

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2011**

The June 15, 2011 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)
Peter Caloger, Public at large
Erich Ferchau, At-Large, Development Community
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Al Pfister, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Services (USFS)

Non-voting Members Present:

Liz With, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)
Dan Reinkensmeyer, USFWS

Staff Members Present:

Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the June 15, 2011 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00am.

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 stands as presented.

APPROVAL OF May 18, 2011 MEETING MINUTES: The May 18, 2011 minutes were discussed and agreed upon. **Moved** by Swenson to accept the May 18, 2011 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Scott. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

Division of Wildlife (DOW)

Seward reported that the final lek count numbers are in. The final high male count was 763, an increase of 25 birds from 2010. Final high female count was 233 birds, an increase of 5 birds from 2010. Using the Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan formula provides a population estimation of 3,744 birds. In comparison, the 1997 Gunnison Basin Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation Plan formula provides a population estimate of 3,051 birds, up 71 birds from 2010. The population appears stable with estimates well within expected fluctuations.

Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

Scott reported that Christina Santana was hired as the Private Lands Wildlife Biologist. She starts Monday, June 20th. This is a 2 year position, funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant and NRCS, who is providing 1/3 of the funding for the position. The hope is that if the results are good enough the funding will continue into the future. This position is to emphasize Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat improvement through NRCS programs.

Land Preservation Board

Navy reported that the Committee sent a letter to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) supporting reauthorization of the Land Preservation Fund. The Land Preservation Board discussed getting a committee together to get various entities on board for voting in 2012. Swenson stated that this is set up through County sales tax money. This needs to be reauthorized by the voters, because it sunsets in 2013.

USFS

Vasquez reported that trail management closures and rehabilitation have been completed on Flat Top. The USFS reconditioned about 20 miles of roads. They also re-seeded with western and southern wheat grass. There is cheat grass up the "Smokey Bear Road" that they may treat or monitor this year. Vasquez provided a map for everyone to review.

Consideration of Amendments to the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee Organizational and Procedural Guidelines:

Cochran reported that the BOCC received the recommendation from the Committee to add an At Large and alternate recreation seat to the Committee. Cochran informed the Committee that the motion made to add the seats did not address changing the quorum to add the committee member. The Committee needs to amend the guidelines to change quorum to 7 members. Also, to provide clarity, Section 10, last section, the narrative reflects what changes have been made. Narrative was not added in 2009. The Committee needs to add the narrative with a "real time" narrative so that we can view all changes over time. Yesterday, the BOCC approved the changes made to the document, pending the Committee's approval today. Advertising for the seat is open for letters of interest, and are due June 27th. The BOCC will interview applicants on July 7th. **Moved** by John Scott to accept the changes to the Organizational and Procedural Guidelines and recommend them to the BOCC. The motion was seconded by Al Pfister. Laurie pointed out that the purpose mentions the Sage-grouse working group. The Committee discussed the working groups. Next meeting the Committee will amend Section 3, Purpose Item 2: sage-grouse working group needs to be changed to working groups. Motion passed unanimously.

CCAA:

Seward reported on the Certificates of Inclusion (CI). CIs need to be returned to the Fish and Wildlife no later than July, 2012. Seward would like to send a letter from the Committee to participating property owners encouraging them to respond in a timely fashion during the CI negotiation/development process. Seward commented he has resorted to sending some property owners certified letters to document his efforts to move the negotiation process forward. Seward provided a draft letter for the Committee to review. Seward has 1 year to get the remaining CI's reviewed and returned to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Committee discussed sending a letter to motivate the property owners to submit this in a timely fashion. Seward commented that if the property owners wait, the local USFWS office will submit their draft listing decision to DC without consideration for CI's in-process.

Greg Peterson (not present) asked Cochran to inform the Committee that he is in strong support of a timely deadline for landowner response during the CI process. Cochran conveyed to the Committee the process is important, which Peterson strongly supports, and would like in the letter a time certain response to each of the items. The Committee discussed landowners who are negotiating and owners who have not had baseline studies. The Committee discussed how to craft the letter and how to portray the high level of importance and urgency to the landowner. The Committee will send Seward the letter, and he can send it out to the landowners. The letter will be completed by next week. **Moved** by Pfister, and seconded by Laurie to approve providing a letter to Seward, contingent on electronic review. The letter will be constructed with Stahlnecker's signature and have an attachment listing all the Committee members. Motion carried.

Technical Action Item #8 Subcommittee Report on Draft Prioritization Tool Presentation:

Mike Pelletier was present to give a presentation and update on the draft habitat prioritization tool. Pelletier presented three different map layers. The maps will help determine how much land needs to be conserved. The Committee will have to discuss what the impact will be on conserving property that has sage-grouse. The Subcommittee mentioned to the Committee they discussed the possibility of adding predator corridors to the maps in the future. The Committee agreed this map is what they were wanting and shows the data they need. The Subcommittee mentioned they are still adding recreation, parking areas, trail heads, trails, etc. In the future the Subcommittee will give a presentation to the BOCC jointly with the Committee to keep them updated and informed.

Al Pfister Proclamation:

Swenson presented Al Pfister the proclamation created by the BOCC. The proclamation proclaims June 15th, 2011 as Al Pfister Day in Gunnison County.

Action Plan Review:

Ferchau handed out examples of how the Subcommittee plans to lay out the new Action Plan. Ferchau will email the Action Plan out as a Word document, along with his revisions, so that the Committee can make comments. Currently the document does not incorporate all the changes that were discussed. These revisions will result in a new Action Plan that needs to be approved by the BOCC. This new Action Plan may create more action items that need to be addressed. Once the Action Plan is revised, the Committee will schedule a work session with the BOCC to review. The Committee agreed to focus on having a final revision to approve in September

2011. The Action Plan Subcommittee was re-established by the Chair. It will be composed of Erich Ferchau, Russ Japuntich, with staff support by Jim Cochran. **Moved** by Swenson and seconded by Al Pfister that Brian St. George be put in charge of Action Item #9 on Fence Lines.

Weeds: Cochran will communicate with the Weed District Coordinator Jon Mugglestone and BLM about information they may have to contribute to a weed database.

Action Item #8 Subcommittee: Subcommittee consists of Pfister, Swenson, St. George and Scott. The Committee removed Pfister and appointed Reinkensmeyer as member of the Action Item #8 Subcommittee, and then appointed Reinkensmeyer as Chair of the Action Item #8 Subcommittee.

Article in the paper: Caloger asked if the Committee would like to send a letter in response to the anti-public lands grazing letter that was recently in the paper. Swenson commented it is not beneficial to play out political issues in the paper, and it is best just to ignore the comments.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

- July - No Meeting
- August 17th 10-2pm: Introduce and seat new recreational Committee members & work on Action Plan
 - Action Plan Subcommittee meet after meeting
- September 9th at 8:30am: Field Trip & Present Stewardship Award
- October 19th from 10-2pm

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting seconded by Pfister. Motion carried unanimously. The June 15, 2011 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 2:43 pm.

Certification of Approval:



Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson



Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:



Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III