GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 19, 2014

The February 19, 2014 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the Gunnison County Multipurpose building located at 275 S. Spruce Street, Gunnison CO 81230.

Committee Members Present:
Voting:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Russ Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alternate
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC) (conference call)

Non-voting:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
John Murphy, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate (conference call)
Tom Spezze, Public At-Large Alternate

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 February 19, 2014 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:04 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 DECEMBER 18, 2013 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved** by Peterson and seconded by Wenum to accept the December 18, 2013 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried.

IN THE AUDIENCE:

- Steve Westbay, City of Gunnison
- Kristy Murphy, BLM
- Russ Forrest, Gunnison County
- Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County
- Jenny Nehring, Saguache County (conference call)
- Pat Magee

MEMBERS APPOINTED: Cochran introduced the new/changed Committee members:

- Tom Spezze; Public At-Large Alternate
- Doug Washburn; Stockgrowers Alternate
- Matt Vasquez; USFS Regular
- John Murphy; USFS Alternate
- Jonathan Houck; BOCC Regular
- Phil Chamberland; BOCC Alternate

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: The Committee nominated the following for Committee officers:

- Chair: Ken Stahlnecker
- Vice-Chair: J Wenum
- Secretary: Greg Peterson.

Moved by Wenum second Houck to approve the nominations for Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary for 2014. Motion carried.

DESIGNATE MEETING LOCATION: The Committee discussed that the BOCC has designated their posting locations to be in the Blackstock building. Cochran suggested that the committee adopt the same locations as the BOCC. **Moved** by Houck and seconded by Peterson to designate the posting locations in the Blackstock building. Motion carried.

ADMIN SUPPORT: Cochran informed the Committee that Bobbie Lucero will not be assisting the Committee after this meeting and that Beth Baker and Michelle Spain, from the Community Development department, will be providing support from here on out. He informed the Committee that the meeting location will be moved to the Planning Commission meeting room, which is located in the Blackstock building at 221 N. Wisconsin Street. He informed that the Committee will need to designate a specific date to meet due to the demand for the meeting room. He suggested the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Cochran informed the Committee that the meeting packets are electronic. If any Committee members want a hard packet mailed to them, they will need to let Cochran know so that they can be accommodated.

SUBCOMMITTEES: The Committee discussed the following subcommittees and appointed the following members:

Standing Subcommittees

Executive Subcommittee

- Ken Stahlnecker, NPS, Chair
- J Wenum, CPW
- Greg Peterson, GCSA

Technical Subcommittee

- Brian St. George, Chair
- Liz With, NRCS
- Russ Japuntich, BLM
- Matt Vasquez, USFS
- Pat Magee, Western State College/Sisk-a-dee
- Nathan Seward, CPW
- Theresa Childers, NPS
- Tara de Valois, BLM
- Gay Austin, BLM
- Brandon Diamond, CPW
- Charlie Sharp, USFWS
- Vicki Spencer, GCEA

** **Moved** by Bove and seconded by Wenum to reauthorized and appoint members to the Technical Subcommittee. Motion carried.

Information and Education (I&E) Subcommittee

- Sue Navy, HCCA, Chair
- Pat Magee, Western State College/Sisk-a-dee
- Sonia Eslit, USFS
- Kristi Murphy, BLM
- Chris Parmeter, CPW
- Dave Wiens, Recreation Community At-large
- Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large/City of Gunnison
- Nathan Seward, CPW
- Ellen Petrick, NPS

** **Moved** by Wenum to reauthorize the I & E Subcommittee, seconded by Houck. Motion carried.

Project Based (ad-hoc) **Subcommittees**

Predator Control Investigation Subcommittee *(Appointed 7/18/12)(Re-authorized 2/19/14)*

- Peter Caloger (Public At-large Regular), Chair
- Erich Ferchau (Development Community At-large Regular)
- Matt Vasquez (USFS Alternate)
- Chris Bove (NRCS Regular)
- Tom Spezze (Public At-large Alternate)
- Pat Magee (WSC)
- Allen Moores (Gunnison County, Public)

** **Moved** by Houck and seconded by Gelatt to reauthorize the Predator Subcommittee. Motion carried.

Grazing Subcommittee: There was discussion that this subcommittee has not been active in the last year. Wenum informed that there will be an upcoming project which may not be grazing, but will impact the Grazing subcommittee. **Moved** by Wenum and seconded by Bove to not reauthorize the Grazing Subcommittee. Motion carried.

Action Plan Item 8 Subcommittee: There was discussion that this subcommittee is to manage priority areas. This subcommittee has not been active due to the pending listing decision. Cochran explained the separation of these subcommittees is because Action item #8 is so large. **Moved** by Bove to make Stahlnecker the chair of this subcommittee. After discussion, motion withdrawn by Bove. **Moved** by Houck and seconded by Gelatt to decommission this subcommittee. Motion carried.

Action Plan Subcommittee (Resurrected 5-18-11) *(Reauthorized 2/15/12) (Reauthorized 2-19-14)*

- Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large (Chair)
- Russ Japuntich, BLM

- Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County BoCC
- Peter Caloger, Public At-large
- Dave Wiens, Recreation Community At-large
- Ken Stahlnecker, NPS
- Russ Forest, Gunnison County Community Development Department
- Brian St. George, BLM
- Chris Bove, NRCS

* **Moved** by Peterson to reauthorize the Action Plan Subcommittee, seconded by Navy. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

HCCA: Navy mentioned to the committee that this month marks 19 years for the original working group.

CPW: Wenum informed the committee that the USFWS has requested that CPW update the Rangewide Conservation plan. He reported that the discussion is ongoing right now, but the request has been made by the USFWS. The request is to finalize this by 3/31/14. The discussion will continue to find out what they desire to be updated. Gelatt explained that this came about after the meeting Cochran (and Swenson,Baumgarten) had in Washington, DC. Cochran informed that at the meeting in Washington, DC they discussed the need to update and amend the Rangewide Conservation Plan.

CPW: Wenum informed that tonight there is the local big game structure meeting to develop the policy timeframe and season structures for 2015-2019. He reported that there is a lot of information online. The meeting will be from 6:30-8:30 pm at the CPW office. The preference point topic will be discussed at a later date.

COUNTY COALITION: Houck reported that the Coalition has been working and the Governor has also been active on grouse issues. They shared with him the Conservation Agreement that was executed. He is happy with the work we have been doing to preclude listing. He reported that there is a dis-connect. How could it (ongoing conservation efforts) not be enough to preclude listing but be enough for a recovery plan? Local efforts have helped pave a way for what is going on with the greater sage-grouse.

SAGUACHE COUNTY SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE: Joseph reported to the committee that there a lot of things going on in the outlying populations. She reported that the Coalition will continue documenting the efforts going on in the outlying pops. There was discussion about having the Committee invite the Saguache Strategic Committee to the April meeting, to get everyone on the same page and discuss the RCP. Cochran informed that the April meeting will need to be in the fairgrounds to hold all of the members of this Committee and the Saguache Committee. The Committee informed Joseph to work with Cochran to get the details ironed out. This will be a topic to discuss at the March meeting.

CUTTHROAT TROUT; SAGUACHE COUNTY: Joseph reported to the Committee that in the San Luis Valley, the cutthroat trout is an issue. She reported that they are exporting the county coalition model, and customizing it to the cutthroat trout. She informed that there is a draft MOU to attempt to launch the effort of creating this group. She inquired on borrowing templates.

USFWS: Gelatt informed that the USFWS was granted a 6 week extension for the Final Listing decision on the Gunnison Sage-grouse. May 12th is the new final decision deadline. The extension was determined necessary due to the federal shutdown She reported that the USFWS received over 36,000 total comments and out of the 36,000, 400 comments were considered substantive. She informed that they will respond to these comments in the Federal Register Notice.

RAVEN ARTICLES: Caloger commented that he found a subscription search engine for birds of North America posted by Cornell. He reported he looked up articles regarding ravens and reported that there have been programs implemented in the past for controlling this species. He reported that there was a program to help save an endangered tortoise, when animal rights organizations heard about it, they shut it down and it took only a few months for ravens to rebound. He also reported that there was a project to control ravens at landfills. If the debris was covered by 6 inches of dirt, it reduced the amount of ravens at the landfill.

BLM: Japuntich reported that BLM relocated to a new office on North Spencer Street. He wanted to thank the community and organizations for being understanding that they could not answer emails or calls until they relocated He reported that document recovery may take up to 7 months, because they have to clean out the old building. Their new office is located next to the Water Conservation District.

ROAD CLOSURES: Cochran reported that BLM, County and USFS roads will be closed 3/15/14. There are no anticipated changes in the closures from 2013.

RAVEN STUDY: Magee reported that he will be presenting a complete report on his raven study in April. Magee reported that they began the study in August, and the purpose was to report the season and daily patterns in the ravens. He opined that there is an interesting shift in patterns since the report in November. He is seeing concentrated roosts near the landfill that disperse throughout the county during the day, and then head back during the evenings. He reported that this started to break out in October and November. He opined that it seemed that everywhere he was he saw a lot of ravens and the use of

the landfill reduced. He anticipates the ravens scattered during hunting season on carcasses/gut piles from hunters. He reported that in the winter, the majority of the ravens come from the southwest, east of Gold Basin Road. Depending on the day and activity at the landfill, he informed that the ravens will hang out at the landfill all day. He counted a conservative amount of 600 ravens at the landfill in 1 day. He counted 40 ravens on carcasses on Highway 50. He reported that he observed some ravens cashing food in the snow. He suggested that they dissect some of the pellets they cough up to diagnose their diets.

COUNTY COALITION REPORT: Houck informed the Committee that Cochran, Paula Swenson and David Baumgarten went to Washington, D.C, in January. He reported that after the discussion, the USFWS suggested a two team approach for the Rangewide Conservation Plan. There was a discussion that the road closures that have been occurring in Gunnison for the conservation of the grouse will be looked at being done with other areas in the County Coalition. The HPT is also being worked with by the County Coalition, so that the other populations adopt this and create the HPT specific to their area. Gelatt clarified the revision of the RCP is in partial and not an over haul revision. Gelatt commented that how the Counties implement the RCP is what counts. Cochran will send an email to the committee to keep them up to date.

GUNNISON BASIN VISITOR MAP: There was discussion that at one of the last meetings a letter was going to be sent. The Committee agreed that the letter is not required anymore and that this project is moving forward. Vasquez informed that all of the edits are being reviewed in their headquarters. He reported that they should get a final draft returned by mid-March. If things keep progressing as they are now, there may be a June publishing date.

CITY OF GUNNISON: City of Gunnison Director of Community Development Steve Westbay was present for the discussion and informed that the City is working on a GOCO grant application. He informed that in 2007 the voters of the City approved a 1% sales tax for the improvements of the recreational components in Gunnison. In 2013 the City of Gunnison adopted the Non-Motorized Trail Plan, which included the components of updating sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. He informed that the only way the City can implement these types of projects is that they need assistance from grants. Westbay presented a map, showing new proposed trails. Steve informed that the City conducted a study and used the RCP, and with the RCP connected it to observations on the ground. He reported that they know that there will be impacts when there are these types of activities on the ground. He reported that there were two cattle allotments that were given up in the agreement. He informed the Committee that part of the property is directly linked to the CCA, and he reported that the City is not a signer of the CCA, but they are willing to uphold the conversation. Westbay inquired from Gelatt, that if the listing decision will be made in May and the grant will be given in June, what does he do if the bird is listed? Gelatt commented that the federal agency would need to determine the effect on the species and determine and evaluate the project, and determine if it will affect the species. She informed that if it does impact the species, then they need to contact the USFWS for consultation. She informed that an informal consultation would take 30 days, and if the species was adversely affected a formal consultation would be 145 days. She informed that the cost to the City, to go into formal consultation, would be that the City would possibly need to hire a consultant. Japuntich commented that they have a conference opinion on the Signal Peak area; once the listing is determined, there is anticipation that it will become a biological opinion. In the organized corridors of the City it is considered non-occupied habitat. Westbay informed that Gunnison Rising is annexed and they are looking into

the potential of a commercial development on the 18 acres. Gunnison Rising has been zoned and titled for 1,500 units. There was a discussion on the status of Gunnison Rising.

LEK ACCESS APPLICATIONS: Cochran informed the Committee that there was only one lek access application this year, which was from Dave Showalter (application can be referenced in the packet materials). The Committee reviewed the application and discussed the applicant's project called "Sage Spirit". The Committee explained that this application process is to help regulate photographers accessing leks and ensuring that they are not being intrusive. **Moved** by Navy to approve this application for lek access, seconded by Caloger. Motion carried. There was discussion that there is nothing stopping the photographers going to a private landowner.

I&E Fund: The Committee discussed that the balance in the I&E Fund is roughly $7,000.

HPT Maintenance and Update: GIS Director Mike Pelletier was present for the discussion. Pelletier reported to the committee the changes to the HPT. Pelletier and the Committee discussed the following:

- Modified the documentation:
  - Did not remove areas: landfill and runway.
  - Did remove Blue Mesa.
- CCAA trying to figure out a better way for Federal Agencies to report to the USFWS. How to update the tool and when. There was discussion that it will be difficult to track changes that occur from year to year and how to change the tool to help reflect changes is the question. The change to the HPT needs to not affect the recording with the CCAA. Create a formal operational manual for when it needs to be updated and maintained.
- Currently using the 2005 occupied habitat data. The question is should they aren't using the most updated data and how to incorporate the critical habitat. There was discussion that biologically it makes sense to adopt the data when the CPW updates their data. Wenum informed that they are updating their data every four years and update it regionally, so it will not be annually.
- Only using occupied habitat right now, which is all the CCAA uses.
- There was discussion that including slopes makes the tool more accurate. Cochran suggested being careful with scoring, he said the slope will not make or break the tool. He suggested the Committee wait until the final rule before making changes to the HPT, then we will have justification for amendments. The Committee agreed that they should wait to make changes to the HPT until after the Final Decision from the USFWS.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, unless changed for a specific reason.

Date	***Time***	***Notes***	***Building and location***
3/19/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
4/16/14	10-2	Regular Meeting; Concrete Room	Fairgrounds; 275 S. Spruce Street
5/21/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
6/18/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
7/16/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
8/20/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
9/17/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
10/15/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin

11/19/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin
12/17/14	10-2	Regular meeting; Planning Commission Meeting Rm	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The February 19, 2014 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 2:04 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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Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III