

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
September 10, 2008**

The September 10, 2008 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  
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)  
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)  
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association (GCSA)  
Al Pfister, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
Gary Hausler, Public At-Large  
Kenny McDaniel, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)  
Jim Dawson, United States Forest Service (USFS)

**Alternate Members Present:**

Vicki Spencer, At large Member, Alternate  
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County, Alternate

**Staff Members Present:**

Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Sage-grouse Conservation Coordinator  
Ruth Dukeman, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Stahlnecker called the September 10, 2008 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 6:30 pm.

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

**PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED:** Proper legal public notice was verified. Cochran made note of an error in printing, where the entire agenda was omitted from publication in the Gunnison Country Times. He stated that the cause of the issue had apparently been identified and should be resolved in the future. He also noted that new digital recording equipment was being used to record the meeting.

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

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

Wenum requested a future meeting agenda item for the Committee to review and make comments on a draft Gunnison Sage-grouse mitigation formula. Jessica Young, Local Working Group Chairperson, volunteered the Local Working Group for review of the information as well.

Stahlnecker requested a future agenda topic to allow for discussion of sub-committee membership, voting privileges and process.

**APPROVAL OF JULY 16, 2008 MEETING MINUTES:** Modifications to the July 16, 2008 minutes were discussed. Spencer voiced concern as to the wording of a motion she made at the July 16, 2008 meeting. Navy requested additional detail be included in the minutes, specifically referencing individuals in future minutes text. Stahlnecker reminded the Committee of time constraints of the current meeting agenda, and it was decided that additional discussion was needed. Approval of the July 16, 2008 minutes was tabled until the next meeting.

### **GRAZING MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT:**

Peterson reported that the first meeting of the Grazing Management Research Sub-committee was scheduled for September 25, 2008 9:30 am until 2:00 pm at the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room.

The Local Working Group Research and Habitat Sub-committees met jointly on September 8, 2008 and discussed grazing research.

It was noted that there was no BLM representative included on the Sub-committee. McDaniel nominated Russell Japuntich and with consensus from the Committee, Stahlnecker appointed him to the Grazing Management Research Sub-committee.

Noting the critical timing for submission of a proposal to Representative Curry, the discussion moved to granting the Sub-committee authority to complete the task assigned. Peterson recommended that the proposal be presented to the entire Committee for approval before final drafting and submittal. Pfister noted that he felt there was sufficient time for Committee review, discussion and approval at the October meeting. Jessica Young requested further explanation as to the expected outcome from the Sub-committee meeting to be held September 25, 2008. Peterson responded that the goal was to expand on a grazing management research proposal drafted by Robbie LeValley. He acknowledged that the Sub-committee would need to be aggressive, and set a high bar to meet the necessary time frame.

### **SHED ANTLER ISSUE:**

Stahlnecker recognized and welcomed the public to the meeting.

Hausler provided an update from the August 11, 2008 meeting held by the Shed Antler Issue Sub-committee. He further explained that substantial discussion occurred at the meeting and included members of the Local Working Group and interested citizens. Jessica Young facilitated a discussion to help direct the group to a decision by creating a matrix including "livable", "livable, not ideal" and "unacceptable" categories. The Sub-committee, using the input of meeting attendees and the matrix, reached a decision on a recommendation to the Committee by majority vote.

Dr. Young's Matrix:

		Sage-grouse	Shed Antler Hunters	Mule Deer
Best Case	Dates	Closed Jan 1- June 15	Feb 25- Mar 15	Closed Jan 1- April 15
	Hours	Closed all day	Open all day	All Day
Livable, not ideal	Dates	????	???	?????
	Hours	????	???	????
Unacceptable, significant population level impact				
	Dates	April 1- May 15	Having no season at all	January - March 15
	Hours	Physical disturbance before 10:00 am		Physical disturbance at any time of day

\*Antler drop (~100% by April 1; 50-80% March 15; Start dropping in lat Jan/early Feb

Hausler provided additional historic references on the topic, explaining that when the issue was first presented over a year ago three alternatives were identified: 1. Full closure of shed antler collection from March 15 to May 15; 2. closure to shed antler collection from sundown until 9:00 am, March 15 to May 15; or 3. no action. He noted that Division of Wildlife senior staff agreed with the sundown till 9 am closure and the dates of March 15 to May 15, to help protect both sage-grouse and big game populations. A strategy discussed during preparations for the Wildlife Commission meeting included advocating the Committee supported recommendation for full closure. The expected outcome was the Wildlife Commission rejecting full closure, and accepting sundown to 9:00 am closure. The Wildlife Commission voted to adopt the full closure option.

The Shed Antler Issue Sub-committee's recommended modifying the current shed antler collection season regulation as follows:

1. March 15 to May 15 an open season from 10:00 am to sundown.
2. May 16 to December 31 open with no restriction.
3. Jan 1 to March 15 full closure.

Swenson reminded the Committee to look at the long term process and relationships and the results of actions taken to be sure that past efforts and the current regulations are not lost. She further summarized the process of developing the matrix explaining there were three different interests competing, sage-grouse, shed antler hunters and mule deer advocates.

Additional discussion as to the needs of the sage-grouse, preference of the shed antler collectors and enforcement concerns ensued.

Randy Clark and Navid Navidi, citizens, explained how the sportspeople felt that shed antler collectors were being singled out from other recreationists and would prefer no restrictions for shed antler collection. They further explained that benefits to the Sage-grouse and big game were the reasons why the group worked toward a compromise. Navy and Peterson described the impact that shed antler collectors can have on the landscape, including creating grid

systems away from established roads, trails and routes typically used for recreational purposes. Navy and McDaniel expressed concern that the regulation has only been in place for a single season and that the previous winter (2007-2008) was not typical. They recommended that the regulation not be modified to allow further evaluation for another season.

Kent Gorman, citizen, shared his concerns that the Committee may need to include more scientific research when making decisions of this nature. He advised that he too was present during the Wildlife Commission presentation earlier in the year, and presented information to the Wildlife Commission about the needs of the shed antler collectors. Gorman stated that many who use public lands are responsible people, and recommended signs communicating protection of sensitive lek areas be implemented versus additional regulation.

Swenson reminded the Committee of the four goals as outlined by the Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners when the Committee was formed:

1. To implement steps which will aid in the preservation of the Gunnison Sage-grouse
2. Minimize disruption to current activity.
3. Further collaboration and communication, in particular to develop mechanisms to effectively deal with rumors and misinformation
4. Implement effective strategies and programs which will preclude the need to list the Gunnison Sage-grouse or at minimum demonstrate the willingness of the Gunnison Community to preserve and protect habitat which will lessen the impact if listing were to occur.

After additional discussion it was **Moved** by Pfister, seconded by Peterson, to accept the recommendation of the Shed Antler Issue Sub-committee.

A friendly amendment was proposed by Hausler to add: "In Game Management Units (GMU) 54, 55, 551, 66 and 67" was accepted.

The chair re-stated the motion:

- 1) The current shed antler collection regulation be amended to prohibit all shed antler collection activities on public lands in Game Management Units (GMU) 54, 55, 551, 66 and 67 from 12:01 am January 1 to 10:00 am March 15, annually.
- 2) From March 15 to May 15 annually, shed antler collection activities on public lands in GMU's 54, 55, 551, 66 and 67 be allowed only from 10:00 am to legal sunset, daily.
- 3) From May 16 to December 31 annually, in GMU's 54, 55, 551, 66 and 67 shed antler season should be open without restriction.

A roll call vote was requested by Hausler.

Yea/yes: Hausler, Pfister, Peterson, Dawson, Stalhnecker, Ferchau, Swenson, Joseph, Scott

Nay/no: McDaniel, Navy

Abstained: Wenum (Reason: Because the Wildlife Commission sets the policy and Division of Wildlife upper staff would have the opportunity to provide a recommendation to the Wildlife Commission, he felt it inappropriate as a member of the committee to try to predetermine an outcome on that particular decision.)

Motion carried.

Appreciation was expressed to all who participated in the process. Navy commented that if there was additional time, there may have been more discussion and a potential for a better solution. Several others expressed their opinions that they are hopeful that the changes to the regulations will be positively viewed. Pfister remarked that most decisions of this type involve compromise.

All Committee members encouraged attendance by the press and public at future meetings, and further stressed the importance of public awareness about issues faced by the Committee.

It was discussed that the Committee recommendation be prepared in timely manner, in the form of Citizen Proposed Issue Paper. Cochran provided details as to the process.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

October 8<sup>th</sup> 10-2, Regular Meeting

November 12<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting, time to be determined.

Jessica Young requested evening meetings be scheduled, referencing an earlier comment from a citizen, to allow them to be in attendance at meetings without having to miss work. The long distance travel required of Committee members was also noted. Swenson proposed an evening meeting be scheduled quarterly. Stahlnecker noted that this topic may need to be a future agenda item for additional discussion.

**ADJOURN: MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Peterson. Motion carried unanimously. The September 10, 2008 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 8:49 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