

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
May 18, 2016**

The May 18, 2016 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO, 81230

**Committee Members Present:**

Voting Members:

Jonathan Houck, Chairperson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
Erich Ferchau, At-large, Development Community (arrived at 10:15 a.m.)  
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates  
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate  
Don Sabrowski, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA), Alternate  
Ken Stahlnecker, National Park Service (NPS)  
David Weins, Recreation-At-Large  
Liz With, USDA-NRCS  
Gina Glenne (came in at 10:15 a.m.), USFWS, Alternate  
Mike Babler, Public-At-Large, Alternate

Non-voting Members:

**Others in the Audience:**

Jim Mendonca  
John Scott  
Jim Cochran, Wildlife Biologist  
John Messner  
Theresa Childers, NPS

**Staff Members Present:**

Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant  
Brooke Vasquez, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist

Others present as listed in text.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Houck called the May 18, 2016 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:01 A.M.

**DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:** Houck confirmed that a quorum was present.

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

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** Agenda approved as presented.

**APPROVAL of March 16, 2016 MEETING MINUTES:** Moved: by Stahlnecker and seconded by Navy to accept the March 16, 2016 meeting minutes as proposed. Motion carried unanimously.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS**

Seward reported on the lek count numbers. He reported that the high male count went down this year. He doesn't believe these numbers reflect what's going on with the population because it was right in the middle of the peak breeding season, April 10<sup>th</sup> to April 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a snow storm for about two weeks and

were rain and snow flurries. The high male count this year was 928, down from 974 in 2015. The high female count went up to 235, up from 175 in 2015.

Stahlnecker reported that Laura Tomcek will be the new NPS representative on the I & E subcommittee board. Her email is [laura\\_tomcek@nps.gov](mailto:laura_tomcek@nps.gov).

Cochran reported that Theresa Childers will start June 15, 2016 as the new NPS regular member on the board.

With reported that NRCS is currently working on pushing through \$12 million worth of conservation easements in Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat. They have a little bit of SGI funds left, if there is anyone interested in applying they will need an application turned in by June 17, 2016.

Houck reported that the County Coalition is working towards an Investment Action Plan and there needs to be target goals. Wanted to match up some funding, resources and opportunity. There is a big focus on conservation easements and habitat treatments. This is the type of work that doesn't impact the legal approach but is more for the benefit of the bird. Working on a strategy with the State to bring someone in to work with everyone on this to find a way to move forward and put down some actions. They are hoping to have an action plan working with everyone by mid-June.

Matt Vasquez reported that the Forrest Service is working on the GMUG Forrest Plan. This is their first year and they are looking at a four year process. Letters will be sent out to start getting public comment. This year is the assessment phase. In 2017 they will begin a deeper process. Samantha Stahley is now a planner in their office and will be leading the process.

Cochran introduced Brooke Vasquez, the wildlife biologist from the Gunnison Conservation District, who will be working with Jonathan with the development of agendas etc.

Seward stated that the CWHPP is open right now and they are taking applications from interested land owners who would like to get a conservation easement or possibly have their property acquired by the State. Deadline for the applications is May 31, 2016.

Glenne reported that they are continuing to work on their CC status assessment. The 4D Rule is being tabled for the long term so they can focus on recovery for now. Apple Snider is leaving them and her last day will be June 10, 2016, they will need to change the Subcommittee information. Discussion followed with what it means to have the 4D Rule tabled.

Houck reported that the BLM roads were re-opened up on May 15, 2016. Cochran reported there were no great concerns. It dried out pretty fast and then it got wet again. Seward reported that there are some issues with the perception that if there is a way into a closed area, folks are doing it. Even when there are locked gates. Some of that are shed hunters, folks with cabin fever who want to get out on their bikes. Will talk about it more during agenda item.

#### **FILLING INTERIM VACANCIES ON COMMITTEE**

Cochran reported that they are working with NPS for filling a vacancy and the County is recommending that if there is a vacancy on the board then the County will need a letter so it is formalized. Sub-committee positions can be accomplished at the meeting since it is less formal. Currently the only vacancy on the board is the At-Large/Development Community Alternate.

#### **PACKET MATERIAL**

Discussion followed on the packet materials. Guidelines, Action Plan and Goals, Reducing Risks of Personal Liability Ex Parte Communication in Quasi-Judicial Proceedings, and Colorado Sunshine Law.

## **LITIGATION UPDATE**

Cochran gave update. They are waiting for a resolution on the challenge to the administrative review. They are also waiting for a resolution on the challenge on the range rule and the lawsuit in Arizona to settle. They are in a holding pattern right now.

## **BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS STATUS REPORT**

Cochran reported that Lori Armstrong, former project manager of the EIS has accepted a BLM Regional Coordinator position and is gone. BLM is figuring out who is doing what. BLM had a Director's briefing scheduled for May 1, 2016. As of yesterday they have not received any correction to when to release for public comment. Their target is still to release the draft on May 27, 2016 and they would have public meetings the weeks of June 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. They are planning on having them in Lakewood, Gunnison, Delta and Elk Creek. There is a mandatory 90 day review.

## **COUNTY COALITION GUSG CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY**

Already covered in Committee reports. Houck gave quick overview of what he spoke about. Discussion followed regarding the designation of the bird, the recovery plan needed and conservation efforts.

## **SPRING CLOSURES**

Houck wanted to know what Seward has seen. Seward reported that the issues he has seen are that the closures work extremely well. The deer and elk herds are finding refuge behind the closed areas. Typically they would have been moving up in elevation but the fact that they are still staying low is a good sign that the road closures are working. There is better compliance with the signs. The Signal Peak West lek, with the road closures is working real well because no one is out there. The perception to the public is if they don't come up to a locked gate they assume it is ok for them to go in. There is some disturbance near the leks on the muddy two track roads. Seward is worried it is happening more than is known. He believes there are some easy fixes. There may be a need for gates in some other areas. The other area off of Highway 114 leads back into private land and leads back into the Six Mile Lane area and there is evidence of people going back in there. The biggest issues are dirt bikes and ATVs in the Antelope Hills area. He believes they could put a lock on the gate there with cooperation from the subdivision. Weins would like to see discussion for possible solutions as a future agenda item. Vasquez gave update on the road closures and issues that he is seeing.

## **CONSERVATION POSTER UPDATE**

Seward gave update. Bob Gress came back out April 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> and took advantage of two mornings to take photos and helped with lek count. Their goal this year was to capture the sage grouse in their natural habitat. Seward thinks they got some good pictures on those mornings and reported that they are looking at \$1,200 in the poster fund. Seward explained where he has received the funds from. They are looking at 4,000 posters rather than 2,500. There will be color on the front and black and white on the back to save some money. Seward has not looked at the text since the last meeting. Seward and Gress are working on the layout and having people review the text.

## **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COORDINATOR UPDATE**

Cochran gave update. County signed a contract with the Gunnison Conservation District. Vasquez will be doing the reviews, with help of Cochran if needed. The referrals are all going to her. Vasquez and Houck will be administrating the committee.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:** Future meetings will occur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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
06-15-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
07-20-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
08-17-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
09-21-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
10-19-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
11-16-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
12-21-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mendunca gave a presentation on lek counts. He reported that vehicles are up and birds are down. There was only one male in April of 2016. There were no hens. He has seen birds on the ledge East of the lek and has seen 13-15 birds move to the North of the lek. There are no birds on the traditional lek. The County signs are appreciated but there is a sign at the view site saying parking, which causes people to park near his house. Thinks the signs need to come down near the view site. Mendunca believes that because there are no females and only one bird something has happened. He believes something should be considered when there is nothing to see. Houck reported that they will put the discussion on a future agenda.

#### **PRESENTATION**

Paula Swenson gave award and presentation on going away for Ken Stahlnecker.

**ADJOURN: MOVED** by Seward to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The May 18, 2016 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:00 P.M.

  
Jonathan Houck, Chairperson

  
Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant