

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 11, 2007**

The April 11, 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 (until 12:30)	Erich Ferchau, At-Large/Development Community
Kenny McDaniel, BLM	J Wenum, DOW
Greg Peterson, GCSA (until Noon)	Paula Swenson, Gunnison County BOCC
Sue Navy, HCCA	Ken Stahlnecker, NPS
Lars Santana, Alternate for NRCS	Al Pfister, USFWS
Mike Jackson, Alternate for, USFS	Linda Joseph, Saguache County BOCC

Staff Members Present:

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

Alternate Members Present in Audience: Sandy Guerrieri, GCSA- Sandy participated in the meeting from the audience until noon, when she stepped in for the Regular member for the remainder of the meeting.

Also present in the audience: Jeremy Meyer, reporter and Helen Richardson, photographer with the Denver Post introduced themselves. Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

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

AGENDA APPROVAL: Kenny McDaniel requested the addition of a Healthy Lands Initiative Report. Agenda was approved as amended.

MINUTES APPROVAL: Sue Navy requested one grammatical correction to page 2 of the March 7th, 2007 minutes. Kenny McDaniel requested one grammatical correction to page 3.

Moved by Sue Navy, seconded by Paula Swenson to approve the March 7th, 2007 minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

GUNNISON COUNTY LAND USE RESOLUTION (LUR) AMENDMENT UPDATE:

Jim Cochran reported that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved the LUR amendments on April 3rd, pending the County Attorney's review. They requested the amendments be retroactive to March 1st. Greg Peterson asked if C3 on Page 3 meant that it "if there's something within 0.6 mile of a lek, but for some reason it's not necessarily going to hinder grouse production, then it won't apply to that development". Swenson answered "right, something geographic like a cliff or road that's been put in or something like that". Peterson said he was glad to see that in there because he knew that was a concern of the Stockgrowers.

SPRING ROAD CLOSURES UPDATE: Kenny McDaniel reported that the road closures have been a challenge. People are getting around several of the road closures. They have had

numerous cases of vandalism to the closures as well as a lot of antler shed hunting. He is considering a closure of areas next year, in addition to the road closures, because of the difficulty they are having in enforcing the closures. He said closed areas can be listed on the Federal Register and may make enforcement more effective. Cochran said BLM has done seasonal area closures in other places and noted that although the closures are being ignored by some, it doesn't mean the travel and activity hasn't been reduced. McDaniel agreed. Cochran reported that the County continues to advertise the closures weekly in two local papers.

Moved by Sue Navy, seconded by Paula Swenson, to direct Jim Cochran to write a letter similar to one previously written by Kenny McDaniel to the Editor regarding the road closures with names and affiliation of each member and send it to the papers. Al Pfister requested the letter be circulated to the members for approval prior to submittal. Erich Ferchau recommended the letter list accomplishments and have a positive tone, as opposed to having a regulatory or authoritative tone. Chairman Stahlnecker restated the motion to have Jim Cochran draft a letter similar to the one previously submitted to papers by Kenny McDaniel, that he send it out for committee review, and then finalize it and submit it to the newspapers. Motion passed unanimously.

Greg Peterson asked if any violaters have been caught. J Wenum reported that enough evidence has been obtained in one case to turn it over to BLM. Mike Jackson thought area closures and good signing would enhance enforcement capabilities. Cochran said Forest Service road closures may be discussed next year as well. Gary Hausler reported that he did not coordinate the additional two road closures on the Cabin Creek allotment which were previously discussed.

ANTLER SHED COLLECTION SEASON PROPOSAL: Wenum said any proposals would need to be in mid-July to be included in the Wildlife Commission's July meeting. There was discussion about whether area closures would take care of the shed hunting issue. Navy thought it would make sense to ask for a season which would begin May 15th, in keeping with the road closures. Hausler requested a change to the document Cochran had prepared and Navy requested a word change to the document.

Wenum reported that Lt. Scott Davis with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources shared some information with him about the antler shed collection season in north Utah. Their primary issue came about to protect deer, because the numbers were way down. Their law prohibits the pick up of shed antlers from February 1st through May 1st. It is also illegal to pick up antlers attached to a skull plate. They will address some conflict with access to Department of Natural Resources' properties being allowed after April 15th. They had a large scale enforcement effort, had 12-15 citations for violations, 3 or 4 warnings and did not yet have a real good feel for how effective the closure was. The season did include private land.

Sandy Guerrieri asked if this group intended to ask for a season which included private lands. Mike Jackson thought private lands should be included in order to make enforcement easier. Wenum said part of what shut down their proposal last year was the inclusion of private lands. There was strong opposition from the Colorado Cattlemen's Association and eastern plains land owners who were concerned with being able to prepare fields, remove hazards, etc. He thought the Commissioners might consider something more localized, such as the Gunnison Basin. Wenum said he would recommend using the five game management units here. Gary Hausler said he'd like the group to prepare draft requesting the seasonal exclusion for the time frame previously discussed for the game management units. He said it ties in with other things being done. Greg Peterson said this request needs to be tied to sage-grouse issues. He agreed with Jackson that excluding private land from the season would create difficulty with enforcement

and thought any season should probably include private and public lands. Guerrieri said she doesn't like to see private land owners encumbered by regulations and didn't think many ranchers would allow shed hunting on their property. She said they had a lot of sheds a few years ago and she wouldn't want to have to ask permission to remove sheds on her land.

Lars Santana asked if the proposal could include exclusion for agricultural activities such removing sheds to plow or drag fields. Navy thought that was a good idea and said the Wildlife Commission might be more likely to pass it if the Stockgrowers came out in strong support of the proposal. Erich Ferchau said he doesn't like the idea of regulating private land, agricultural or otherwise. Peterson agreed with Guerrieri about the operational issues, and he agreed with Ferchau, but was concerned that limiting the supply might increase the value and draw shed hunters to private lands to take the sheds, which would make the season less effective. McDaniel said if the private lands inclusion is going to be a stumbling block, he'd like to see the proposal still move forward for the public lands. Hausler said he doesn't like to see more regulations either, but added "when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service looks at listing the bird again they will consider what we've imposed on ourselves that benefits the bird". He said the private and public lands should be included in the proposal.

Al Pfister said that approximately 33% of the leks are on private land so excluding 1/3 of the leks wouldn't be biologically beneficial. He agreed that private lands should be included, but thought incidental collection and agricultural collection could be distinguished from commercial collection. Paula Swenson agreed with Pfister and said that one of the County's objectives in creating this committee was to maintain the landscape, remembering that the bird doesn't know which land is private and which is public. She agreed that agricultural uses or personal use could be considered, but that the landscape should be considered as a whole.

Chairman Stahlnecker noted consent from the group for proceeding with a regulation through the Wildlife Commission. J Wenum abstained from this consent. Cochran said the group would actually draft a petition for regulations, but not the regulations themselves. He said the petition could include suggested regulatory language or issues that need addressed. He added that if the Wildlife Commission accepts the petition, the Division of Wildlife (DOW) would then draft the regulations. Guerrieri said she would be satisfied with the private lands being included if it was made extremely clear that agricultural production would be exempt. Peterson agreed. Cochran also noted that some areas don't have fencing between private and public land, so it can be difficult to determine which you are on. Ferchau said he wants to support protection of the bird, but doesn't like the regulation concept. He asked for language covering incidental pick up, perhaps tied to proximity of the lek.

Moved by Greg Peterson, seconded by Paula Swenson to have Jim Cochran write a proposal for an antler shed collection season for the Gunnison Basin including private and public lands, with exceptions for agricultural operations and private land owner incidental pick up activities, to be approved or dis-approved by the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee at the May meeting.

Discussion ensued. Peterson asked Cochran to have the draft prepared a week prior to the May 9th meeting in order to get input from the Stockgrowers' Board of Directors and other members of the public who are interested. Cochran confirmed that distribution to the Committee would be sufficient, since members would then pass it on as necessary. Chairman Stahlnecker asked if the proposal should come from the Committee or from the Board of County Commissions. Navy suggested it come from the Committee. Ferchau asked if there is opportunity for public input once it goes to the Wildlife Commission and Wenum confirmed that there was opportunity in

their three step process. Jackson clarified that the public lands in the proposal would be identified as the five game management units. There was agreement among the members.

Motion was re-stated by Chairman Stahlnecker. Motion passed with J Wenum abstaining.

Jackson asked Wenum if his office would support an antler shed season and Wenum said they would since they were the ones who proposed the season last year, even though it was for different reasons.

HABITAT ASSESSMENT SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT: Lars Santana reported who was at their meeting on May 10th. Al Pfister said the subcommittee met monthly for about a year and tackled three main issues.

1. Grass Height. This was discussed with the Strategic Committee and with Tony Apa, the DOW researcher who put together the habitat guidelines for the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP), who in turn discussed it with the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Item #7 in the packet is the result of all these discussions and gives clarification of the language. Pfister said Seglund has done an excellent job coordinating language that everyone can agree on. The back page shows photographs which will be used to train technicians in the future so they can more consistently measure the grass height. The pictures are done in accordance with the way Tony Apa took his measurements when determining the habitat guidelines for the grouse. Pfister said having more consistency in any scientific endeavor is a major accomplishment.
2. Pfister handed out a table showing the top five different methodologies used throughout the scientific community for assessing sage-grouse habitat conditions. Comments were obtained from experts on pros, cons, nuances and parameters for each of these tools. This has not been finalized because the language for each box is still being discussed. The language will be geared more towards agency use, but will be usable for land owners and others as well. They are trying to get agreement on the language from the diverse groups represented on the comparison chart. Details can be found by going to the citations given on the document or by asking those most familiar with it.
3. The third accomplishment was looking at the Monson guidelines in the Gunnison Rangewide Conservation Plan and agreeing that type of discussion should be had with land owners and land managers whenever there will be any type of treatments for the benefit of the land owner and/or the Gunnison sage-grouse.

The Habitat Sub-committee tried to decide if one methodology is better than another, and found it is dependant upon what type of question you are asking, or what type of activity it's oriented towards. Because of this, the final document will not list one type as being better than another. It will list the methodologies available for those people managing the land. Pfister thanked Santana and Seglund for all their effort in accomplishing these three goals.

Peterson requested that the Sub-committee attempt to more closely define which methodology is more appropriately used in each instance and asked if the structural guidelines would be used by all. Pfister said the guidelines have been adopted by the Range Wide Plan Steering Committee, so all signatories to the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP) have adopted these as the minimum structural vegetation collection guidelines. Chairman Stahlnecker said the effort put into getting this moved forward and approved can't be overstated and thanked the Sub-committee.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR (DOI) HEALTHY LANDS INITIATIVE: Kenny McDaniel wanted to make the Committee aware of the 22 million dollars directed to the Healthy Lands Initiative in DOI's 2008 budget. He said the Healthy Lands Initiative is really focused on maintaining and improving habitat. BLM is slated to receive about 1.3 million from this budget. He listed the different habitat enhancement treatments which can be included and said it fits in well with things already being done in this county. He said this is a possible funding source to keep in mind as the group completes their Strategic Plan. Pfister noted that BLM's press release specifically mentioned SW Colorado and the Gunnison sage-grouse as one of the featured species. McDaniel said it's supposed to be multiple-year funding and said BLM does have some projects on the shelf. Peterson suggested that Cochran add this to the potential funding list he's compiling so the group has the lead time. McDaniel said the initiative seems to focus on the idea of working with partners, getting matching funds, etc. Cochran said the County's outreach meeting to develop some private land owner projects didn't generate much interest, so the County may try another one this summer.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE (DOW) FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Cochran reported that this request for proposals (RFP) is for Working Groups with approved conservation plans. Seglund asked Gary Skiba if the Local Plan counts because Cochran had never seen the term 'approval' with that plan. Cochran said Skiba's opinion was that the Local Working Group would qualify to apply for these funds and thought this was an opportunity for the Local Working Group, not the Strategic Committee.

INTRODUCTIONS: Chairman Stahlnecker asked the photographer to show the pictures taken that morning during the break and introduced Matt Kales from the DOW. Kales said Meyer has done some outstanding coverage on eastern slope wildlife issues lately and inquired about the Gunnison sage-grouse. Kales thanked J Wenum and the Committee members who participated in taking them on the tours that morning. The Committee members each introduced themselves.

BREAK: The meeting was recessed from 11:50 to 12:05 for a break.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE LOCAL WORKING GROUP- Joint Meeting between the Local Working Group (LWG) and the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee (Strategic Committee): Jessica Young, Allen Moores, Sandy Borthwick and BJ Johnson with the LWG were all invited up to the table. Steve Westbay, Director of Planning from the City of Gunnison and Chris Parmeter from DOW were present as well. Chairman Stahlnecker summarized some of the discussion from the previous meeting and said the purpose of this meeting was to continue the dialogue from the last joint work session. He said the intent was to better define the roles of the two groups, to discuss the different plans being used and developed and to improve communication between the two groups. Jessica Young presented a handout listing the guiding principles of both groups, the strengths and weaknesses of both groups, opportunities for coordination and recommendations for better communication. Young noted that agenda item #8 discussed earlier is a perfect example of the urgency to do this well, since it was the first the LWG members had even heard about that funding opportunity. She thanked Cochran for putting it on the agenda so they would see it. She said the deadline is May 1st so they've already lost three weeks to apply and said that shows the need for better communication.

Young noted some overlap in guiding principles of both groups, but noted that there are very different roles as well. She said that noting these differences can be very informative and encouraged everyone to take a closer look when time allows. She said the strengths and

weaknesses of both groups as listed are her opinion. She thinks there's a real potential for the Strategic Committee to revitalize the LWG in the way it was originally designed, but warned that there's also the potential to kill the effort. She said both groups could really utilize each other's strengths more successfully. Kenny McDaniel suggested looking at communications. Sandy Borthwick asked that the opportunities for coordination be discussed as well.

Chairman Stahlnecker read the first recommendation which discusses using one email list for all communications. Cochran said that minutes in the Strategic Committee's packets are draft copies and would not be distributed by email. He said they are posted on the web-page once they are approved and finalized. He asked how the groups would want him to handle drafts meant specifically for the Strategic Committee. He also noted the difficulty in compiling comments when the two groups vary on decisions. He suggested starting with emailing the agenda to both groups.

Young felt that would be limiting and noted that the minutes at times aren't available for one or two months. She said the LWG would benefit from the antler shed season discussion that has been going on. She said she can't think of any reason to limit discussion between the two groups and recommended a wider distribution than just the agenda. Chairman Stahlnecker asked Cochran if gathering the multiple incoming comments is a concern for him. Cochran said the distribution of information is up to the two groups but asked that a pathway for communication be developed for the returning information and comments. Chairman Stahlnecker said that everybody on the LWG has a representative on the Strategic Committee that they can go through. He suggested that LWG members could give their comments to that representative, who could then pass them on to Cochran. Paula Swenson thought that would be a better way to streamline the process for Cochran. Jackson stressed the importance of keeping the two groups separate, while sharing information and decisions. He said the LWG can decide to support or not support decisions made by the Strategic Committee. He thought that attempting to send proposals out and get consensus from the members of both groups will run into the same, past problem of not getting things accomplished.

Chairman Stahlnecker said he thinks it's the job of each Strategic Committee members, as representatives of their constituencies, to accept input from the LWG through those reps in order to better represent that constituency. He said that including the LWG members, who are well informed and very interested, would help each member's responsibility of representing their constituency. Santana suggested using a disclaimer in the outgoing e-mails, such as "This is for informational purposes only. If you have comment..." McDaniel said he owes it to his staff to communicate what is going on at the Strategic Committee meetings and having a single email list would be helpful. He agreed that the path of return communications should be through the representative, for example, comments from Sandy Borthwick should come back through him. Jackson said maybe there should be consideration of an official appointee from the LWG to the Strategic Committee. He said even though he is a member of both groups, he does not consider it his responsibility to report all that goes on here to the LWG. Navy thought it would be difficult for that group to pick one representative. She asked if the Strategic Committee perceives themselves to be on a different level than the LWG and noted that the LWG doesn't meet as often as the Strategic Committee. She thought having more email communication would be great and agreed with Santana's suggestion. She also noted that the email list provided by Johnson included people who weren't even LWG members and questioned if that entire list really needed to be used.

Allen Moores said the Strategic Committee is a higher level committee because it is a decision making group and thought that there was a lack of communication from members who belong to

both groups. He said that link needs to be made and thought that the expertise of the LWG could have already been better utilized if members who belong to both groups would have brought to light some of the things being worked on by the Strategic Committee. He added that the LWG will have to commit to meeting more often and step up to the plate if they want to carry more weight while noting that attendance to LWG meetings fell off when the Strategic Committee was formed. Chairman Stahlnecker agreed that part of the disconnect was the LWG not meeting very often and said the Strategic Committee did designate a liaison to the LWG but the LWG did not do the same. He said that group may have to pick a person to be that liaison.

Young said the LWG is underestimated in their decision making capabilities. She said they do need to meet more often, but thinks they have had a real crisis of identity. She said it began when the RCP was created. The group then heard the County was creating a Strategic Plan. She said the LWG has worked together for 12 years and has incredible expertise and a broad community base, but has a lack of purpose. She said the Strategic Committee was set up to meet quarterly. Cochran and Swenson corrected Young saying that committee was set up to meet a minimum of four times a year. Young said some of the things the Strategic Committee is wrestling with could be handed off to the LWG or to a LWG Sub-committee. She said the LWG has information to share which might help the Strategic Committee's discussions as well. She noted that the LWG has a sub-committee already set up that could help implement goal #7 listed under Strategic Committee.

Sandy Guerrieri said she struggles to understand the role of the LWG now that the Strategic Committee has come on board. Chairman Stahlnecker said that was discussed at the last meeting. Guerrieri asked if the LWG even knows that the Strategic Committee isn't using the Local Plan. Young said she understood that the primary document used by the Strategic Committee is the RCP, which clearly says that Local Working Groups need to adapt the RCP to their local objectives. She said the RCP clearly says it is not meant to take the place of the Local Plan, so by the Strategic Committee adopting the RCP as their primary document, she thought the intent was for the LWG to look at the Local Plan and adapt it with the new objectives. She asked if the Strategic Committee's intent was to throw out the Local Plan when they adopted the RCP because that would suggest there is no role for the LWG. Chairman Stahlnecker said the Strategic Committee adopted the RCP as their primary document which does assimilate the Local Plan and refers to the Local Plan, but it wasn't one document instead of the other.

Navy said a problem arose when the LWG did the priority list which was in turn amended by the Strategic Committee without the knowledge of the LWG. She asked if it was the intent of the Strategic Committee to override decisions made by the LWG and said that is an issue of roles rather than communication. Ferchau said it's up to the LWG to make the decisions regarding the DOW funding discussed earlier which makes him think the LWG has more authority and power than the Strategic Committee. Guerrieri said it's necessary to define the roles of both groups. She asked if Stockgrowers should have to attend meetings of both groups in order to have representation, if their representation on the Strategic Committee can't add something to a priority list compiled by the LWG, which is exactly what happened. Sandy Borthwick said the two groups are very different when you look at the goals of each. She said she never saw it as a hierarchy where the LWG goes through the Strategic Committee for approval and said the LWG is disenchanted by the Strategic Committee taking on that role. She said that several members who belong to both groups stopped attending the LWG meetings as often because they are going to the Strategic Committee meetings. She said the Strategic Committee doesn't have the background information to make decisions for the LWG. Young said Guerrieri's comment concerns her because there's nothing in the formation of the Strategic Committee that suggests

that committee would take the place of or oversee the LWG. She said she would welcome Stockgrowers back to the LWG meetings.

Moores said Stockgrowers had representation at LWG meetings until the Strategic Committee was formed. Navy noted that LWG meetings are open to whoever wants to contribute. Cochran voiced his frustration in attending LWG meetings since 1997 and being on and off the e-mail lists. He said the group's membership is difficult to get your hands around. He also noted that the LWG prioritization meeting involved eight people, with one county vote to three BLM votes, which he was uncomfortable with. Swenson said one reason for setting up the Strategic Committee was so that every entity would have equal say and an equal vote on decisions. Chairman Stahlnecker said that's not to say there isn't a role for the LWG. Swenson read the 2nd goal of the Strategic Committee and said "That is where we've fallen apart- working in coordination when implementing programs and strategies". She said if the Strategic Committee is receiving information for a BLM grant, it would be helpful to have a designated person on the LWG to pass that information along to. Navy said Johnson isn't an official representative of the LWG, but is the Coordinator.

Cochran said he'd be comfortable sending information through Johnson with the understanding that Johnson will distribute it to the LWG members and with the understanding that comments come back through the representatives on the Strategic Committee. Johnson said that one issue is the Strategic Committee receiving correspondence directed to the LWG and acting on it. He asked for agreement on whether there will be mutual inclusion or mutual exclusion regarding correspondence. Swenson suggested that all information go to both Coordinators (Cochran and Johnson) and they can decide between the two of them which group the information is appropriate for. Cochran suggested starting with adding Johnson to his mailing list and letting Johnson decide what to do with the information, noting that he doesn't feel comfortable making that choice for the LWG. Johnson said he had attended some of the first Strategic Committee meetings and wondered if it would be appropriate for him to begin attending them again and taking that information back to the LWG to keep them more current on what is going on. There was some agreement from the group.

Chairman Stahlnecker reiterated that all information sent to the Strategic Committee would be forwarded to Johnson with the understanding that any comments would come back through the representatives on the Strategic Committee so Cochran wouldn't get bombarded. He said that Johnson would begin attending the Strategic Committee meetings and taking summary information back to the LWG and noted that Strategic Committee meetings are also open to anyone who wants to come. Cochran suggested scheduling two joint meetings between the two groups. He said joint meetings and emailing to Johnson will be a good start to bringing the two groups together in a positive role. Chairman Stahlnecker recommended giving Johnson a standing agenda item for reports and Cochran agreed.

Chairman Stahlnecker asked about utilizing the LWG for technical issues whenever possible and noted that in retrospect the Strategic Committee missed an opportunity to do that when forming the Habitat Assessment Sub-Committee. He said the Sub-committee brought some of the LWG members into that discussion and it was extremely beneficial. In regard to implementing a communications and education program (#7), Young recommended that the Strategic Committee assign a few members to the LWG's I&E Sub-committee. She said that is a perfect way to take advantage of LWG's expertise while providing current and accurate information. Chairman Stahlnecker agreed. McDaniel agreed that the Strategic Committee should not get bogged down with technical issues and noted that the LWG helped the Habitat Assessment Sub-committee a lot. He said those issues should be referred to the LWG. Chairman Stahlnecker

commented on the progress made and suggested picking the discussion up at another meeting in addition to evaluating what has already been agreed on.

SCHEDULING: The Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee re-scheduled the June 13th meeting to June 20th from 10:00 to 2:00 in order to have a joint meeting with the Local Working Group on June 20th from 12:00 to 2:00. Swenson suggesting having a regular meeting to deal with minutes, etc. from 10:00 to 12:00 and a joint meeting with the Local Working Group from 12:00 to 2:00 or later, if needed to finish this discussion. Young suggested using some of that time to work on joint- meeting agendas for the rest of the year. Cochran suggested that the joint meeting be a work session.

BREAK: The meeting was recessed from 1:20 to 1:23 for a break.

AUDUBON COLORADO SPECIAL SAGE-GROUSE MONITORING RENDEZVOUS: Kenny McDaniel said Martha Greywal from the Black Canyon Audubon Society had approached him about coordinating some monitoring with the Audubon group who will rendezvous here June 21st through June 25th. BLM agreed to train them the morning of the 21st and have them do some monitoring as long as it's done to BLM standards and produces a product which BLM can use. BLM will have them focus on the riparian areas. He assured Guerrieri that the permit holders would be informed of where this monitoring will be done so they can discuss their operations with the volunteers. Sandy Borthwick from BLM said there will be core teams of two with others possibly being added to those core teams. She expressed hope that if the training and monitoring goes well, this group could do monitoring year after year. Pfister complimented BLM on getting this coordinated and noted the challenge of getting these people good training. Borthwick said there will be quality control checks to be sure the monitoring is being done right. Swenson said the permit holders might appreciate having a limited number of people allowed on each team and having that maximum number defined ahead of time.

Borthwick said volunteers will be using set criteria for the monitoring, but will also be asked to use their observational skills and note such things as what other birds they are seeing, since they are birders. Santana asked if this would be when monitoring is normally done by BLM and Borthwick answered yes. Cochran said he received a call from someone who has been involved with sage-grouse habitat assessment for quite awhile and whose wife is an Audubon member. When this individual saw the press release he voiced concern to Cochran about these people being sufficiently trained in one morning. He worried that BLM would get back opinions rather than data and expressed concern about having a lay-person assess the condition of habitat. Cochran said the checks and balances will be very important. Cochran noted that his own wife was concerned about the monitors being out there when the chicks are most vulnerable and hopes BLM will be careful about the numbers of people allowed in one area. He said it is a positive that these people are birders and will identify the birds really well.

McDaniel said they share some of the same concerns, but do expect a useful product back for their investment. Curtis Allen, from the Stockgrowers Association, shared concern about having people who aren't sufficiently trained doing the actual monitoring, and bringing a product back to the office which will then be used to manage and issue permits. He asked if BLM will use this product as if Borthwick had done the monitoring. McDaniel answered that it will be important for BLM staff to train them, be out there with them on site and go behind them to do their own monitoring for comparison so they can be comfortable with the data. He said they will have the proper checks and balances in place and agreed to let the permit holders know as soon as the areas are chosen.

Pfister said one lesson taken from the Habitat Assessment Sub-committee is that you can't take the information you've collected and over-apply it. Certain methodologies are used for certain things and you can't use it for something other than the intended purpose. He said that sounds like what McDaniel intends to do. Chairman Stahlnecker added that this multiplies the amount of effort that any trained professional on staff can accomplish, and can raise red flags that can then be given a second look by professionally trained staff. Borthwick said they chose to have the birders help in the riparian area because the time frame matched the workload, and because measuring stubble height is something they felt could be readily taught. Navy asked if the teams would be on their own. Borthwick said they hope to have someone with each group at least the first day and added that a lot of these birders have science backgrounds and natural resource interest. Guerrieri requested that permittees be notified as early as possible and have a chance to be out there and share their message with the birders. Borthwick said the birders thought that would be a good idea as well.

HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM DISCUSSION: Cochran asked the group if they would like to see the presentation that DOW gave to the Board of County Commissioners. He said developing a relationship with this group could be very beneficial. The group said yes.

Chairman Stahlnecker said Steve West Bay also offered to do a presentation on the Gunnison Rising Annexation developments as well. The group thought that would be good. Johnson said this will be moving forward very quickly, but the planners are very agreeable to input about trails, recreation, sage-grouse, etc.

SCHEDULING: The Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee agreed to meet next on May 9th from 9:00 to 2:00 and Cochran agreed to ask Westbay to do the presentation at 9:00. The Habitat Assessment Sub-committee will meet May 9th from 1:00 to 4:30.

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH WORK GROUP NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT: Cochran noted the email list given to the student who is working on the project and asked if any other members were okay with him releasing their email addresses. Ferchau said he could be added to the list. The student had been in contact with Johnson as well.

UNSCHEDULED CITIZENS: There were no unscheduled citizens.

Guerrieri asked Wenum if this year's counts will take into consideration how much earlier the birds are breeding this year. She said their daily count began February 23, which is much earlier, has already peaked and is concerned that the April count won't truly reflect the actual numbers. Wenum said he shares those concerns, but they have protocols in place and prefer to use them. He invited Guerrieri to share any counts they have. Navy noted that there was always some play in the count since every lek is not counted every day like Guerrieri's is. Wenum said the active leks are counted at least 5 times during the lekking period. Young said the peak can shift as much as two weeks. She said one of the challenges with the daily counts is that counts should be random across ten days to be consistent with other counts. She agreed that this was an early year and attributed it to how warm it has been.

ADJOURN: Chairperson Ken Stahlnecker adjourned the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Certification of Approval:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Keri Hodgkin, Administrative Assistant III