Gunnison Sage-grouse Lek Access Process
Spring 2015

The following process is available for non-commercial and commercial users wishing to access Gunnison Sage-grouse leks in the Gunnison Basin for the purpose of photography, audio recording, or other activities. This process is intended to assist with education and research opportunities that contribute to Gunnsion Sage-grouse conservation efforts. No more than two applications will be selected in any one year, with the realization that any or all lek access has the potential to be curtailed based on Sage-grouse conservation needs or due to outside influences, such as weather, landowner permission, agency discretion, lack of bird attendance, etc.

The Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee – Technical Subcommittee will review applications and provide recommended applications to the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee (Committee) for final approval and coordination with appropriate agencies and landowners to facilitate these types of opportunities. The application must be submitted by February 15, 2015, for consideration in the 2015 lek season. Applicants must provide two professional references, identify the proposed project, and the relevance of the project to Gunnison Sage-grouse conservation. Successful applicants are required to submit a one page summary of their activities within 30 days of the project visit and must contribute products to the committee, including copies of all photographs, video, or audio recordings of the grouse. These will be made available to the local conservation community and to the general public for projects promoting grouse conservation.

An existing database of Gunnison Sage-grouse photographs and other media is available for public use (as long as the original artists are credited). Any proposed project that could be accomplished by using existing media will not be considered.

Lek access will be recommended by the Committee after reviewing submitted applications in late February. Human activity on leks during the mating season may potentially cause disturbance to the grouse and therefore only projects that will contribute significantly to the conservation of Gunnison Sage-grouse by users that are willing to follow lek viewing protocols will be recommended for access. Successful applicants will be accompanied in their blind by a viewing guide to help monitor the proposed activity and its possible impact to the grouse. It is illegal to harass wildlife and violators may be cited by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. The program involves the cooperation of willing landowners and specific requirements of the users may change depending on the agreement made with a landowner. Landowners cooperate with the committee to establish specific rules and to communicate with users. The viewing guides are the onsite decision maker and communicator with the landowner during the access opportunity. No dogs are allowed on the lek or in the user's vehicle.

User access will be limited to only one or two days, within a two to three day window at the discretion of the viewing guide, and specific agreements in place with landowners, to minimize disturbances to the birds. Further, users are required to follow specific rules developed by the committee and the landowners. Users must arrive the afternoon before the project initiation date and meet with the viewing guide to determine access routes and other specifications relevant to a site including distance the blind will be placed away from the lek center. Users are required to arrive at the lek at least 2 hours before sunrise and they must not leave the lek until all grouse have departed for the day. Users must supply their own blinds. There will only be one person in the blind with the viewing guide. Successful applicants will be expected to walk at least one-half mile to the blind location from their vehicle. They

must minimize all noises and disturbances that may flush or alter normal grouse breeding behaviors. No flash photography is permitted.

All leks selected for this program are located on private lands. More specific protocols/restrictions may be established based on consultation with landowners.
The complete application packet includes: 2015 Lek Access Application (feel free to elaborate beyond the space provided on the application), list of two references, and an example of previous work. Submit to:

Jim Cochran, Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Gunnison County
200 East Virginia
Gunnison, Colorado 81230
970-641-7604

Electronic submissions can be submitted to Jim Cochran at jcochran@gunnisoncounty.org

Applications must be submitted by February 15, 2015.