GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 15, 2015

The July 15, 2015 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstocks Government Center, 2nd floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin # D, Gunnison, Co. 81230

Committee Members Present:
Voting Members:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community (arrived at 10:30 a.m.)
Elinor Laurie, (Saguache County-Alternate by phone)
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) - Alternate
Liz With, (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service- Alternate (arrived at 11:30 a.m.)
Russ Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Lori Armstrong (BLM) - (Arrived at 11:00 a.m.)
Gina Glenne, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Jim Mendonca- Public

Staff Members Present:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant
Others present as listed in text.

10:00:50 AM **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Stahlnecker called the July 15, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00 A.M.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Stahlnecker verified that proper legal public notice had occurred.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as circulated.

APPROVAL of MAY 20, 2015 MEETING MINUTES: Moved by Vasquez, second by Japuntich. Approved as distributed.

10:04:40 AM **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS:**

Japuntich reported that Elijah Waters is the new field manager. He will assume his position on August 3, 2015. Japuntich will be the acting associate manager until August 3, 2015 at which time he will start permanent duty as the Southwest BLM District fishery biologist.

Gina Glenne, Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist, will be nominated as alternate Committee member for the USFWS; Ann Timberman, Western Colorado Supervisor, will be nominated as the regular Committee member. Gina gave an update on USFWS staffing.

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Caloger reported that on the radio there was a segment regarding recovery of the green sea turtle in Florida and gave information.

10:13:12 AM **LITIGATION UPDATE**

Cochran presented this update. Cochran reported that the final Motion to Intervene has been filed in the last of three complaints challenging the listing of the Gunnison Sage Grouse. The Judge granted the motion to intervene in the State case filed by Gunnison County and the Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association. Gunnison has to coordinate with the State regarding arguments presented. Gunnison is making additional claims. The Judge is talking about establishing a date after which additional motions to intervene will not be granted. The judge delayed the first scheduling conference until August so no schedule for future actions is available right now. The Administrative Record for the Gunnison sage-grouse listing decision and designation of Critical Habitat is due from the USFWS by August 21, 2015.

10:19:04 AM **BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS**

Japuntich reported that Lee Espy has taken a new position with the Colorado BLM office. Replacing her will be Lori Armstrong for the next 120 days. She will be working on the Gunnison sage-grouse EIS. They are currently trying to get the EIS document tidied up for a first official draft due mid-August to mid-September. This draft will be provided to the Cooperating Agencies for a 30 day review. There has been some delay due to the switch in positions. Public draft review occurs very soon after the internal draft is due. The public draft release is scheduled for early 2016. BLM received 1,800 comments on Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Cochran reported the frustrations from other Counties regarding process.

Lori Armstrong showed up later in the meeting and reported that the team is working on recommendations. She is in the process of reviewing the document. She has provided a newly drafted schedule regarding time frames for reviews to the BLM State Office.

10:24:28 AM **WUANITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE UPDATE**

Wenum reported that the Waunita Watchable Wildlife Subcommittee met July 2, 2015. He provided background information to audience. The Committee discussed the 2015 report from Sisk-a-dee. Wenum presented and discussed the 6 recommendations the Subcommittee came up with that are at the back of the Subcommittee report. Cochran reported that recommendation 6 should be amended to read that the review of the final report will be annually. Wenum believes that the Waunita site is not the best site for sage-grouse viewing. He reported the potential for live-remote video feed of the site to be fed directly to the trailer on-site.

Audience member, homeowner Jim Mendonca, reported that he can see all of the activity from where he is at. He explained his methodology of counting the birds as soon as he wakes up. He believes the hens have abandoned the lek. He reported 89 days of no hens on the lek. He reported people trespassing with no enforcement. He believes there is no way to enforce activities at the site. He believes the lek is not being used any longer due to the daily commotion at the Watchable Wildlife site. If rules are not enforced then they will be meaningless.

Wenum reported that the biggest challenge is providing viewing locations for the public. He is concerned that if no opportunity is offered then people will start trying to view birds on their own. This will be more detrimental to the species. The Committee discussed issues with enforcement; man-power to do so and options for funding.

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Glenne reported on possible options for funding. Possibility of charging people to view to help fund enforcement. Cochran noted that the Subcommittee can make recommendations but not make decisions; that's ultimately up to the USFWS. Glenn will report back regarding more information on what they can do regarding the Section 6 agreement, after more review.

Stahlnecker requested action from the Committee. The Committee decided to wait to act on recommendations until Glenne has had time to review the Subcommittee recommendations. Wenum suggested waiting a couple of meetings before action is considered. Glenne thinks she can give a better response in one month. Wait to hear back before acting. Wenum will take Glenne out for a site visit today. Cochran reported that the educational aspect is done really well and if we lose that we lose the connection between people and the birds. Chamberland requested that Glenne send information to members for applications for grants for funding.

11:23:52 AM **GuSG RIPARIAN RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE PROJECT UPDATE**

Andrew Breibart, BLM Hydrologist and member of the Gunnison Basin Climate Change Working Group did a PowerPoint presentation regarding the project. The project is focused on reconnecting floodplain systems. Breibart reviewed the techniques used and benefits to the systems. Most structures are placed by hand, without removing any vegetation. They are built to make sure water gets back into the floodplain system. One technique uses a drift fence across valley bottom to reduce domestic livestock and wildlife trailing impacts to wet meadow systems. The project is working in different areas throughout the next few years, building and maintaining the structures.

Vasquez presented an update of what happened last year and what is going to be happening this year regarding new structures and existing structures that need maintenance done. The USFS has $40,000 in funding this year to be used for both public and private projects. He is in the process of applying for funding for next year. They are ordering enough rock in anticipation of what they might need in the future for restoration. The USFS, BLM and NPS are working on a programmatic biological assessment (BA) so they can start the work in August.

With reported that they still need time, money and effort on these projects. Looking for partners to donate UTVs for use to transport rock.

12:08:45 PM **TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL REVIEW**

Vasquez presented this update. They are acquiring and updating the Tool with more current information. Documentation is being improved. The lek data will be recommended for updating. Trying to keep most current information in the Tool. He talked about how leks are scored and keeping them the way they are now. The Subcommittee is working to Map irrigation ditches that go through sage-grouse habitats. New soils data and updated parcel data will be incorporated into the update. Cochran reported that GCEA has agreed to provide their transmission line data. The Subcommittee has to decide on scoring for this new data. The Subcommittee is working on updates and anticipates bringing them in front of the Committee to be approved in the near future. With stated that the biggest change will be that the next version will have less layers built into the tool. Cochran summarized that the Subcommittee is working on the layers and wants to figure out when updates will happen and how it will affect the Tool. All proposed changes and updates will be brought to the Committee for final approval.

12:23:08 PM **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.

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Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
08-19-15	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
09-16-15	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
10-21-15	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
11-18-15	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
12-16-15	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
01-20-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
02-16-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
03-16-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
04-20-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
05-18-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
06-15-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: MOVED by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting and head over to the Courthouse to view the new facility. Motion carried unanimously. The July 15, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:25 P.M.

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Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

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Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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