

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
February 17, 2010**

The February 17, 2010 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room in the Courthouse at 200 E. Virginia, Gunnison CO 81230.

**Voting Members Present:**

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)  
John Scott, Vice-Chairperson, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)  
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)  
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)  
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)  
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)  
Jon Muggelstone, Public At-Large (Alternate, Regular seat vacant)  
Erich Ferchau, At-Large, Development Community  
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) arrived at 10:47 am.

Via Telephone:

Al Pfister, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)

**Non-voting Members Present:**

John Murphy, United States Forest Service (USFS) (nomination to be ratified by the BoCC on March 2, 2010)

**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 February 17, 2010 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:04 am.

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

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

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** No modifications to the agenda were requested. Cochran advised that Gunnison County Attorney David Baumgarten would be joining the meeting for Agenda Item #10. The agenda was approved as circulated.

**INTRODUCTION OF BoCC APPOINTED MEMBERS:** Cochran reviewed the ratification and appointments made at the Board of County Commissioners meeting held February 16, 2010. It was noted that all of the nominations were ratified and applicants appointed except for the regular membership for District Ranger, John Murphy representing the U.S. Forest Service as

the nomination letter was received after the BoCC packets were distributed. Ratification of his appointment was scheduled for the March 2, 2010 meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** **Moved** by Navy, seconded by Swenson to nominate Ken Stahlnecker to continue serving as the Chairperson of the Gunnison Basin Strategic Committee. The motion was friendly amended, to include John Scott as Vice-chairperson of the Gunnison Basin Strategic Committee and Greg Peterson as the Secretary of the Gunnison Basin Strategic Committee. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion about sub-committees commenced. Cochran provided a list of active sub-committees and their current membership. It was decided that this topic could be included on a future agenda for additional discussion and consideration.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:**

**NRCS:** Scott reported that he attended an annual meeting of the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) and the Society for Range Management workshop with over 2300 attendees. He highlighted the Sage-grouse related topics that were shared. He also brought a poster titled "Working the Landscapes" by local artist Barb East for the Committee to view. The Committee discussed the poster, the location of the sage-grouse, the story behind the art work and the narrative.

David White was announced as the new NRCS Chief. Additional funding to support Sage-grouse conservation efforts was anticipated to be announced on March 1, 2010. There also may be funds available to support cost sharing efforts on public lands as allowed in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Training sessions about Sage-grouse planning and restoration efforts for NRCS Conservationists are being scheduled toward the end of May.

**USFWS:** Pfister announced that the Greater Sage-grouse findings were anticipated to be released in the coming week. A Sage-grouse Land Owner Workshop in coordination with the NRCS was scheduled for Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at the Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center.

**USFS:** Vasquez announced a new employee Sonya Esleit was hired into a Business Management Assistant (BMA) position. She has expressed interest in working with elementary students on Sage-grouse conservation education efforts. Scott recommended curriculum materials. Pfister also suggested Project Wild, a focused curriculum teaching conservation principles that could be easily incorporated into the classroom as another source of information. Navy supported the efforts and offered the assistance of the Local Working Group I&E subcommittee if needed.

**Gunnison County:** Cochran provided an update about the Species Conservation Trust Fund bill. He presented information about the funding request to support the proposed Grazing Research Project and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) projects. He noted that additional presentations, with Committee participation, may be needed to help support the efforts related to passing the bill.

**APPROVAL OF JANUARY 20, 2010 MEETING MINUTES:** Modifications to the January 20, 2010 minutes were discussed and agreed upon. **Moved** by Swenson, seconded by Wenum to accept the January 20, 2010 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried.

**GUNNISON (TOURIST) MAP UPDATE:** Ferchau advised that the Gunnison Chamber of Commerce had completed the contract for production of the maps. Payment details were discussed with a request for the Chamber to prepare invoices for payment for the agencies. Pictures for use on the map were discussed. It was decided that the Committee did not want to include specific location information about the grouse. A detailed narrative was desired. Ferchau thought that printing deadlines were quickly approaching. A final draft of the narrative will be circulated to the Committee. Vasquez said the USFS may be able to contribute \$50 toward the cost of the ad for the map.

**ACTION ITEM #2 SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE/DISCUSSION:** Scott explained efforts to coordinate the membership for subcommittees and the organization of the Local Working Group. The importance of maintaining membership to serve as technical expertise for projects was emphasized. It was explained that time, funding and overall resources could be used more efficiently by combining meetings and projects of the Local Working Group and the Committee together. Challenges identified with the formalization of membership for those who are not part of the Committee, making appointments to subcommittees, subcommittee recruitment and voting privileges were further discussed. Edits to the draft proposal were deliberated.

The importance of communication efforts to encourage public involvement, expanding email notification lists to include Local Working Group Members, the need for technical expertise and increased membership were identified as items needing attention.

Members of the Local Working Group are reviewing a proposed subcommittee policy. A future agenda item was requested to be scheduled for additional discussion about this topic.

**TNC GUNNISON BASIN PROJECT:** Cochran advised that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff members were recently in Gunnison to discuss action plans resulting from the Climate Change Workshop. He explained that their brochure about the Gunnison Sage-grouse would not be distributed until updated, as it appeared that some of the information included in the brochure was outdated. Discussions about the information of concern, specifically the statements concerning haying practices being noted as a significant threat to sage-grouse commenced. It was further explained that someone not familiar with the issues may find truth in the statements made in the brochure that may not be accurate. St. George presented information related to the overall issues of his agency's monitoring other organizations' publications and information. It was decided that TNC was willing to accept input related to current research and that information and opinions could be provided to the organization for consideration. The Committee thought that efforts would be better allocated toward the Climate Change Workshop follow up, versus revision of the sage-grouse brochure document.

**STATE T&E LISTING PROCESS:** County Attorney David Baumgarten was present for discussion. He explained how Gunnison County staff members, at the direction of the Board of County Commissioners, were preparing comments related to County conservation efforts for the Gunnison Sage-grouse. The species is scheduled for consideration for listing on the State

Endangered Species List by the Colorado Wildlife Commission. Cochran explained that the documentation would be submitted for inclusion in the meeting packets on February 25, 2010 and that he would also be presenting information at the March 11, 2010 Wildlife Commission meeting. It appears that if a normal three-step process takes place, the final decision will be made at the May 6, 2010 meeting. Committee members were invited to participate.

Baumgarten explained the County's strategy to highlight the efforts taken to protect the species allowing it to thrive. He further presented information related to the process and requested insight from the Committee related to statements explaining that Gunnison County is unique and that recovery and conservation efforts would continue with or without listing the species.

The different factors for listing at the state level and at the federal listing were further discussed. The objective of the letter, to provide the State with accurate, unbiased information was further deliberated. Baumgarten expressed his appreciation to the Committee for all of their efforts.

Peterson asked Wenum about specifics related to the state level listing. Wenum explained that there would be increased penalties for poaching. The consequences for the state listing versus the federal listing were further discussed with the federal listing including habitat considerations whereas the state does not have that level of jurisdiction. Other species listed only by the State were discussed.

**TNC GUNNISON BASIN PROJECT (continued):**

Cochran will continue to communicate with the organization and provide information about the concerns discussed. The efforts related to the Climate Change Workshop information would be independent from the Committee.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

February 23, 2010 - NRCS/USFWS Land Owner Workshop, Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center

March 18, 2010 - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, Regular Meeting

April 15, 2010 - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, Regular Meeting

May 26, 2010 - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, Regular Meeting

**ADJOURN: MOVED** by Stahlnecker, seconded by Scott to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The February 17, 2010 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:19 pm.

**Certification of Approval:**

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Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

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Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

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Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III