COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources

Gunnison Service Center
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Gunnison Sage-grouse Lek Access/Viewing Protocol

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and Sisk-a-dee, a local Gunnison sage-grouse advocacy group, volunteered to monitor applicants requesting access to a Gunnison sage-grouse lek (strutting grounds) for conservation purposes through the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee lek access process. Applicants interested in gaining access to a lek for educational or commercial purposes may contact Nathan Seward, Wildlife Biologist, at (970) 641-7882.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Sisk-a-dee will supervise successful applicants and work with private landowners willing to grant access to assure grouse are not impacted during courtship displays. All individuals conducting activities near a Gunnison sage-grouse lek need to comply with this Lek Access/Viewing Protocol to reduce potential disturbance.

Please keep in mind that Gunnison sage-grouse are sensitive to human disturbances. Continued human disturbance could result in grouse abandoning the lek or low attendance. To ensure the future of grouse and to avoid adverse impacts, applicants should adhere to the following recommendations:

Viewing Etiquette:

- Lek access opportunities are available from 1 April to 15 May
- A user will have two consecutive days of lek access and no additional opportunities in one season
- A user will be able to reschedule for weather if the guide is available
- A minimum of five rest days between lek access visits on one lek is required
- Arrive at lek at least two hours before sunrise with guide; guide will escort user to the lek and remain in blind with user

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- No pets, especially dogs, are allowed near the lek or in vehicles
- Remain as quiet as possible on approach to lek and when on the lek; no radios, cell phones, horn honking, car door slamming, or other noises should occur
- Head lamps may be used to access lek and blind, once in blind equipment should be set up and lights turned off
- Access is by foot only; no mechanized vehicles should approach closer than 0.6 mile to the lek
- Blind should be placed an adequate distance away from birds to avoid adversely impacting breeding behavior; use of high-powered binoculars, spotting scopes, and zoom lenses is recommended
- User's blind will be set up the afternoon before the lek visit date, location of blind will be determined at the same time
- User should remain still and in the blind and should not leave until all birds have stopped displaying and departed the lek (typically 4 hours)
- Users should be prepared for long stays in blind and for cold temperatures (typical morning temperature is 20 F in April in Gunnison)
- Conversation should be minimal and kept to a low whisper
- No flash photography is allowed
- Additional rules and restrictions may be imposed by landowners

This protocol is enforceable by the CPW. Failure to comply with these recommendations may be considered wildlife harassment with violators cited and fined.