

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2010**

The August 19, 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)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Erich Ferchau, At-Large, Development Community
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large, arrived after the meeting began
Al Pfister, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Arrived at 9:49 am.

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 August 19, 2010 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 8:31 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. The agenda was approved as circulated.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 23, 2010 MEETING MINUTES: Moved by Scott, seconded by St. George to accept the June 23, 2010 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

BLM: St. George reported on several check dam projects being accomplished in cooperation with the DOW on drainages and draws that will be completed later in the summer. The habitat improvement, specifically in brood rearing habitat, was thought to be beneficial and worth the expense. A new Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) rig equipped with a weed control applicator was recently added to the BLM fleet. The Committee discussed noxious weed species and increased monitoring and control efforts.

SUMMIT #3 PLANNING:

I&E Subcommittee Report: Navy presented a draft schedule/agenda for the Third Gunnison Sage-grouse Summit and Festival ~ *Lifestyles and Livelihoods: Everyone Plays a Role*. Dr. Patrick Magee provided invaluable assistance by developing an initial draft for Subcommittee discussion. The dates for the event were changed to April 9 to 13, 2011. The Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site is not available during these dates. Ferchau expressed the desire for public outreach. Opportunities for public participation and community involvement were explained, with a family oriented festival event scheduled for Saturday, April 9, 2010. Committee members wondered if other community activities could be highlighted for those from out of town to participate in on Saturday and Sunday and then stay for the entire Summit.

Navy emphasized that this was a tentative schedule attempting to include many of the proposed ideas with very few details confirmed. The Committee expressed their desire to identify and confirm presenters/speakers for the event as soon as possible, allowing the dates for the event to be confirmed. Peterson recommended having additional communications related to clarification about the Saturday festival event being part of the activities offered, yet targeted to local families, as he thought that the audience for the Summit would be primarily agencies from out of town. Clearly identifying the Festival as a separate event may avoid confusion for participants. It was hoped that the Festival would be a way to communicate Summit activities to the public. Wenum recommended outdoor experiences for participants, such as observing field technicians during lek counts or small groups being organized for lek viewing. Other activities may include a live webcam for lek viewing, film footage being shown, and using posters instead of presentations for some topics. Specifics related to scheduling were discussed. Inclusion of a predation control discussion and local observations with the inclusion of private landowners on a panel discussion was proposed. Appreciation was expressed to Pat Magee for his efforts in developing a draft schedule.

Committee Member Assignments:

Having a recognizable keynote speaker was discussed. Swenson and Wenum were assigned to discuss the possibility with DOW Director, Tom Remington.

Event Planning: Cochran reviewed the draft letter proposed to be used for fundraising efforts related to the events. Swenson recommended a challenge grant from the City of Gunnison with a budget request to be included in the 2011 cycle. Finance options were reviewed. The previous Summit was funded primarily with grant funding. Additional discussion about logistics related to funding, determining an organization that would serve as a fiscal agent and soliciting for event sponsorship commenced.

GEOTHERMAL PRESENTATION – BLM: Marnie Medina, BLM NEPA Coordinator/Realty Specialist, Gunnison Country Times Staff Writer Will Shoemaker and others were present for this presentation and following discussion.

St. George presented a video highlighting and recapping a tour of a geothermal power plant with a production capacity of 9.5 – 12MW near Burley, Idaho held June 9, 2010. He explained that the U.S. Department of Energy developed the water-cooled plant in the 1970s near the Raft River as a trial operation. A commercial operator then purchased the facility in the early

2000s. The current plant is a 2 level binary plant and was noted to be state of the art. The facility is entirely on private land. There are six operational wells, with four providing hot water and two reinjection wells. Water temperatures of 270 – 300 degrees Fahrenheit were being produced by the wells. The exact process for power generation was reviewed. The differences between water-cooled and air-cooled facilities, with, among other differences, water-cooled facilities having more consistent generation capabilities was discussed. The noise levels of the facility were determined to be around 50 decibels at the pumps with louder levels, around 90 decibels, at the generation plant. Discussion about the dissolved solids and evaporation in the water-cooled system, balancing power generation and heat loss, pipeline configuration, noise mitigation potential, as well as other logistics related to the facility commenced. A website www.geothermal.com was provided for additional information.

GEOTHERMAL LEASE DISCUSSION: Details related to a possible geothermal project in the Gunnison Valley were discussed. There currently are few particulars about potential development available. Specifics related to roads, pipelines, power generation needs, noise levels and degree of habitat fragmentation, and other issues are unknown. Pfister asked about the industry as a whole and about the technologies currently available. St. George explained that there is over 100 years of geothermal production technological experience overseas, however, this is relatively new in the United States.

An Environmental Analysis (EA), which will determine whether the nominated area should be opened for leasing is being developed by BLM to help understand, among other issues, the value of the sage-grouse habitat within the proposed lease area. The information may help identify habitat fragmentation potential. Peterson expressed his frustration about not knowing the details related to the potential location for development. St. George explained the process, with the first step being to determine if the land is appropriate for leasing, then exploration, development and commercial production, with additional analysis and permitting at each stage. Currently, the area is only being considered for its suitability for geothermal leasing. Information about the impacts any geothermal development would have to existing transmission lines, roads, agricultural uses and an established commercial hot spring in the area will need further evaluation at subsequent stages.

Potential restrictions and the possibility of future modifications to lease stipulations were discussed. How geothermal production was included in the current BLM mission was presented. The draft EA is currently scheduled to be available in early September with a final EA and decision due after the GUSG listing announcement (status review) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in mid-September. A discussion of management of the area with stipulations that address impacts, consistent with the GUSG Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP), and the fact that new and emerging science was being considered, as well as a need to define core habitat and continued collaborative efforts was facilitated by St. George.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

September 22, 2010 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Regular Meeting

November 17, 2010 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Regular Meeting (includes Grazing Project Update)

ADJOURN: MOVED by Stahlnecker, seconded by Scott to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The August 19, 2010 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11:34 am.

Certification of Approval:

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III