GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2017

The September 20, 2017 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstocks 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)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Nate Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Liz With, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates

Others in the Audience:
Jim Mendonca
Tom Grant, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Pat Magee, WSCU
Jason Evanko, Gunnison County Weed District Management Technician
Bradley Wigginton, Gunnison County Weed District Co-Coordinator
Jon Mugglestone, Gunnison County Weed District Coordinator

Staff Members Present:
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant
Brooke Vasquez, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Houck called the September 20, 2017 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-Grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:04 A.M.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Houck confirmed that there was a quorum.

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

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL of August 16, 2017 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Seward and seconded by M. Vasquez to accept the August 16, 2017 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS

With reported that Dan Olson started in June as the new District Conservationist and will be taking over her position on the Gunnison Basin Sage-Grouse Strategic Committee as the regular committee member. NRCS has drafted a letter to the Board of County Commissioners. Steve Woodis will continue to be the alternate. Peterson requested that With be the alternate based on her experience and not wanting to lose that expertise. Several committee members were in agreement. Houck requested that a letter be put together for the Board of County Commissioners changing the alternate from Woodis to With.

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Navy reported that it was fun to be a part of the Wildland Restoration Volunteer Project, building rock structures to improve sage-grouse habitat. Grant gave an update on the project and future projects. This was the fourth year they did the event. There were about 30 volunteers each day. They built four rock structures in the Teachout drainage, a handful of new structures in the South Cottonwood drainage, and did maintenance and repairs in the South Cottonwood drainage. BLM will be working in the Sapinero area in October. Houck wants to sit down with Grant before the next meeting and talk about how the Strategic Committee can help with the projects. Grant said that they will be doing some volunteer work around the area next year.

Peterson wanted to know what the status was on the satellite population working groups. Has anything moved forward or have things been better. Childers reported that they have funding for this year and are looking at hiring someone to help with grant writing and coordination. Seward reported that the Oversight Committee for the Crawford working group had a meeting and that they had limited funding for this year and next and had asked the current coordinator to step down until they could find a new individual with different skill sets to bridge some of the communication gaps. They are trying to decide whether they will be advertising for a new person or taking on individual responsibilities themselves for the working group.. That decision has not been made yet and they are currently exploring more funding opportunities.

M. Vasquez reported that the new District Ranger, Matt McCombs, was unable to attend today, but that they have a letter to add him as the USFS alternate member for the committee.

WAUNITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Seward reported that the subcommittee met on August 28, 2017 to discuss how the site was used during the spring of 2017 and what kind of issues came up. They had good signage telling people where they could and couldn't park. The traditional lek was not used through the entire viewing season. Grouse were using the North Meadow and East Ridge making it difficult for counters to get an accurate grouse count. CPW would like to work with a WSCU volunteer next year to help count the East Ridge. There will be no changes to the viewing schedule for the 2018 season. The viewing site will be open five days, closed two days, and monitoring will continue during the closed days. Seward believes the birds might be moving because of the traffic noise on Highway 50. Houck stated that he will try and get as much information as he can from CDOT, including vehicle count data. Seward stated that they do not want to move the viewing site location or move it to a different lek.. Navy wanted to know what the benefit would be to keep a site open if there are no birds. Peterson wants to know if the birds have moved and they just can't see them or if they are gone, what's going on with the birds? Houck requested there be a motion that a letter be sent to Rick Besecker, Gunnison County Sherriff, signed by the Committee stating the issues with people not following the viewing protocol at the viewing site and asking that he come to a Strategic Committee meeting for the Committee to discuss these issues with him. **Moved:** by Peterson and seconded by Navy that Houck draft a letter specifically on behalf of the Committee requesting that Sheriff Besecker be scheduled to meet with the Committee so they can specifically discuss the issues of how law enforcement interfaces with what the Committee is trying to do with County roads and the sage-grouse. He will reference all the different agencies and organizations that are represented at the Strategic Committee. He will also request that a Fish and Wildlife law enforcement arm be there also. Motion passed unanimously. Houck requested that the next agenda include action items to address the enforcement issues at the site.

LEK ACCESS APPLICATION AND PROCESS UPDATES

B. Vasquez worked with Seward and Magee to update the lek application and process document. Discussion followed on the changes and updates. Houck wanted to know when they would like to have the application approved and requested that they move forward with the lek access application pending inputfrom Ann Timberman to make sure there were no concerns from t Fish and Wildlife Service. If there are any concerns Houck will make sure to schedule it at the next meeting for amendments. **Moved:** by Peterson and seconded by Waters to approve the lek access application presented and process updates pending the correspondence with Chairperson Houck from Fish and Wildlife Service. Motion passed unanimously.

WEED DISCUSSION

Mugglestone reported that they want to make sure their priorities, Gunnison County Weed District, match the Committees' priorities. M. Vasquez gave update on how he would like the Committee to be involved and would like to know how the County is working with the City. Vasquez wants to look at how the Weed District can target more of the weed sources in the City limits and how the Committee can work with them to help. Mugglestone stated that they are contracted with the City for 16 hours/year to treat weeds within the City limits. Mugglestone agrees that more needs to be done and that things need to be changed. The Weed District has talked to the City Manager and new Public Works director to try and figure it out. They have been working with the North Valley to get more funding. M. Vasquez thought it'd be a good idea to get someone from the City on the Strategic Committee to increase awareness of the impacts weeds have on the area. Houck requested that M. Vasquez let the committee know what he needs to move this along.

COUNTY COALITION AND COUNTY LITIGATION UPDATE

Houck reported that the State of Colorado, Gunnison County, and Gunnison County Stockgrowers' all filed their briefs and they are waiting for the federal brief to come back. Houck feels like this is going to go where it is going to go and that they will let the legal side play out. The litigation will never end and the most important thing they can do is focus on what is going on around habitat and create stability for the bird. County Coalition got together at the end of August in Montrose and had a big attendance. Houck is Chair of the Coalition. At the last meeting, the Coalition decided to appoint a Co-Chair.

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.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
10-18-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
11-15-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
12-20-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
01-17-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
02-21-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
03-21-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: The September 20, 2017 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:13 P.M.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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