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

The December 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:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community (arrived at 11:30 a.m.)
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA)
David Wiens, Recreation At-Large
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate (by phone)
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Liz With, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Others in the Audience:
Theresa Childress, NPS
Nathan Seward, CPW
John Scott, Public
Lori Armstrong (BLM) - (by phone)
Pat Magee (WSCU)

Staff Members Present:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

Others present as listed in text.

10:01:32 AM **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Stahlnecker called the December 16, 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 NOVEMBER 18, 2015 MEETING MINUTES: Moved by Wenum, seconded by Houck. Approved as amended.

10:03:23 AM **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS**

Wenum reported that the helicopters flying around in the next month are because they (CPW) are starting to round up the elk to capture and tag them. Early January they will be doing annual census flights for big game population estimates.

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Houck reported that there will be a meeting with all neighboring counties in January. The County Coalition wants to work on reestablishing relationships and that if there is anything happening in Saguache they will work on it together. The County Coalition will start working on conservation easements and taking advantage of funding available early in the New Year. Houck invited everyone from the Strategic Committee to attend the Coalition meeting in Montrose and get to know more about the group. He is not sure when the meeting will be, but will let everyone know.

Waters reported that BLM hired a new biologist, Marc Thonoff, who has extensive training and will be reporting to duty on January 11, 2016.

Seward wanted to know if everyone needs to send a letter to the Board of County Commissioners explaining that they will be continuing on the Board in 2016. Cochran stated that an email would be sufficient. The appointment of members occurs every two years and as of now the public seats that will need to be filled in February are Public At-Large, Recreation At-Large and Development.

Cochran reported that Russ Forrest is here to help with the transition and that the staff will continue to provide administrative support to the Committee. Cochran reported that he and Forrest have been having discussions about the possibility of quarterly meetings. Cochran reported that it is premature for quarterly meetings right now with all the conservation easement meetings and other conservation activities going on. Discussion regarding quarterly meetings followed. The Committee decided that as of now they will determine when the next meeting would be at the end of each meeting, instead of making a decision on quarterly meetings at this time. Forrest reported that they are still working out logistics and that they will have Cochran until the end of January to help with the transition.

With reported that Cochran and Houck invited the NRCS State Conservationist to meet regarding conservation easements. That meeting occurred in early December, 2015. During their meeting they discussed that as of now, they are required to have a 25% cash match. During their meeting NRCS identified waivers that would bring the required match down to 3.3%. The application deadline is January 15, 2016. With reported that David Colburn is concerned with the farm bill allocation in easements. They need to find people interested. With reported that if you are within sage-grouse habitat you are of high priority. With reported the general easement pot is about $6 million. Cochran reported that next year they will get SGI funding because they will have a prioritized investment plan. Cochran reported that their goal is to find and develop an inventory of easement applications and take advantage of end of year and other available funds. Further discussion followed.

10:32:19 AM **LITIGATION UPDATE**

Cochran reported that the attorneys still have until the end of January to figure out certifying the administrative record as complete. A motion will need to be filed with the court to resolve the issue if they cannot resolve the differences informally. Cochran believes the attorneys will be able to come to an agreement. Gunnison County is involved in the review. The Gunnison County BoCC approved a common interest agreement with the State of Utah and San Juan County, UT.

10:35:55 AM **BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS STATUS REPORT**

Armstrong gave an update about meeting with Cooperating Agencies to discuss the EIS document. Changes to the draft EIS were discussed and it was a good meeting overall. Status on the draft EIS is that they are finalizing some details, grammatical, etc., and getting it to their Washington office by the end of the holidays, at the latest. The Washington office will have it for 30 days. They will get the actual draft of the EIS out for public review and comments for ninety days by mid-March. The document itself is about 600 pages with an additional appendices of 300 pages. Cochran reported there are eleven management plans that may be amended as a result of this EIS as far as he understands. Armstrong reported that each resource management plan could look exactly like the new EIS plan or they could

determine that the plan is already sufficient and can be selected for a). No-action needed, b) they only need partial changes, and/or c) they fully need their plan changed and will be doing a new one. Armstrong reported the proposed final EIS should be done by March of 2017 and would be available for protest for 30 days. In July of 2017 the EIS and any amended resource management plans shall be signed. Discussion followed regarding the concerns that were brought up at the meeting they had with the Cooperating Agencies.

10:59:37 AM **WUANITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE**

Cochran reported that there was a question regarding the signs being placed on the County road from the newspaper and that the County is putting up signs restricting ATVs but they are not putting them there because of the sage-grouse. Pat Magee gave a Sisk-a-Dee update regarding the closure schedule for the site. 2016 will be another busy year. Wenum reported that he has not heard anything back about a fee collection box and that it may not happen this spring. Further discussion followed about possible issues with having a collection box, what it would do to the area and possibly having people pay/donate online instead.

11:06:02 AM **CONSERVATION POSTER REVIEW**

Seward reported that they are making progress and handed out a draft of the proposal. He has been having conversations with different folks. They have raised some funding so far from the National Park Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the U.S. Forest Service. He will be meeting with US Fish and Wildlife Services this Friday, December, 19, 2015 to request funding. Seward reported that the cost for 2,500 posters ($2,665.51) with the additional costs for recycled paper ($297) and FedEx Shipping ($446.90) will total $3,409.41. Once they have the final draft of the poster it will take about 30 days to get them completed but that it will take time to get to that point because of the need to get the best photos. Seward wanted to verify whether the posters should actually be sold or just given away. Discussion followed about the layout of the poster, distribution etc. Peterson made motion to expend through the Information and Education (I&E) Sub-committee up to $2,000 based on the draft proposal with the actual expenditure of funds after the match money is committed and after approval by the Strategic-Committee of the final poster and the distribution process to be determined later, Navy seconded. Discussion followed. Passed unanimously.

Discussion followed regarding the sage-grouse website about who manages it, what it will possibly say, who will be responsible for maintaining it etc. The Committee decided to discuss it more in the future.

11:39:43 AM **CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

Cochran reported that the Colorado Mountain Ranches easement project is being worked on. Gunnison Ranchland Legacy has put together draft letters, but the issue is that there are multiple land owners out there and it will take time to get it done. Houck reported that the State is willing to extend their purchase order which is providing the diligence funding for this project.

11:42:58 AM **LEK ACCESS PROGRAM FOR 2016 SEASON**

Cochran reported that he got a response from Gina Glenne at Fish and Wildlife Service this morning regarding the Lek Access and Viewing program. Stahlnecker reported that it looks like the Fish and Wildlife Service are approving the private plan for the two situations and would like to suggest that an adaptive management treatment be built in. Discussion followed regarding the recommendations. With recommended that they see how the current program works in 2016 and they are invited to provide any kind of recommendations in 2017. The Board agreed. Cochran will send an email back to let them know. Cochran recommends that they move ahead with the 2016 Lek Access Program. Moved by Wenum and seconded by Navy to proceed with the Lek Access Program in 2016. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion followed about redacting landowner's names from reports and Committee minutes to honor the privacy of the landowners. The Committee agreed that the meeting minutes will not include the landowner's names.

12:05:06 PM **2016 GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE SUMMIT**

Magee reported that they have been organizing the Summit since August of 2015. He passed out a Brain-Storming Draft and noted that they are still open to suggestions. Magee updated the Committee on the status of plans. Discussion followed regarding the plans and different recommendations.

12:21:13 PM **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COORDINATOR TRANSITION PLAN**

Cochran reported that he put together a draft of the major components involved in being the Wildlife Conservation Coordinator. He is not sure how/when they are going to approach BOCC yet. Cochran will no longer be in an office at the end of the year, but will doing what he has been doing in the past until someone new is selected. For the near future he will be doing most, if not all, of everything until further notice.

12:25:55 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.

The Board determined that they will not have a January meeting but that they will meet in February. They will discuss the website in February.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
02-17-16	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

Cochran reported that the Fish and Wildlife Service requested that the Board appoint one of their staff, Elise (Apple) Snider to the technical sub-committee. Snider was appointed to the sub-committee

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The December 16, 2015 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:30 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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