

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 7, 2007**

The March 7, 2007 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the Commissioner's Meeting Room in the Courthouse at 200 E. Virginia, Gunnison CO 81230.

Regular Members Present:

Gary Hausler, At-Large	Erich Ferchau, At-Large/Development Community
Kenny McDaniel, BLM (in at 2:40)	J Wenum, DOW
Greg Peterson, GCSA	Paula Swenson, Gunnison County BOCC
Sue Navy, HCCA	Ken Stahlnecker, NPS
John Scott, NRCS	Al Pfister, USFWS
Jim Dawson, USFS (in at 2:10)	Linda Joseph, Saguache County BOCC

Staff Members Present:

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

Alternate Members Present in Audience: Amy Seglund, DOW
Jim Starr, Gunnison County BOCC

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

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

AGENDA APPROVAL: Sue Navy requested a Wildlife Commission update from Jim Cochran, which was added to item #5. Jim Cochran requested a Congressional Appropriations Request update, which was added to item #6. The agenda was approved as amended.

Chairman Stahlnecker welcomed the newest member Linda Joseph, from Saguache County and asked each member to introduce themselves.

MINUTES APPROVAL: Sue Navy asked for corrections to three typos in the February 9, 2007 minutes. **Moved** by Greg Peterson, seconded by Paula Swenson to approve the February 9, 2007 minutes as corrected. Motion passed unanimously.

GUNNISON COUNTY PROCEEDINGS FOR FURTHER REGULATIONS REGARDING GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE: Jim Cochran said that the Gunnison County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) held a Public Hearing yesterday, which was continued to March 20th at 3:00 p.m. to allow additional public comment and discussion.

SPRING ROAD CLOSURES: Jim Cochran reported that there are 13 County road closure points and 25 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) closure points this year. The BLM roads were closed by March 6th and the remaining County roads will be closed on March 15th. Anyone needing authorization to get behind the closures, such as landowners and grazing permit holders can go to Public Works, Cochran's office or the BLM office to sign in. Cochran reported that BLM would require their employees going behind the closures to sign in as well so there would be a record of everyone with access. Erich Ferchau said he would pass this information

on to the Association of Realtors, in case they needed to show property behind closures. Cochran reported that the road closures have been publicly noticed in large format in four local newspapers. He added that there will be a law enforcement meeting with the Sheriff's Office, National Park Service (NPS), BLM, and the Division of Wildlife (DOW) to discuss coordination of enforcing the closures. Gary Hausler said he has requested two additional closures on the Cabin Creek allotment, which BLM has agreed to.

WILDLIFE COMMISSION UPDATE: Jim Cochran reported that two members of the Wildlife Commission were in town last week for an open discussion with the public. He took the opportunity to discuss an antler-shed season proposal with them. One member said if the season were limited to this area, and not a state-wide proposal they would consider it more favorably. They asked if the reason a sage-grouse group was opposed to the previously proposed antler shed season was because of the timing. Cochran said he would like to discuss this further with BLM because the issue of the land management agency came up. J Wenum said any proposal would need to be submitted to them in the next three months in order to have something in place by next spring. Peterson asked Cochran to work with Wenum to compose a memo listing pros and cons already discussed by the group, look more in depth at the current regulations to make sure it's not already adequately covered, and see if there are any efforts being made on behalf of wildlife harassment which could possibly be combined with this effort. Wenum said there is a region in Utah that enacted a closure for this year. He will talk to his contact there to find out what worked and what didn't work with their closure.

PROJECTS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES: NRCS CIG PROGRAM- John Scott handed out a document summarizing the program. He discussed what type of projects would be eligible for this program. He said that one of the stipulations is that landowners would have to qualify for the Environmental Quality Program by having land that's under agricultural operation, since this funding comes through the Environmental program. Hausler asked if the funding could be used on federal land if an individual, such as a grazing permit lessee were to put in a well system or do something which would benefit the sage-grouse. Scott answered that this program is mainly for private lands and some could possibly be used for public lands at the discretion of the State Conservationist but it would have to show that the project would benefit private and public lands by crossing boundaries. Pfister asked if the Deseret Land project could be submitted. Scott said it depends on how it is written up. Cochran said that the State Conservationist is really hesitant to use this on public lands, but Cochran would like to see someone in the Gunnison Basin come up with a project like Hausler described that would benefit other species as well as the sage-grouse, because it would be another step away from managing to fence-lines. Scott said that NRCS might be more likely to fund something if there were other partners such as BLM, DOW, USFWS, etc., in a joint proposal. Chairman Stahlnecker noted that there is a 50% match required. Cochran said 25% can be in kind. Peterson said the Stockgrowers may want to do a seeding project this year, but it would likely focus more on public land as well. Scott discussed a possible forb seeding project.

CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE: Cochran said that Congressman Salazar's office asked the group to prioritize the four appropriation requests they submitted. They also asked for a federal agency and account to be added to each request. He said Congressman Salazar's staff is helping him figure out the appropriate agency for each one, and noted that the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) will be used for the CCAA request. The group discussed the prioritization. Gary Hausler said that he disagrees with having the easements in the list at all.

Moved by Erich Ferchau, seconded by Paula Swenson to prioritize the four appropriation requests in the following order: 1) Habitat Protection through Easements, 2) CCAA, 3) Habitat Improvement, and 4) Research. Motion passed by majority vote with Hausler dissenting.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Sue Navy asked that no action be taken today, until the Local Working Group's concerns are heard at the 5:00 meeting. There was discussion about whether to take action on anything today. Scott suggested the group at least agree on this section for the sake of going forward, even if action isn't taken. The group then discussed each suggested change. Scott then showed the group Navy's suggestion of re-arranging the document by removing the four goals, moving the background information before the strategies and giving the strategies section its own roman numeral. She said that would eliminate the problem of having something in the document that one member doesn't agree with. She also said that funding possibilities could be impacted by having something political in the beginning of the plan as its purpose. Ferchau said there are other items that some may not individually agree with, but are left in because the group agrees on them. Chairman Stahlnecker asked if the county members wanted the goals left in there. Commissioner Swenson answered that these are the goals set out by the County after a lot of discussion and public input. She said there was discussion that the fourth goal should be an over-arching goal. She thought they should be part of the Strategic Plan. Navy said that her organization doesn't like that fourth goal and asked "Why not take something out that doesn't need to be in there?"

Commissioner Jim Starr said that if this document can have the consensus of all the stakeholders as well as the Local Working Group, then it will be a stronger document. Swenson said that getting buy-in from the Local Working group is fine, but said that the Strategic Committee is the group set up to be the decision making group. Peterson agreed that the goals should be left in. He disagreed with Navy's comment that the goals might be a detriment to funding and said he thinks having them in there would be positive for getting funding because they talk about preservation of the sage-grouse, keeping a healthy local community, dealing with misinformation and trying to preclude the listing by doing positive things. He added that people in his organization argued adamantly before the BOCC to have the fourth goal as an all encompassing goal, and this was a fair compromise. Chairman Stahlnecker said he still doesn't see the 4th goal as supporting or not supporting a listing, and it means we're doing things on the ground to make it better for the bird which might have the benefit of precluding the need to list. Navy said that goal to her says preclude the need and she would say it's too late, the need is already there. Pfister said that the decision has been made that the need is not there. Navy said there are people who disagree with that decision. Ferchau said that he takes offense to the amount of time given to this discussion, when that amount of time hasn't been allowed for other people's objections.

Commissioner Starr said the Strategic Plan will ultimately be adopted by the County, so in the interest of moving forward HCCA could submit a minority opinion asking the BOCC to remove those goals. The group agreed that when the entire draft is completed it will be sent out to others for input.

SCHEDULING: The group agreed to hold the next meeting on April 11th from 10:00 to 2:00. There will be one May 9th from 10:00 to 2:00, and one June 13th from 10:00 to 2:00. Cochran agreed to add the antler shed season discussion to the April 11th agenda. Wenum said he'd like to talk their Regulations Coordinator and see if a prohibition might work better than a season.

ADJOURN: Chairperson Ken Stahlnecker adjourned the meeting and began the Work Session at 3:25 p.m.

Certification of Approval:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Keri Hodgkin, Administrative Assistant III