

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 10, 2008**

The December 10, 2008 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:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
John Scott, Vice-Chairperson, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Sandy Guerrieri, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association
Al Pfister, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC)
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)
Jim Dawson, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Russell Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Staff Members Present:

Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Sage-grouse Conservation Coordinator
Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the December 10, 2008 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:01 am.

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Stahlnecker verified that proper legal public notice had occurred.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Stahlnecker confirmed that a quorum was present. Pfister participated via telephone from his office in Grand Junction.

AGENDA APPROVAL: No modifications to the agenda were requested. The agenda was approved as circulated.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCA); Certificate of Inclusion (CI) Update: Cochran requested an update on the CCA CI process. Pfister reported the document was progressing through the process and had been signed by the USFWS. It was sent to the DOW and participating landowner for review and signature. This will be the 1st CI completed under the DOW's CCA for the Gunnison Sage-grouse.

Working Group Presentation: Several committee members attended a meeting hosted by the Range Wide Plan Steering Committee in Montrose. The presentations included interesting data and successful results. It was commented that some of the observations showed differences in perception between groups and several reported that the local Working Group

survey results were surprising. Several Committee members asked if the Power Point presentation could be provided to the Committee. Stahlnecker will contact the author to see if they would be willing to share the presentation. Navy requested including an invitation to Gunnison Working Group members, as the presentation content was about working groups.

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2008 MEETING MINUTES: Amendments and corrections to the November 12, 2008 minutes were discussed and agreed upon. **Moved** by Scott to accept the November 12, 2008 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Swenson. Motion carried with a majority vote.

SHED ANTLER ISSUE UPDATE: Cochran reported that the Citizens' Petition requesting modifications to the shed antler season was presented to the Wildlife Commission at their meeting held November 13, 2008 in Colorado Springs. In response two Wildlife Commissioners questioned if the requested change in regulation would result in reduced protection for the Sage-grouse. The Petition was approved for consideration in a two part process and is scheduled for the January 12, 2009 Wildlife Commission meeting to be held in Denver. Cochran advised that a vehicle large enough to accommodate several passengers is scheduled to travel to the meeting from Gunnison, allowing additional Committee participation, and to contact him directly for details.

GRAZING RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE: A Grazing Management Research Sub-committee meeting was scheduled for December 18, 2008 from 8:30 to 3:00 pm. The tele-conference number is 970-641-7988 (if any problems arise call 970-641-7982) for those who would prefer to participate via telephone. Stockgrower participation was encouraged.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Changing the regular meeting date and time to address the overall desire to make meetings more accessible to participants was discussed. An email message from the Gunnison Country Times was included in the packets outlining their availability to attend on Wednesday or Thursday. It was further discussed how holding evening meetings could allow for greater attendance by interested parties. Navy reported that she would prefer not to have evening meetings, citing travel concerns. Several committee members proposed scheduling business meetings during the day and periodic evening meetings for topics that may be of interest to the public. It was noted that evening meetings for local members did not present major problems, but for those members who travel from out of town may require them to stay overnight and incur additional costs. Many expressed the desire for evening meetings to be held on intermittent occasions versus scheduling them on a regular basis.

Guerrieri commented that if the press was able to attend meetings, the newspaper coverage could be a great tool to help get information to the public about current topics and issues being considered by the Committee.

It was further noted that meeting on a quarterly basis was desired. Review of upcoming topics that may require action by the Committee was reviewed and it was decided that more frequent meetings at least through the 1st quarter of 2009 were needed. Swenson then proposed scheduling meetings every two months into the 2nd quarter of 2009 in hopes of getting closer to the quarterly meeting goal.

It was proposed, to help limit the need for full committee meetings, that sub-committees address topics in detail, then present the information to the Committee after the particulars had been worked through. It was decided that an initial presentation to the Committee within an allotted timeframe would allow the determination if a subcommittee would be needed.

Specific topics discussed that may to be addressed by the Committee in the coming months included:

1. BLM Travel Management Plan that may have a 90 day comment period
2. The 5 year Big Game season structure being considered by the Colorado Wildlife Commission.
3. DOW proposed Sage-grouse Mitigation Formula

Future meetings were scheduled for:

Thursday, January 15, 2009

10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 5, 2009

4:00 pm - 6:00 pm - Regular (Business) Meeting

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm - Shed Antler Season Issue Public Information Session

STRATEGIC PLAN – COMPLETION PROCESS: A completion process for the Gunnison County Sage-grouse Strategic Plan was discussed. Discussion as to presentation to the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), public review and implementation commenced. Navy asked about comment inclusion, wondering if all the proposed comments submitted had been considered. This topic was shelved to be further addressed during the Work Session scheduled for later in the day.

It was decided that a 30 minute presentation to the BoCC of the Plan would be requested to be scheduled during their January 20, 2009 meeting. The need to have the public review the document was discussed. It was noted that a public hearing would be held by the BoCC as part of the review process. It was decided that would be sufficient and additional public meetings held by the Committee were not necessary at this time. A 30 day public comment period was decided to be the recommendation to be proposed to the BoCC. How the comments would be addressed was further discussed. It was noted that the BoCC may decide to address the comments directly, or refer them back to the Committee before adoption of the Plan.

A process to introduce the Plan to stakeholders was discussed. A letter of introduction and a copy of the draft Strategic Plan could then be sent to these parties for review. Cochran will organize a list of interested stakeholders from Committee submissions. An email message will be used to request the information from Committee members.

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Scott. Motion carried unanimously. The December 10, 2008 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11:55 am.

Certification of Approval:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III