GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 18, 2013

The December 18, 2013 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the in the Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center at 275 S. Spruce St. Gunnison CO 81230.

Committee Members Present:
Voting:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife (CPW)
Chris Bove, 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)
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Alternate
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – by phone
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community

Non-voting:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate
Russell Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alternate
Polly Oberosler, At-large Recreation Community Alternate

Staff Members Present:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Russ Forrest, Gunnison County Director of Community Development
Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County Director of GIS
Brenda Wiseman, Gunnison County Legal Assistant

Others present as listed in text.

Visitors:
Jenny Nehring, Biologist, Saguache County GuSG consultant/coordinator

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the December 18, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:01 am.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Chairperson 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 NOVEMBER 20, 2013 MEETING MINUTES:

Discussions regarding revisions to the meeting minutes of November 20, 2013 were as follows: Sue Navy requested that the meeting date at bottom of the last page of the minutes be amended to January, 2014. Navy also requested a grammatical error be changed at page 5, 2nd paragraph, second sentence from end, to read "lose" rather than "loose".

Linda Joseph questioned the information regarding the number of birds transplanted. She believed that 17 birds were transplanted, not 18. The discussion was tabled until Nate Seward arrived to confirm the data.

Upon Nate Seward's arrival, he confirmed that 17 birds were transplanted from the Gunnison Basin to the Poncha Pass population. Seward further corrected the numbers relative to the CCAA update. He stated that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) signed a Certificate of Inclusion (CI) that enrolls 1,820 acres of property. He reported that a second CI, approximately 1,600+ acres, is currently being reviewed by the USFWS. The number of CI's completed in the Gunnison Basin will be 21, which will enroll 29,385 acres in the CCAA program. Seward reported that if Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) can enroll the 6 others properties in progress, the CCAA goal for the Gunnison Basin will be achieved by 105%.

Chairperson Stahlnecker confirmed that the further modification to the November 20, 2013 minutes would be "105% to 102%" and the total completed at "21." The Committee then discussed that the other information provided by Seward was new, up-to-date information and Jim Cochran suggested that the Committee leave the information as it was recorded from last month's meeting and have this new information from Seward be contained in the current minutes.

Moved by Linda Joseph and seconded by Chris Bove to approve the minutes of November 20, 2013 as amended to change the grammatical errors noted by Sue Navy and amend the number to 17 birds translocated to the Poncha Pass population and 13 to the Miramonte sub-population of the San Miguel GuSG population. Motion carried.

NOTE: Due to the confusion associated with actual statements made at the November 20, 2013 meeting in the report by Seward and revised information provided at this meeting, the minutes of the November 20, 2013 meeting will reflect the actual statements made by Seward. This meeting's minutes will reflect corrections to the information provided on November 20, 2013 by Seward.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

CPW: J Wenum reported that CPW began conducting flights to collect big game population data yesterday. CPW will conduct elk capture flights at another date. Wenum said he attended a

meeting where other sage-grouse populations were discussed, however the Gunnison Basin population was not mentioned. Navy asked for details about a meeting with USFWS Regional Director Noreen Walsh. Cochran had attended the meeting and reported that the Governor's staff informed the USFWS of the potential impacts to allocation of State resources if a listing occurs. Cochran does not know if the Governor's office or Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will act further. Jonathan Houck added that the USFWS was also informed on the amount of resources and time spent to preclude a listing. Wenum said from a local perspective, CPW will continue their efforts and what they are currently doing. Patty Gelatt said that she supports CPW's role in conservation.

NRCS: Chris Bove reported on a meeting with USFWS on NRCS practices with respect to a conference opinion on those practices. USFWS added language in the draft opinion that has requirements regarding speed limits and restricted activity. Bove opined that no landowner will sign off on it due to these strict requirements. Patty Gelatt said this addition is based on concerns coming to the USFWS at a national level and NRCS. Bove explained that some of the restrictions include restricting private landowners to times of day they can go outside. Gelatt responded that there may be some misunderstanding. Greg Peterson asked if this document needed to be completed before there is a decision on the proposed rules. Bove commented that consultation will need to occur on every single NRCS project (if the GuSG is listed and critical habitat designated) if it is not completed. Gelatt added that NRCS can continue seamlessly without consultation. Peterson requested a copy of this draft to comment further. Bove will find out if he can make the draft available for comments. Gelatt and Bove will have further discussion about Bove's concerns.

BLM: Brian St George reported on the unfortunate fire that occurred at the BLM offices. In November, Thanksgiving weekend, the BLM office suffered significant losses from an act of vandalism and arson. The BLM temporary offices are now functioning next to the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District on Spencer Street and its staff currently is implementing its core mission work. The only documents currently available are those that can be accessed from a server recovered during the fire. St. George said he and certain staff are permitted to enter the BLM office to access what files were salvaged. There has been no contract yet implemented for the cleanup of the BLM office due to the recent snow storm and deep freeze. Peter Caloger asked if there appeared to any planning to the vandalism. St George said he is leaving the investigation to law enforcement but noted that it did not appear to be an anti-government act.

Saguache County: Linda Joseph reported that Saguache County approved changes to the wildlife chapters of their land use code and will provide a copy at a future date. Joseph has been contacted regarding the San Luis Valley Cutthroat Trout issue and was asked to take the lead to develop a similar coalition as with County Coalition regarding the Gunnison Sage-grouse. A valley commissioner meeting has been scheduled for January 27, 2014 and Joseph is unable to attend. Jenny Nehring reported in 2 months of tracking that one powerline collision confirmed one Gunnison Sage-grouse fatality.

USFS: Matt Vasquez reported on route closure compliance issues on Flat Top and Forest Service property. Vasquez shared a sign that explains lek closures, big game, road closures and other pertinent information to display during hunting the seasons. The sign was based on discussions with this Committee.

Gunnison County: Cochran reported that a number of County offices were moved in December due to the upcoming renovation of the Gunnison County Courthouse. Temporary office locations for Cochran and the Gunnison County Commissioners are located at the Blackstock's Government Center on the second floor. The administration offices of Gunnison County such as Administration, Finance, Human Resources and County Attorney are located at the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport on the second floor. Cochran reported that the phone numbers and addresses for these offices remain the same. Houck added that the new Courthouse facilities are projected to be completed by March of 2015.

COUNTY COALITION REPORT AND DISCUSSION:

Houck reported that the last County Coalition meeting was December 12, 2013 and 7 counties participated. The Public Hearing was well attended which demonstrated a lot of support from the State of Utah and a strong showing by the State of Colorado from the Governor's office and CPW. Gunnison County representatives will be attending an upcoming meeting with USFWS representatives in Washington DC in January. A document is being prepared by the County Coalition that explains the continuing efforts, results, strength of the Conservation Agreement and commitments of the 11 participating counties that will be sent to USFWS Director Ashe. Houck explained that there currently have been 116 conservation efforts implemented by the counties. A habitat prioritization update was shared by Linda Joseph at the County Coalition meeting. Also the County Coalition discussed the possibility of conducting a summit to educate and discuss Gunnison Sage-grouse issues. The Coalition concluded that it would be best to wait until after a listing decision. Houck reported that a phone conference will be scheduled once Gunnison County Chairperson Paula Swenson, Gunnison County attorney David Baumgarten and Gunnison County Wildlife Consultant Jim Cochran return from Washington DC. Cochran confirmed that the meeting in Washington DC has been scheduled for January 14, 2014.

Joseph added that she heard someone in the County Coalition comment that they do not have the kind of relationships with agencies that are similar to the relationships formed with this group (the Strategic Committee.) Joseph acknowledged that what has been achieved in this room is unusual. The relationships have grown over time said St. George.

Caloger asked if the County Coalition has received any information from the Western Governors' Association or states affected by the Greater Sage-grouse listing. Cochran commented that the Western Governors' Association is deeply involved in the Greater Sage-grouse issue. The only involvement Cochran is aware of was that a survey was performed to obtain local government initiatives for the last 3 years, which Gunnison County completed for them. The Western Governors' Association and other states are looking at the model developed by the County Coalition and Gunnison County. Houck concluded that we do not know the complete level of involvement/

GUNNISON BASIN VISITOR INFORMATION MAP:

At the last meeting of the Committee, Cochran was asked to draft a letter to the USFWS about the Gunnison Basin Visitor Information Map. Cochran was unable to do so because in the intervening time there has been some communication among the agencies. Cochran requested

discussion to see if Committee involvement should continue. Vasquez said that the Forest Service submitted comments and changes. It is his understanding that there is limited room and they are working on the text. There is no date as to when this map will be finalized and made available to the public but Vasquez is hopeful the map will be available before the start of the next hunting season. St. George asked why this is being addressed at a regional level and not locally. Vasquez said there may be national standards on how information is displayed. Vasquez said a draft letter may be useful to send to the USFWS after the holidays. Cochran acknowledged that he can draft a letter and make it available to Vasquez and St. George.

Wenum suggested that the letter should be more encouraging rather than a demand. St. George added that the letter should explain a clear connection between the map, nexus data and travel management information. Chairperson Stahlnecker asked if the Committee wants to review the south half of map rather than the border text. David Wiens asked if there was a preference for an electronic version. Seward said the version he reviewed had gates illustrated on it for seasonal road closures. Vasquez commented that many of the administrative roads will not be on the map. This is consistent with ?MBM? and carries the same message that roads decommissioned will not be on map.

Chairperson Stahlnecker concluded that a letter will be distributed in January regarding the details discussed.

HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL MAINTENANCE/UPDATE/PROCESS/POLICY:

Cochran informed the Committee that the packet materials for this meeting contained suggested changes to the Habitat Prioritization Tool (HPT) document. Gunnison County uses this tool as part of its Land Use Resolution GuSG land use application reviews and the BLM uses it as a basis for CCA. The County Coalition is also committed to exporting the HPT technology to the satellite populations, beginning with the Crawford population. When changes are made to the HPT, Cochran suggested that they be well documented and approved by the Committee. Cochran explained that Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County GIS Director prepared the proposed changes/amendments working with the subgroup designated by this Committee. Chairperson Stahlnecker asked about the timeline to submit recommendations. Cochran responded the document is currently open for review.

Pelletier added that Cochran suggested that he ask the Committee for suggestions. Pelletier summarized how he collects information from address points, new construction and existing building construction. Public land information is obtained through the CCA. St. George added his office is tracking the CCA reporting requirements. Cochran said he believes it would be beneficial to update the HPT annually. The current HPT uses the Rangewide Conservation Plan occupied habitat boundaries. Seward would like to see current information used including data collected in 2010. Pelletier informed that he is currently using the 2007 lek location information. Pelletier said certain areas have been taken out of the HPT such as the City of Gunnison and Blue Mesa Reservoir and elaborated on the low scores of Walmart and that Blue Mesa Reservoir does not score habitat. Chairperson Stahlnecker concluded that a subgroup was formed to conduct the review of the HPT and suggested that the subgroup conduct the initial review of the proposed changes to the HPT.

Chairperson Stahlnecker recessed the meeting for a lunch break at 11:47 am.

The meeting was called back into session at 12:16 pm.

SUMMIT:

Houck reported the subject of hosting a (Gunnison Sage-grouse) summit was taken to the County Coalition. The Coalition agreed that a decision on hosting the Summit should be postponed until after a listing decision is made. Partners in funding and planning will need to be considered. He is being careful not to commit Gunnison County to do it all. Cochran said if someone wanted to move forward with the concept it would be fine. Suggestions came from Committee members but funding options and committing staff to organizing and participating in the summit resulted in this topic being tabled until a later date.

BROOD REARING RESILIENCY PROJECT:

Cochran added this topic to the Committee's agenda because the first year monitoring report recently came out with photographs of the Wolf Creek project. This Brood Rearing Resiliency Project and supporting data worked extremely well, but was very labor intensive. Navy asked about any other future projects in the works. St. George replied there are projects planned in Sage Hen and Chance Gulch by BLM. St. George explained that they plan on obtaining labor resources from volunteers from Great Outdoors Colorado. St. George said this next project will not be as intensive as far as activity with heavy equipment. St. George added funding is competitive, so the future of the project depends on whether funding can be secured.

Jim Cochran said the Brood Rearing Resiliency Project was funded through grants and in-kind contributions from the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, USFS, BLM and CPW. Houck suggested speaking with Western State Colorado University if there are any work force issues. St. George said there are youth services available, however, labor does not seem to be limiting factor at this time. St. George reiterated that the biggest challenge is planning and funding. Vasquez commented that the Forest Service's budget looks bad this year. He had requested additional funds for this type of work but was denied additional funding. The Forest Service plans to continue restoration work on Flat Top and get drainage issues taken care of. Vasquez mentioned working with The Nature Conservancy about obtaining in-kind funds for these types of projects. St. George added that additional resources for funding may be obtained through the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Seward added that The Nature Conservancy has been supportive of these requests and mentioned other organizations such as the Wetlands Federation Program as funding options. Other funding options were discussed but ultimately it was decided that someone would need to take the lead and explore funding options for other projects.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Cochran noted that all future meetings be held at the Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center, in the Van Tuyl (concrete) room on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The posting location will be the same as the posting location designated by the Board of County Commissioners in January. Navy has a scheduling conflict in July and August of 2014. Cochran is not available January 15 as he will be in Washington, DC. Cochran said that a written statement from Gunnison County will follow after the Washington DC meeting. After discussion among the Committee it was decided that there would not be a January 2014 meeting. The Committee will address the remainder of the meetings not mentioned below at a later date.

Date	***Time***	***Notes***
2/19/14	10am	
3/19/14	10am	
4/16/14	10am	
5/21/14	10am	

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Chairperson Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The December 18, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:08 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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Brenda Wiseman
Gunnison County Legal Assistant