

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 19, 2011**

The October 19, 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:

John Scott, Vice-Chairperson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Dan Reinkensmeyer, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
David Wiens, Gunnison Trails, Inc.
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
Kathy Griffin, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (DOPW)
Matt Vasquez, US Forest Services

Non-voting Members Present:

Connie Rudd, National Park Service

Staff Members Present:

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

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chairperson Scott called the October 19, 2011 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00 am.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Scott 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 AUGUST 17, 2010 MEETING MINUTES: Minutes mention that the group will discuss and review the action plan next meeting, yet the Action Plan will not be discussed at this meeting. The Action Plan will be discussed in the November meeting, along with the Fencing Proposal, because it is not completed and prepared for this meeting.

INSERT on Page 4: Include that the Committee will follow up on asking the USFWS if they have the ability to manage 1 endangered species in potentially benefiting another. **Moved** by

Swenson to accept the August 17, 2011 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Navy. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

BLM:

St. George commented that they burned 14.5 acres and will continue to move forward with the project. They performed aerial weed spraying last week in the Cochetopa, which was not advertised widely. St. George commented that the public and private land owners seem happy with the result. They will perform a follow-up to do an assessment on the results. They targeted private property and canyon for cheat grass. Weather window was the most challenging aspect of this project. Cheaper to do spraying by helicopter on large area projects than spraying by hand. Organizations that helped fund this project were NRCS and RMEF.

PREDATOR CONTROL

Audience -The following were in the audience and present for discussion:

- Jim Garner, Division of Parks and Wildlife.
- Allen Moores, Gunnison County Public Works Department
- David Moreno, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services
- Nathan Seward; Division of Parks and Wildlife
- Samantha Staley, BLM
- Mike Phillips, Division of Parks and Wildlife
- Barbara Hawke, The Wilderness Society
- Megan Mueller, Rocky Mountain Wild
- Matt Vasquez, Forest Service
- Jenny Nehring, Poncha Pass Working Group
- Ron Henny, APHIS

This is a continuation of the discussion from the past meeting on the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP). Peterson expressed that he had concerns with the triggers on the RCP. Garner commented that chicks are almost adults now, and that they have placed transmitters on them. If these birds survive they will not place transmitters on other birds. Moreno informed the Committee that the APHIS will be doing aerial hunting this winter, and with good snow cover in February 2012 to June 30, 2012 they will perform predator control on coyotes in Miramonte. Garner commented within the last few years they have seen a lot more rabbits, which is a good sign because they are a main source of food for coyotes.

There was a discussion on the triggers for taking action. Scott asked if the trigger is the population drops below 25 birds per lek or 25%. Phillips commented it would be more appropriate to look at certain leks to make that assumption, because the trigger is based off of an isolated population, not a population with more interaction from predators.

Moores commented he is confused why everyone is focused on coyotes. Moores has concerns about the ravens as well, and stated the Committee needs to be proactive, not reactive. Moores stated ravens, fox and raccoons cause problems as well, not just coyotes.

There was a discussion on the process of controlling the raven population. Studies have counted the lek populations, not the number of predators. Phillips commented there has been a "Cause for Morality Study" which concluded predators was a major factor in lek population.

Moreno commented that the permitting office works well with Gunnison on the sage-grouse issue, and if the Committee is going to do predator control, they will need specifics. Moreno mentioned the methods for control are poisoning, shooting and trapping. One poison for raven control, Avicide (DRC-1339), is registered through the EPA exclusively for the APHIS and works on pigeons, starlings, ravens and magpies. Moreno commented that if they use DRC13-39, only Moreno's agency can perform control and hold the permit, and narrowing it down to their agency makes it easier to get the permit. The Committee discussed the current permit held by the Gunnison County Landfill. The permit for the landfill was specific for the landfill and for helping sage-grouse.

Caloger commented that there was a paper published last year on a study that found a hot spot of chronic wasting disease in New Mexico. The article said they found that ravens carried the disease with them south and it spread. Caloger mentioned there may be other areas south that will be interested if we are using poisons. Reinkensmeyer informed the Committee he sent information to our Migratory Bird Treaty and has not heard back from them.

The Committee discussed that cost is a big driver for this project and they need to discuss:

- Who would hold the permit?
- Would it target leks or basin wide?
- Who pays for it?
- What method to target the predator species?
- Time frame / seasons?
- Cost was \$36,000 in 2010 for predator control on all species in Miramonte.

Barbara stated the Committee should pick methods that don't affect other species, and assess predator populations before and after. Also, assess what is causing predator populations to increase (trash/road kill). Phillips commented that the Miramonte project started quickly because they had the statistical information before they began. The Committee discussed how long it will take to gather this information. Phillips has statistical information for leks.

Scott commented that they have been working on protecting the sage-grouse for 17 years. If the bird is listed, what population number do they have to get over to get the bird de-listed? What number would satisfy everyone to feel comfortable that the bird will not be extinct? Reinkensmeyer responded that it is based on more than population numbers. Allen Moores commented that it would be nice to be proactive and say that we prevented the bird from being listed, instead of we got it unlisted. The Committee discussed expanding the crow season in Colorado. Moreno commented that the season can be expanded but they will have to meet with the DOPW to accomplish that.

The Committee discussed sending a formal written request for the process to proceed with Predator Control. The Committee discussed the possibility of expanding the County Landfill's permit.

Moved by Scott to write letter to the DOPW and USFWS stating the Committee's concerns and ask what the guidelines and protocol requirements are to proceed with predator control, seconded by Swenson. Staff will write letter and circulate electronically for committee review. Motion carried unanimously.

Candidate Conservation Agreement (AP AI#8)

St. George explained the purpose of this presentation is to get the Committee on the same page, direction, and goals. Staley is the lead for this project, and she gave the Power Point presentation. The goals for the CCA are to:

- Develop a GIS mapping tool to identify areas.
- Develop qualitative and quantitative habitat conservation goals.
- Define monitoring adaptive management.
- Develop/specify management-oriented conservation measures.
- Define implementation timelines, and funding requirements.

Technical Subcommittee for Habitat Prioritization is documenting how they arrived at the ranking in prioritization tool. The Subcommittee is meeting Nov. 2nd from 9am-3pm to finish documentation and map details. Gunnison County GIS Manager Mike Pelletier is striving to complete the map by the end of November.

Moved by Peterson to endorse the CCA model and process demonstrated in the Power Point presentation dated October 19, 2011, seconded by Joseph. Motion carried unanimously.

The next steps are to recruit additional stakeholder participation, maintain teamwork, and continue public outreach and communication. Staley directed the Committee to meet with her during October 31st - November 4th to discuss the CCA and accomplish goals. Peterson stated he is going to recruit stockgrowers to participate.

US Air Force LATN EA (RWCP Local Pop. Mgmt. Str. #2)

Cochran handed out a letter the Committee sent in 2010. The Committee read the letter and agreed that sage-grouse are not mentioned in the list.

Moved by Swenson to send a letter stating concern regarding effects on sage -grouse on the US Air Force training over the Gunnison Basin, seconded by Joseph. Motion carried unanimously. Cochran will draft the letter, and it will be similar to letter provided at meeting.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Notes</i>
November 2 nd	9am - 3pm	CCA Subcommittee meeting
November 16 th	10am - 2pm	Regular Meeting
December -----	-----	No Meeting
January 18 th	10am - 2pm	Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: MOVED by Scott to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The October 19, 2011 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 2:20pm.

Certification of Approval:

John Scott, Vice - Chairperson

Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III