

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 11, 2009**

The May 11, 2009 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)
Erich Ferchau, At-Large, Development Community
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association (GCSA)
Al Pfister, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Gary Hausler, Public At-Large
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC) via teleconference

Alternate Members Present

Amy Seglund, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)
Mike Jackson, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Keith Berger, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Staff Members Present:

Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the May 11, 2009 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:06 am.

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

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Stahlnecker confirmed that a quorum was present.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

DOW: Wenum announced several upcoming meetings:

Big Game Season Structure - May 20, 2009 at 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm at the Fred Field Heritage Center. The meeting is open to the public and several presenters are scheduled, including members of the Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association and a sportsman's group presenting an over-the-counter license alternative.

Prairie Dog Management Meeting - May 21, 2009 at 8:30 am at the Aspinall-Wilson Center located on the Western State College (WSC) campus. As lunch will be provided, RSVP's are requested to a formal invitation being sent to Committee members. Seglund further commented that a review of comments on the first draft

of the Division's conservation plan was in progress and a second draft of the proposed Gunnison's and White Tail Prairie Dog Conservation Plan would be available to the public soon. The upcoming prairie dog planning meeting was scheduled to gather public input including concerns, issues and threats to the species. The DOW will prioritize the information collected for development into several strategies for areas with known viable populations. She also noted that a similar meeting is scheduled in Craig, Colorado for June, and subsequent meetings proposed for public information gathering in other known Prairie Dog population areas will be scheduled in the future.

Peterson requested a lek count update. Nathan Seward, DOW reported the count period was completed May 10 and that the processing of count numbers was underway, but no specific data was yet available. Wenum further commented that he visited with Dr. Jessica Young of Western State College and the Local Working Group, and it appeared that preliminary numbers indicated that the population numbers had increased from the 2008 lek counts.

USFWS: Pfister introduced Dan Reinkensmeyer, a USFWS biologist recently tasked with projects related to the Gunnison Sage-grouse and Gunnison Prairie Dog including taking the lead on the ESA listing processes for these species. Pfister advised that Mr. Reinkensmeyer may be nominated to serve as the USFWS alternate on the Committee.

USFS: Jackson reported that Jim Dawson officially retired as of May 1, 2009. As he too is planning to retire in the coming months, he introduced Matt Vasquez, and Roy Mask as they may be present at future meetings.

BLM: Keith Berger announced that Brian St. George, the new Gunnison Field Office Manager, is scheduled to report to the Gunnison Field Office on June 22, 2009.

Gunnison County: Cochran passed out a handout provided by the NRCS and the Gunnison Conservation District about an aggressive program for the control of the invasive weed Absinth Wormwood. This species is a look alike for big sagebrush. and workshop will be held on June 30, 2009 to help professionals identify and eradicate the unwanted plants. It was noted that Ohio Creek currently had several areas of infestation. The plant is a category B weed and is designated for eradication by the state of Colorado.

The signature page for a letter addressed to the Colorado Division of Wildlife referencing the 5-year Big Game Season Structure Process as it Relates to Gunnison Sage-grouse approved at the April 9, 2009 meeting was circulated for signatures from the Committee members. The Committee agreed that members did not need to have been present at the April 9 meeting to support the letter with a signature.

Cochran noted that a potential new lek site was reported by a private land owner in an area that no previous leks were known. Discussion with the landowner indicated that he recently purchased property and observed sage-grouse on a nearby parcel exhibiting lekking behavior.

APPROVAL OF APRIL 9, 2009 MEETING MINUTES: Modifications to the April, 9 2009 minutes were discussed and agreed upon. **Moved** by Hausler to accept the April 9, 2009 meeting minutes as corrected, seconded by Stahlnecker. Motion carried. Peterson, Navy, and Joseph abstained as they were not present at the April 9, 2009 meeting.

NOMINATION LETTER FOR GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE STEWARDSHIP AWARD:

At the last meeting the Committee discussed nominating Curtis Allen for the annual Local Working Group award. A draft letter was provided to the Committee for review. Navy reported that the nomination period would be open until June 1, 2009.

Moved by Scott, seconded by Peterson to approve the letter as drafted to Allen Moores, Chair of the Information and Education Committee of the Gunnison Local Working Group. Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT:

Ferchau reviewed a recent email message he sent to the Committee that included stakeholder recruitment assignments. He provided a brief update from a recent Local Working Group meeting he attended where members of the group expressed their willingness to participate in the action plan development process.

The conversation returned to stakeholder recruitment. Navy and Swenson voiced concern as to the level of time commitment required of participants and the potentially large size of the stakeholder group. Ferchau assured them that any participant would be able to provide insight into the issues and areas of concern. Those with limited time to participate may communicate via telephone or email messages to members of the subcommittee. The Committee discussed the importance of contributions from interested parties and how critical that would be to the development of a successful action plan. As the Committee represents many of the agencies, community participation was emphasized.

The timeline of the Action Plan development process was discussed and the members of the Committee agreed to work with sub-committee members to provide the needed nomination of stakeholders.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

- Wednesday, June 17, 2009 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Regular Meeting
- Thursday, July 9, 2009 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Action Plan Work Session
- Thursday, August 13, 2009 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: MOVED by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Scott. Motion carried unanimously. The May 11, 2009 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11:38 am.

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III