GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2015

The August 19, 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)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association
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 11:30 a.m.)
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Liz With, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Ann Timberman- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Alternate Members (non-voting):
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)

Others in the Audience:
Elijah Waters, US Fish and Wildlife Service (BLM)
Lori Armstrong (BLM) - (By phone, left early)
Jim Mendonca- Public

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

10:00:00 AM **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Stahlnecker called the August 19, 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 JULY 15, 2015 MEETING MINUTES: Moved by Matt Vasquez, seconded by Peter Caloger. Approved as distributed.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS: Stahlnecker introduced new members to Board:

Ann Timberman, Regular for USFWS, from Grand Junction field office
Gina Glenne, Alternate for USFWS, Grand Junction field office
Elijah Waters, Regular for BLM. Elijah Waters will be appointed at next BOCC meeting to be the BLM regular member if a nomination letter is received from BLM prior to that meeting.

10:08:14 AM **BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS**

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Armstrong gave the EIS status update. She stated that they distributed a draft Monday for Cooperating Agency review and that they are looking for comments back by September 16, 2015. She stated that the draft is about 700 pages, plus another 200 pages for appendices and that the draft has changed quite a bit from the preliminary draft. She stated that they made changes to the draft from comments they received. She stated that a lot of the information that was missing from the preliminary review is now in there. There are still some spots missing information until they can compile the information needed. She stated that they will give status after they get comments back and incorporate those comments. They will then send the draft to the Washington office for review in November. Once they get the draft back from Washington they will have 30 days to amend the draft and get it out for a 90 day public review in January.

10:14:19 AM **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS:**

Timberman distributed packets to everyone containing sources for potential funding for grants and how to apply for them. There were fact sheets included in the packets regarding the funding sources. Timberman requested feedback for any other funding sources that she could add to the packet. There was discussion among the Committee regarding funding opportunities and the need for funding.

With stated that they finally got the Partners position hired for Natural Resources Conservation Service. Marsel Fremgren will be starting in early September and will be working primarily with the satellite populations of the Gunnison sage grouse.

Houck stated that the County Coalition had a meeting last week to get everyone from the other counties up to speed regarding the Gunnison sage-grouse. He stated that most Counties are actually following through with actions for sage grouse protection. He stated that they received an update about where litigation is and discussed the BLM EIS and how they would be responding to it. Houck stated that they discussed conservation easements and how they are a big tool to help protect sage-grouse habitat. He stated that San Juan County, Utah intervened in all the court cases before the deadline to intervene was past. Cochran reported that it's concerning that conservation easements are being actively lobbied against in some of the counties. Houck stated that there is concern from different counties that they are forever and therefore it takes the private land out of being able to do anything with, other than agriculture. Houck stated that it's a private property right. Houck stated that Mesa, Montrose and Delta Counties are having the hardest time supporting conservation easements.

10:33:17 AM **LITIGATION UPDATE**

Cochran reported that the deadline for intervention has passed and that there will be no new interventions accepted by the Court. He stated that although the deadline has passed it doesn't prevent someone from filing a separate lawsuit. He reported that San Juan County, Utah moved to intervene in all cases. The deadline for filing of the record was August 21, 2015 but that has apparently been delayed. He stated that a new judge has been assigned to the cases for preliminary hearings and that no one would see the other judge until later in the process. Gunnison and San Juan Counties are the only local governments that have actually intervened. Discussions were held regarding which cases Gunnison County has intervened in.

10:43:33 AM **WUANITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE UPDATE**

Timberman stated that she sat down with Gina Glenne with USFWS, and reported that USFWS wants to put the no parking on side of roadway signs up March 1, 2015 instead of March 15, 2015 to make it more consistent. They would also like to start counts along that time frame as well. She wanted to know how far along the road the closure will occur. It was discussed that the road closure goes far enough where it won't move the issue further north along the highway. She reported that the closing for two days a week is a good idea to get some response. Timberman stated that a fee could be an option and those funds could be used to benefit conservation of species as well. Timberman wanted to know if there are any vehicle count trends, or any way to track it for future information as to when people are there, all day evening etc. Timberman reported that people will pay a lot of money to see the species. She stated that you could use it as a marketing tool to get money into the area while protecting the species. Timberman stated that April

is the peak season for viewing sage grouse. Houck proposed setting up some kind of real time video to lessen impact right on the field. Timberman thinks that's a great idea. Seward reported that they usually do their educational signs later in March and Ann agreed it was fine.

Jim Mendonca stated that there were 55 birds total the entire season on the traditional lek. He stated that there were 22 of them there on one day. No birds there the entire month of May and none until later in March. Mendonca wanted to know how much degradation is going to be allowed and that he believes the birds have left the site. He state that the hens are leaving and believes once they are gone then there will no more birds. He wanted to know what the goal is. He stated that no monitoring of the site has really been done. Peterson reported that he doesn't like that the site has gone down in the numbers, not sure why. Peterson doesn't believe moving the site is going to be beneficial to the birds. He stated that if people have no place to go they will start going to places that aren't protected. Timberman reported that they are taking steps to try and control the area. Cochran reported there is a commercial fee out there. Cochran talked about the road closures and stated that BOCC has the decision making authority regarding the roads. Peterson wants a policy in place and that it be consistent as a condition before passing and recommending to BOCC.

Motioned by With to approve the 6 recommendations lined out by the subcommittee with the following changes: a) WSCU to be taken off list of duties until further notice that they are ok with doing them, b) modification of parking closure on 887 to begin March 1, 2015, and c) installation of a voluntary fee collections box at the site for 2016 to receive voluntary fees, amount to be determined. The Committee will recommend these to the BOCC. Seconded by Greg. Discussion commenced. MOTION PASSED.

11:47:38 AM **GuSG RIPARIAN RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE PROJECT UPDATE**

Cochran reported that weed management allowed within Gunnison sage-grouse Critical Habitat on federal lands now. He stated that the Riparian and Restoration and Resilience project extends onto private lands with certain conditions and that the project is being worked on now. These were the result of a Biological Assessment (BA) prepared by the NPS, USFS and BLM with a Programmatic Concurrence from the USFWS dated July 31, 2015.

Vasquez gave update. He reported the weed management was included since weeds keep showing up in habitats. He reported that there was good communication with all departments and quick responses, which made it really easy.

11:54:38 AM **2015 GUNNISON BASIN LEK COUNT SUMMARY AND POPULATION ESTIMATE**

Seward reported an increase in birds this year in overall population numbers. He stated that there is an article in the paper about it and that it's the second highest count since 1996. He reported that there has been an increase in males, decrease in females. In the Gunnison Basin the population estimate was 3,897, which is an increase of 653 birds from last year. Seward believes that the population will increase next year.

11:58:21 AM **TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL REVIEW**

Cochran reported that they will be working on tool updates and revisions as things slow down. Cochran stated that he has talked to Timberman about assigning someone from the USFWS to help. Timberman reported that Gina Glenne will help Mark Brennan participate on the Technical Subcommittee and then Mark Brennan solely. With stated that they should just elect both Glenne and Brennan to the subcommittee. It will be September before the subcommittee gets back together. Stahlnecker appointed Glenne and Brennan to the Technical Subcommittee.

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12:01:53 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.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
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. Motion carried unanimously. The August 19, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:10 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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