

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 17, 2016**

The August 17, 2016 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:

Jonathan Houck, Chairperson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Erich Ferchau, At-large, Development Community
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
David Wiens, Recreation-At-Large
Liz With, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) (arrived at 10:15 am)
Peter Caloger, Public-At-Large
Matt Vasquez, US Forest Service (USFS)
Elijah Waters, Bureau Land Management (BLM)

Non-voting Members:

Mike Babler, Public-At-Large, Alternate
Bruce Noble, National Park Service (NPS), Alternate

Others in the Audience:

Kathy Broadhead, BLM Wildlife Biologist
Kim Hartwig- NPS, Interim replacement for Stahlnecker
Mykayla- WSCU intern

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 August 17, 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 May 18, 2016 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Waters and seconded by Caloger to accept the March 16, 2016 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Introduction of new and current members.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS

Caloger stated that he has been bothered that they have had quite a few periods when agency representatives have not been on board because of constant transfers and there is a six month period before someone else comes in and was wondering if they can start documenting that for use in future litigation that in contract negotiations this constitutes as bad faith negotiation. Houck reported that the Strategic Committee is not directly involved in the litigation. Gunnison County's biggest concern and frustration has been the constant revolving door of the Grand Junction office and there isn't much they can do in the litigation point of view. Houck acknowledged the frustration.

With reported that it sounds like the SGI group with NRCS is potentially coming to Gunnison for their big national meeting in June of 2017. They are satisfied with the work in Gunnison and wanted to check out some of the conservation work occurring in Gunnison. Although it is tentative there is a possibility they will have the meeting next June and they will be asking for lots of help for tours and expertise. Seward wanted to know if they could wait until after July 15, 2016 and With did let them know that that would be best.

Seward reported they are getting the Army Corps permits in place now as best as they can. They need a really good idea of how many structures and the volume of rock that will be put in place to have it approved.

Houck reported that the Eleven County Coalition had a great meeting in Norwood. They have been working on an update to the investment action plan taking the range wide plan and wanted to take a look at it to see what other types of things they can continue that would be meaningful, with the focus on private land. They wanted to look at the programs that focus more on other things than just conservation easements. It is not a recovery plan, it is not a regulatory document, it is not framed or addressed as population numbers, it is an acknowledgment that the species shouldn't have been listed in the first place. Funding opportunities have been coming in to play for Gunnison Sage Grouse specific and they wanted to let them know they need help and assistance in this area. Houck gave an update of the meeting and talked about who is involved in the process. Discussion followed.

BLM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT EIS STATUS REPORT

Waters reported that the EIS was released August 12, 2016 and it is out for its 90 day comment period. It is online and in a book form. The comment period ends November 12, 2016. Houck reported there is merit in each member on the strategic committee to comment individually and as a group. They will put it on the next committee agenda. There will be a series of public hearing meetings. Waters stated that they do not have a list of the meetings yet but will let the committee know when they do.

UPDATE ON GUNNISON TRAILS SIGNAL PEAK PLAN

Wiens gave the update on the Signal Peak Plan. They received a grant a few years ago from the State of Colorado to put together a mast trail plan for the Signal Peak Trail area and at that time in the CCA that area was considered an urban interface area, which was an area they could pursue for more trail development. The plan that they are going to produce will not have any authority, it was something they were able to produce for the Gunnison Trails plan, but it was supported by the BLM and wasn't opposed by CPW. They want to produce a plan that is something that is useful for all the agencies. They have been working closely with CPW and BLM and have to make sure the plan that finally comes out is useful to them. They have a survey out right now that is dealing with the trail use that is happening up there right now, how people are using the area, what's their knowledge of the area, etc. They have also produced a first version of a draft map which shows the trail alignments, trail corridors and where it has been established. The area is divided into four zones, showing when the trails would be opened. Wiens stated that they would like to have the plan completed by the end of the year.

Waters reported that the BLM made the decision that they were going to take this up in January of 2017, even though the EIS will not be completed by then, and that they will be looking at all of the impacts and have public hearings to cover all concerns. Seward reported that CPW does not oppose the plan and that the area needs to be more managed before it is completely out of hand, so they can reduce the impacts to wildlife.

Houck stated that the Strategic Committee will need to give some comments to the BOCC on the plan and their position. Believes it would be good for the Signal Peak subcommittee to reconvene and have a discussion on the plan. Determined who was on the Board and that Houck will send a notice out to have a meeting sometime in the near future.

SEASONAL ROAD CLOSURES

Waters gave update that there were people who were accessing the roads when they were closed. BLM trying to figure out how to address that and that it is mostly an internal BLM thing. In most cases people need to be educated and possibly there needs to be additional signage and adding some locked gates. Broadhead with the BLM reported that they have already ordered signs and that in the springtime there will be an area closure on the maps when posted in the newspaper and that two gates have been ordered and they have been working with CPW to identify the problem areas.

M. Vasquez reported they have problems every year but they need to be consistent. Seward thinks more signs would help and the burden should be on the people in the wrong areas. Houck reported they are going to need more information from Pat Magee on the no parking signs that were put up.

RANGEWIDE GRSG AND GUSG LEK COUNTS AND GUSG CONSERVATION POSTER

Seward gave an update on current lek counts. The Gunnison sage-grouse numbers seemed to do pretty well. Unfortunately, the high male count for 2016 by each population, decreased in all populations, except for Poncha Pass which is up 33% from 2015 high male count. The high male count range wide is 1,065. The population estimate is around 5,200 birds range wide, which is above the range wide conservation target of 4,500 birds. The range wide population decreased about 6% from last year's high male count. With asked what the theory was on why the counts are down and Seward explained that it was likely attributed to weather. Seward stated that they may need to make the count period a little longer to account for changes in weather patterns.

Seward reported he has not had time to go back to the poster. They have \$1,200 in the fund. They are still looking for funds.

WET MEADOW RESTORATION/RESILIENCY PROJECT

Seward gave update and stated that this is another huge collaborative effort through the Gunnison Climate working group. He reported there are roughly five different sites this year and gave information on where each of the sites are. Seward reported that the work is really taking off, having the SGI biologists come to Gunnison to see firsthand how were are doing and how to plan a treatment may help the restoration/resiliency work expand into new sage-grouse populations.

GUSG INVESTMENT ACTION PLAN REPORT

Already discussed above.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

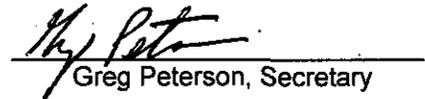
FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, CO 81230, unless changed for a specific reason.

Discussion followed regarding monthly or quarterly meetings. Stick to the rule that not to have meetings for the sake of having meetings. Next meeting will discuss times, when etc.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
09-21-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
10-19-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
11-16-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
12-21-16	10-2	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: MOVED by Wiens, seconded by With to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The August 17, 2016 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:10 P.M.


Jonathan Houck, Chairperson


Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant