to Cochran for distribution to the Strategic Committee.

LOCAL WORKING GROUP REPORT: Sue Navy reported that the Local Working Group has some concerns with the communications gap between the Local Working Group and the Strategic Committee and have requested a meeting to decide who has the authority to do what between the two groups. The Strategic Committee agreed to meet with the Local Working Group at the Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center after the March 7th meeting from 5:00 to 6:30. The group discussed the forum for that meeting. Greg Peterson requested that Chairman Stahlnecker facilitate the meeting since he is a member of both groups and is familiar with the issues. Peterson asked Chairman Stahlnecker to have the Local Working Group submit a list of their concerns prior to the meeting if possible. **Moved** by Greg Peterson, seconded by John Scott to have Chairman Stahlnecker facilitate the meeting and have it ended by 6:30 p.m. Chairman Stahlnecker agreed to contact BJ Johnson about the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT RESTORATION ON PRIVATE LANDS: Jim Cochran said the County is trying to create a 'library' of projects ready for proposal requests. He discussed the US Fish & Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Grants Program and Colorado Youth Corp Concept Paper. Cochran agreed to develop a calendar of grant programs and funding opportunities to have a better idea of what is coming up and to help avoid the short notices. The group agreed to have funding opportunities as a standing agenda item for each meeting. John Scott said to keep the Western State College Conservation Corp in mind for projects too. Cochran said that Scott may put together an un-manned power point presentation to run during the Public Outreach Meeting. They are considering something that will show what the habitat treatments and the birds look like.

COUNTY PROCEEDINGS FOR FURTHER REGULATIONS REGARDING GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE: Cochran said a Public Hearing has been scheduled for March 6th at 4:00 to discuss the proposed amendments to the Land Use Regulations (LUR). He said comments can be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) prior to the hearing and added that the hearing has been noticed with "possible action". Al Pfister asked if the DOW would be able to request an extension if they were unable to get comments to the county on a very important parcel within the twenty-one days. Cochran said that if an extension was requested, he would recommend that the county grant one. Swenson said part of the rationale for the time period was so that the process for the property owners would not get strung out. Navy questioned using the wording 'shall proceed...' and Cochran said that wording was a result of public comment so there would have to be a very good reason to change it. Peterson suggested a word change to maintain consistency within the document. Ferchau expressed some concerns with the use of defining terms and asked if the county is trying to regulate something that can't be enforced. He also asked why construction activities have been singled out when other activities have an impact on the breeding of the bird as well. Swenson said this was a discussion for the Public Hearing and asked everyone to submit comments for consideration.

INCENTIVE REVIEW PROCESS, PRE-DEVELOPMENT REVIEW OF SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT AND LEK LOCATIONS: Cochran reported that he was directed by the BOCC to work with the Planning Director and County Attorney on drafting an incentive process for parcels 35 acres or larger. Peterson asked if the results of a parcel evaluation would be available for any future development, so that some certainty of an expedited process would be part of the incentive. Swenson said that this process would add value because the end buyer would have that step already taken care of. Peterson said that if a land owner went through this incentive process and the areas of development had already been addressed so the buyer of a lot would have an expedited process, then that does address his concern. Cochran said that if the recommendations were followed by the land owner then that would be acknowledged and the permit process would go very quickly. Ferchau said the review would need to be linked to the regulations somehow and said the incentives need to recognize what is important to the land owners.

FEDERAL BUDGET REQUEST TO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION: Cochran said the information form for Senator Salazar's office is due March 2nd and that he would use the information approved by the Committee for submittal. He said no funding requests can be sent to Congressman Salazar's office right now.

SPRING ROAD CLOSURES: Cochran reported that the BOCC adopted a resolution on January 23, 2006 which changed the re-opening date of the road closures to May 15th in order to coincide with BLM dates. He said the county and BLM will have thirty eight closures this year. A joint map and access information will be made available at Public Works, BLM and Cochran's office so the public can go to one office to obtain what they need. The County will be able to issue access information for BLM closures and visa-versa.

ANTLER SHED COLLECTION: Cochran said that if the group wanted to submit a request to the Wildlife Commission for an Antler Shed Season it would have to be done soon. Ferchau questioned the propriety of singling out this one activity. He asked how this activity differed from the college track team running in the hills. Swenson said the problem is that this activity happens in the nesting ground during the lekking season. Navy said that these birds are so sensitive and the gridding system used for antler shed collection basically herds the birds away from where they need to be. Chairperson Stahlnecker said this activity can displace the birds from the leks and nests, where other activities aren't occurring right in the lek areas. Ferchau said perhaps all activity should be stopped during those times at those locations. Peterson suggested that this is a management issue and asked if the DOW would want help with enforcing the management mechanisms already in place.

Cochran reminded the Committee that last year it sent a letter to the Wildlife Commission requesting that they delay the opening date of the antler collection season to May 15th. He also noted that road closures do not close public lands, they only close the lands to vehicle traffic. Cochran asked if the committee wanted to submit a proposal to the Wildlife Commission. J Wenum said this can't be brought up within internally (within the DOW), but this group could petition the Commission to hear it as a regulation proposal. He received some feedback that using this to protect Sage-Grouse would probably not be well received by the Commission since there are other mechanisms being used to curb impacts to the bird. Chairman Stahlnecker requested that this be scheduled on a future agenda for further discussion. Wenum said another issue is that this may be something the BLM needs to address through their regulatory process, since they manage the lands. Hausler asked who would enforce the road closures. Cochran said the BOCC approved overtime last year for the Sheriff's Department to enforce the closures. This year the county will bring all the necessary agencies and Sheriff's Department together to

discuss coordinated enforcement of these closures. Wenum said that the DOW can file a witness report with the appropriate agency if they witness a violation that isn't under their jurisdiction.

CITY OF GUNNISON ANNEXATION PROCESS: Cochran covered his draft comments which he presented to the BOCC regarding the Tomichi Creek Corridor Annexation Master Plan. Paula Swenson said the BOCC approved the comments and will be submitting them to the City of Gunnison with the sage-grouse being listed as the number one issue with the proposed annexation area, because of the habitat on that land. Cochran said comments are due to the City by February 16th. Swenson said there will an opportunity to submit comments throughout the city's process. Cochran said that his comments generally were:

- The concept of development occurring from the center of the city outward is the best process, as opposed to developing away from town and creating sprawl
- South of Tomichi Creek along the meadow and W Mountain should not have development or trails
- North of Tomichi Creek and South of Highway 50 would be fine for development as far as sage-grouse issue
- North of Hwy. 50 and South of the Cemetery Ditch does not have huge sage-grouse issues
- North of that has some sage-grouse habitat, but has not been valued and is highly impacted already.

Wenum said the DOW comments on this annexation will probably be very similar to Cochran's and will address a question Peterson had about the interface area near the ditch.

SCHEDULING: The March 7th Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting will be held in the BOCC meeting room at the Courthouse from 1:00- 4:30. The joint Work Session with the Local Working Group will be held immediately afterward at the Fred Field Center until 6:30 p.m. The Public Outreach meeting to discuss private land projects will then be held at the Fred Field Center from 7:00-9:00 p.m. on March 7th.

The April 11th and May 9th meetings will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

UNSCHEDULED CITIZENS: Butch Clark said that the Tomichi Creek Corridor Annexation Plan was available on the Gunnison Rising Website.

ADJOURN: Chairperson Ken Stahlnecker adjourned the meeting at 12:15.

Certification of Approval:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Keri Hodgkin, Administrative Assistant III