GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 21, 2014

The May 21, 2014 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2nd floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin # D, Gunnison, Co. 81230.

Committee Members Present:
Voting:
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stock growers' Association (GCSA)
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Charlie Sharp, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Non-voting:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Polly Oberosler- At-large Recreation Alternate

Staff Members Present:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Beth Baker, Planning Services Manager Community Development Department

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Greg Peterson called the May 21, 2014 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00 A.M.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Peterson 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 April 16, 2014 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved by** Navy and seconded by Houck to accept the April 16, 2014 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Committee Member Comments/Reports;

- Chris Bove and Nathan Seward said Christina Santana is moving and will not be attending the meetings. She has expressed her appreciation for the committee.

- Houck said, that during the Gunnison Sage-grouse listing decision deadline extension, Gunnison County will be continuing on the same path; providing leadership to the coalition and using this time to identify gaps and missed possibilities. The County Coalition will meet in June; they will evaluate the effectiveness of the things in place.

- Cochran noted the County is considering changes to the reclamation permit process; particularly looking at invasive weeds in priority (Tier 1) Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat. The County is also

considering requiring pre-application conferences for all land use change applicants in Sage-grouse habitat.

- Peterson was in agreement as to how the County is approaching the listing extension; he suggested looking at the listing extension as an opportunity not a setback.

- Seward explained there are several Certificates of Inclusions (CI) in progress but there would likely not be more before the listing decision is final. Additional CIs would only occur if the right situation occurs; fulfilling current commitments is the priority. He added 27 CIs have been completed, totaling 41,561 acres. There are two CIs currently under review; 1,700 acres in Crawford and 104 acres in Gunnison. There are an additional four CIs in progress totaling 13,106-acres. The goal of 55,302- acres was not reached but there were 54,697 acres, just shy of the actual goal. He informed the committee the preliminary numbers from the lek counts this spring were completed. In 2013 there were 848 males, 236 females; in 2014 there were 811 males, and 239 females. The three year average from 2011 to 2013 is 811 males and 239 females. The numbers remained steady.

- Vazquez noted the structures (GuSG brood rearing/riparian resiliency) which had been placed last year on Flat Top had worked as intended. They will be building more structures above Redden's property.

- It was noted that the Trap and Transplant goal of 30 birds to outlying populations was achieved; five males and five females to Poncha Pass, Miramonte, and Dry Creek. There is hope the Gunnison Sage- grouse will move between populations.

Gunnison Sage-grouse ESA Listing Decision Extension:

There was a discussion concerning the extension of the final listing decision for the Gunnison Sage-grouse to November 12, 2014.

The BLM will be revising and amending all the Resource Management Plans (RMP) in Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat. The Gunnison County plan is outdated and needs to be amended.

There are current negotiations with Fish and Wildlife Service, including the four mile buffer and what mitigations need to be seen if the four mile buffer is being considered.

Vazquez said they are considering a Forest Mission which would incorporate Forest Management. Peterson noted it would be beneficial for the County Coalition to have some input. This could help get buy-in from local government on the revisions. It was noted this is going through the NEPA process; scoping will take time.

Sharp said extension and the 4D rule can strengthen or relax the prohibitions. The court ordered the final 4D on Nov. 12th, if the species is listed. A proposed 4D rule will come out in the next couple of months. There may be public hearings.

Houck reiterated his biggest hope with the listing extension is we would be able to closely examine what has already occurred. He was concerned with knowing who specifically is looking at our comments; imbedded in them there are over 120 measures taken, from road closures to land use, etc. We have not received any feedback, pro or con. It would be very beneficial to know what measures were perceived as the most effective.

Signal Peak Recreation Area Planning:

David Wiens, representative for Gunnison Trails, Eric Freels, acting wildlife biologist for the Gunnison Office of the BLM, and Kristi Murphy, recreational planner for the BLM, gave a PowerPoint presentation

DRAFT

concerning the development of a single-track trail system in the Signal Peak area. He noted the use of trails has changed significantly in the last 25 years. Trails are now used year-round for fitness and recreation; biking, walking and running on the trails.

Wiens said Gunnison Trails has established three trail areas as goals, including the Signal Peak area; they have not wavered in their mission.

Wiens explained Gunnison Trials and the BLM will act as partners in the Signal Peak trail system. He said conceptually the system would be defined by Signal Mesa, Cabin Creek, and Sheep's Gulch. Some of the trails are currently in place. Wiens urged the committee to consider involving the local youth in the trail building.

Kristi Murphy said Signal Peak will act as an urban interface. They have not moved forward yet considering the management plan for Signal Peak; this is the first meeting. They will be working together with Gunnison Trails on the trail locations.

Peterson recommended the Stockgrowers be considered as a partner as well. Recreation and ranching are the two largest uses of public land.

Murphy noted all projects have wildlife issues; any action taken will create a reaction somewhere else. It is difficult to deny access to public lands. It was noted absolute closure during the lekking season is being considered. Informal comments will be accepted this summer, and they will be considering alternatives based on comments received. There may be a total of approximately 25-miles of new trails constructed.

Oberosler suggested creating a comprehensive overlay map showing where the roads exist for the entire area.

Houck suggested a new subcommittee to interface with Gunnison Trails and the BLM. The subcommittee would be encouraged to look at lek areas, and the habitat year-round. It was noted there was potential for multiple season uses; mountain biking, skiing, etc.

Seward said he struggles with the actual need for this area; this landscape has great value. Wiens explained if we don't manage it, it will happen anyway (with no management of the use).

The committee agreed to appoint a subcommittee—the Signal Peak Recreation Area Planning Subcommittee;

- **Jonathan Houck**(BOCC)–Chairman
- **Dave Wiens**-Recreation Community at Large (regular)
- **Nathan Seward**-CPW (alternate)
- **Alli Melton**-HCCA (alternate)
- **Doug Washburn**-GSCA (alternate)
- **Russ Japuntich**-BLM (alternate)
- **Polly Oberosler**-Recreation Community at Large (alternate)

Predator Recommendations- Peter Caloger;

Caloger said Red Fox and Ravens were the Gunnison Sage-grouse primary predators.

He suggested;

- Take Red Fox during the nesting/ brood rearing period for a digestive assay.
- Ravens- establish a program to relocate road kill within 24-hours and pick up carcasses for secure disposal
- Talk to restaurant owners about separating the wasted food from the other garbage
- There is a concern with what to do with the food waste once separated
- Possibly cover the wasted food in the land fill to discourage the ravens

He said it would be beneficial to decrease the raven population to the 1950s level, when there were fewer ravens and many more Sage-grouse. He pointed out breaking the human subsidy cycle for a period of eight to 12 weeks could be beneficial to the Sage-grouse.

The subcommittee on predators was tasked with making recommendations to committee in June or July.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, Co. 81230, unless changed for a specific reason.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
6/18/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
7/16/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
8/20/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
9/17/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
10/15/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
11/19/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
12/17/14	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The May 21, 2014 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committed adjourned at 12:30P.M.

Absent

_____
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

_____
Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

_____
Beth Baker
Community Development Services Manager

DRAFT