GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 16, 2015

The September 16, 2015 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 Members:
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA) (acting Chair)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community (arrived at 11:30 a.m.)
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) - Alternate
Liz With, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Polly Oberosler (Recreation Community At-Large) - Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Lori Armstrong (BLM) - (By phone, left early)
Creed Clayton (FWS) - (By phone)
Jim Mendonca- Public
David Baumgarten (Gunnison County Attorney)
Pat Magee (WSCU)

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

CALL TO ORDER: Secretary Peterson called the September 16, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:04 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: Agenda approved as circulated.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 19, 2015 MEETING MINUTES: Moved by Houck, seconded by With. Approved as distributed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS

Jim Cochran reported that last Tuesday the Gunnison County BoCC appointed Elijah Waters as the regular BLM member of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee.

With discussed and handed out a packet regarding the Sage-grouse Initiative (SGI) investment strategy and where funding will be put and where funding will go between 2015 and 2018. She also discussed the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). That program provides a maximum of 50% of an easement's value. She suggested interested landowners contact Gunnison Ranchland Legacy to discuss options for the rest of the funding. The ACEP application deadline will most likely be some time in the winter.

Seward stated that he has had requests for information on how Gunnison sage-grouse are doing. He distributed a summary report from statewide Grouse Coordinator, Kathy Griffin that shows that the lek count

trend was up 17% this spring from last year. The Gunnison Basin and San Miguel Basin drove that increase. The current population estimate range wide is 5,515 grouse which is above the range wide population target of 4,500 specified in the Rangewide Conservation Plan.

Houck stated that the Gunnison County team continues to work with communications between State, County and stockgrowers about the litigation process. The positive out of this is making sure that because there are so many folks involved that Gunnison County is maintaining the liaison position between the other Counties and the State and feel that they are affectively keeping everyone in the loop so there are no misunderstandings about positions and opportunities.

Vasquez stated that with the riparian restoration program for Forest Service have completed over 100 structures. The most in a season so far.

Seward reported that another 75 to 80 structures have been built on public and private lands. Maintenance of existing structures on private lands has also occurred. Most of those are on conservation easements that CPW holds.

10:20:44 AM **LITIGATION UPDATE**

David Baumgarten, Gunnison County Attorney, gave this update. Baumgarten stated that Gunnison County, the Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association, State of Colorado, State of Utah and the County of San Juan, Utah have requested that the listing of the Sage-grouse as threatened be withdrawn. The parties would like it thrown out. There are folks on the other side asking that the rule of threatened be elevated to endangered. Baumgarten stated that they have challenged the Fish and Wildlife Service on a host of analytical and procedural grounds and explained each of the analytical and procedural grounds that they are challenging. Mr. Baumgarten discussed the information used, how they reviewed them and what they determined. He also discussed the Administrative Record and what they are currently doing now to make sure it is correct and that all information used in the rulemaking is included. They have until sometime in December to challenge the Record as complete and then they will start to write their brief. The Administrative Record has over 11,000 entries and 150,000 pages. It will be a herculean task to complete by December but that they have good, competent people and it is a staggering amount of work but that the work will be done carefully and that they will pick out what is important, accurate and complete for their brief.

10:58:39 AM **BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS STATUS REPORT**

Lori Armstrong stated that they have extended the deadline for Cooperating Agency comments to September 25, 2015. Since the last update BLM has made the decision to add an analysis on the distance from a lek that now is recommended at 4 miles and they are going to also do an analysis in relation to a distance from a lek and the activities that can effect birds and population in that buffer area which includes areas outside of any kind of Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. They have identified about 10-15 items that they will consider looking at. Once the analysis is written they will distribute it for review and comments. She reported that the new lek buffer language can be considered separately from the rest of the EIS document.

11:15:35 AM **WUANITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE**

Cochran stated that the Committee passed a motion with 7 actions associated with the Site and one of those actions was to close Gunnison County Road 887 to parking for a minimum period of March 1 to May 15 along an area of the County Road to be determined in consultation with CPW and Sisk-a-dee. Last week members of the Subcommittee talked to the Gunnison County BoCC about the signage and the BoCC agreed with the signage. Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works Department is working on getting the signage ready. The Public Works Department will request a meeting with CPW to see what they need

to do with the signs and what they need to say. The Subcommittee also discussed enforcement with the BoCC. Peterson suggested that Cochran talk with the Sheriff and see when they can schedule a meeting with the Sheriff and a few of the Subcommittee members to discuss enforcement issues.

Peterson stated that he is still considering coming up with the voluntary fee to view the birds and would like to discuss the amount today. Discussion followed on recommended amount and process on how to collect. Recommended by With that Sisk-a-dee could collect.

With motioned that the Strategic Committee have a box built and that a sign be erected with a suggested donation of $10. Waters seconded. Discussion followed. Motion passed.

11:33:41 AM **HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL REVIEW**

Cochran stated that Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County Geographic Information Services (GIS) has been working on the Habitat Prioritization Tool (HPT) and has determined there are some issues that will need to be addressed. Cochran stated that one issue identified is that for whatever reason some parcels don't have any scoring associated with them. Pelletier is looking at everything and how to fix the HPT. Cochran is recommending a formal adoption of changes so landowners and users can see them and understand why specific changes were made, and when.

11:38:28 AM **WEED MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION STRATEGY**

Cochran stated that sage-grouse and weed management is surely an issue but there are different entities throughout the Basin working on weed management. The Committee needs to determine how they can work with them so they do not alienate anyone and suggested that the Committee have a work session with them at some point. Vasquez stated that it would be great to have the other entities in for a work session and to see what they have in place for weed management. He stated that this year in particular has been a good year for weeds everywhere. This effects the ecosystem services that are important to the community. Vasquez suggested that they increase community awareness about sage-grouse and when it comes to weeds have them involved in weed management strategies. Vasquez stated that in the past there have been some grants available for private landowners for weed control and recommended that those become available for City landowners also. Vasquez suggested a possibility of aerial spraying on locations that they cannot reach by ATV or foot and that it be done sooner rather than later.

11:56:33 AM **CONSERVATION POSTER**

Seward asked that this discussion be tabled because he had to leave the meeting early.

11:57:04 AM **GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE SUMMIT 2016**

Pat Magee with WSCU gave this update and stated that the Summit is planned for March 9 to 11, 2016 at Western State Colorado University. Magee is looking for a way to move forward with on-the-ground efforts for sage-grouse conservation and would like comments on a new model to enhance the efforts that are already happening. Magee is thinking that last day of the Summit could be a work session and discussion regarding models and options that they have which would not open to the public so can be productive between the different entities. Magee requested feedback on the proposed agenda for the Summit and discussed funding for the event.

12:23:36 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
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 Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The September 16, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:24 P.M.

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Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

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Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

/s/ Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

DRAFT