GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 14, 2018

The February 14, 2018 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)
J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA) (Arrived at 10:20 a.m.)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Non-voting Members:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
Kathy Brodhead, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Alternate
Bruce Noble, National Park Service, Alternate
Mike Babler, Public At-Large, Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Pat Magee, WSCU
Jim Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Dan Olson, NRCS District Conservationist
Matt McColmbs, District Manager, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Dylan Peters, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Suzie Parker, United States Forest Service (USFS)

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

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Houck called the February 14, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:04 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 January 17, 2018 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Peterson and seconded by Navy to accept the January 17, 2018 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD APPOINTMENTS

All appointments were made by BOCC on February 13, 2018 and the seats will be filled for two years. Peter Caloger and Mike Babler were reappointed. Kugler was appointed as regular for the recreation. All other seats will stay the same as before.

The new executive committee will take effect at the next meeting, March 21, 2018.

Officer seats: Chairperson: Houck, Vice-Chairperson: Wenum, Secretary: Peterson. Moved: by Peterson for Houck to continue as Chairperson, seconded by Waters, passed unanimously. Moved: by Peterson for J. Wenum to continue as Vice-chair, seconded by Houck, passed unanimously. Moved: by Wenum seconded by Waters that Peterson continue as Secretary, passed unanimously. All were elected by acclimation of the Committee.

SUBCOMMITTEE REAUTHORIZATIONS, DESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

The Committee reviewed the current Subcommittees, gave reports on each committee and will officially determine who the seats are at the next meeting.

Technical Subcommittee:

Vasquez explained that the subcommittee will be helping move forward the habitat prioritization tool, review the updates and get feedback, and get it updated for the Committee to approve. They will continue to use Cochran for his expertise.

They will remove Gina Glenne and Elise (Apple) Snider; Add Suzie Parker with USFS.

Information and Education (I&E) Subcommittee

Discussion followed on whether the subcommittee was needed. It was agreed that they would keep the subcommittee.

They will remove Gina Glenne and Elise (Apple) Snider. Navy will talk to Wiens to see if he wants to still be on the subcommittee and Childers will look to see if anyone with NPS is interested.

Predator Control Investigation Subcommittee

Caloger stated that he is hoping to keep the committee. Houck wanted to know if they need someone from USFWS. Caloger would like that, they will connect with them and discuss it later.

Signal Peak Recreation Area Planning Subcommittee

Houck suggested that they keep the group together. Caloger suggested that they reach out to Sportmans' group in the county to see if they are interested in someone from their group getting on the committee.

Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site Subcommittee

Peterson suggested that Wenum or Magee be the new chair and that the committee remain active. Wenum stated he would be willing to become the chair. Houck suggested that Timberman become the member for USFWS instead of Mark Brennan since she has been doing a lot of work. Houck also suggested that they talk to Marlene Crosby with Gunnison County Public Works to add someone from their department. M. Vasquez doesn't feel he needs to be on the committee any longer.

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COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS

Wenum reported that it has been a very mild winter, which is good for wildlife. The animals are scattered throughout the area. Everything is going well and road kill has been nonexistent this year. Wenum invited everyone to a wildlife management 101 class that starts February 15, 2018 at the WSCU Ice Lab. There is not a cost for the class.

M. Vasquez gave update on the Forest Service Plan. They have been getting comments on the air quality and at-risk species assessments that they have done. They are moving forward to incorporating those comments into their documents. Most recently they released some species overviews for at-risk species. The comment deadline is until February 28, 2018. A lot of the comments they have received are that they consider looking at the species that are not considered at risk and he stated that they are doing that. They will be addressing all of the species. They are looking at finalizing the assessments at the beginning of March.

Olson reported that they have maintained funding levels for conservation programs. This year they focused their attention on irrigation treatments and small farm opportunities. They are hoping to get more interest for structural and management improvements for sage-grouse conservation. Agricultural land easements have seen a lot of attention. NRCS has made a significant investment into Lidar and have secured funding for Gunnison and Montrose Counties for this year.

Houck reported that the County has been involved with multiple parties in the litigation. They are currently in the briefings and responses process right now. Cochran reported that they filed a joint response brief on Friday, February 9, 2018, responding to the environmental brief that had been filed prior. It was the first joint brief filed.

Houck reminded the Committee that the road closures are coming up soon. Houck reported he has a meeting with Marlene Crosby next week to work on coordination of the closures. Crosby is also in discussion with CDOT to put up a closure sign on the highway so they don't have to turn on the road to see the signs.

Houck stated that he has talked to Timberman about the review process for the building and planning departments. There may be extra requirements from the USFWS and the question was what that process was. Houck asked Timberman to do a presentation on the requirements of the owner with USFWS at the next meeting; what will the owner be required to do once those permits are approved through the different entities? Peterson wants to know if there is a full blown process the owner will have to go through with the USFWS and what assurances are they going to receive from USFWS that they did everything they needed to do to make sure they will have no problems with them in the future? Wenum requested that she talk about the mitigation requirements.

Houck reported that the County Coalition is working on a road in San Miguel County that has some leks located off the road. There has been some hesitation with San Miguel County closing the road. There is only one owner pass the gate. Houck worked with the Commissioners to completely remove that County Road and reroute the road to be only on public land. Cochran reported that they have heard that San Miguel County is looking at land use regulations that are similar to Gunnison County's to protect the sage-grouse. Cochran stated that they will be going to San Miguel in March to do the San Miguel and Dove Creek threat assessments.

DAU PLAN PRESENTATION

Wenum gave a brief history of the DAU plan. They are going to talk about the clustering of three game management areas. There has been enough concern that they have slowed the process down to look at those concerns. Kevin Blecha with CPW gave presentation on the DAU plan, with discussion following.

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WAUNITA LEK UPDATE

Wenum reported that he had a meeting with Sheriff Besecker. There will be two days that the lek viewing sight will be open from April to May. He asked Sherriff Besecker to provide additional patrols during those open days. Besecker understands and will try to put enforcement out there. Wenum is going to ask his District Managers to do periodic drive bys also. Wenum would like to get a lek count for the East side of the lek. He would like to know how much activity is occurring on the east side ridge. Seward will include that in his lek counts this year. Seward is hoping to hire a lek count coordinator soon to help with the counts. Houck wanted to know if it is out of place to put "wildlife viewing by permit only" on the signs too. Discussion followed on the verbiage. Houck will work with public works on the verbiage and bring it to the committee to approve before they actually put the signs up. The signs will need to be put up soon due to when the closures start. Discussion followed on whether to add the sign on the highway for now.

SIGNAL PEAK UPDATE

Waters reported that there is a lot of Tier 1 habitat in Signal Peak, meaning it is an important place for sage grouse. Signal Peak is also important for archaeology, recreation and mule deer. All of this was known in the 90's and it was so important that they did not designate it as a place for certain use but decided to go for a more balanced use. They have reduced the uses of the area to things that only dealt with CCA. The three issues for the area are Gunnison sage grouse, wintering wildlife and community values. The BLM came up with an alternative that took those issues that includes stipulation to prevent it from becoming something the local community does not want. They came up with protective measures for the sage grouse, wintering big game, both above and beyond what the CCA requires. Jim Lovelace with the BLM gave a presentation on the Signal Peak area and the process they went through to come up with their current plan. One of the key challenges was understating the demands of the area, growing population, active population and trying to balance those issues on the landscape. They tried to make decisions with the species in the area in mind and came up with a proposed action, took the comments they made and came up with this compromised proposed action. Currently it is only 21 miles of trail but there is a chance it could change. Discussion followed on the area. Waters explained that they put the draft alternative out and will start the analysis next week and have an environmental assessment sometime in March or April 2018. He is anticipating that it will then go to a final decision, which at that time the appeal process time starts and once that process has passed, they will be able to put the plan into effect**.**

LEK ACCESS PHOTOGRAPHY APPLICATIONS

Seward reported that this year Frank Comisar applied. He is a professional photographer out of Durango and is very interested in coming here to take pictures of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse. He is intending to use this unique opportunity to get the photos to a new audience. He has made the offer to return 50% of the proceeds for any money he may make off the prints in his gallery. Comisar's application is the only one they received this year. Discussion followed on the application and whether they should approve it and whether it is to the benefit of the conservation of the bird. Moved: by Navy, seconded by Peterson to deny the application. Seven members in agreement of denying access, two in favor of allowing access. The application is denied.

STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Navy reported that it is time to think about who to give the award to. It began in 2003 and goes to people who are deserving as being recognized for something that they have done consistently for the benefit of sage-grouse and encourage them to continue their efforts. Navy and Magee decided this year it should go to Burt and Sandy Guerreri. I&E makes the recommendation and then the Committee can have a consensus to approve. Moved: by Peterson and seconded by Waters to approve the recommendation from the I&E Committee to give the award to the Guerreris. Peterson recommended that they reinstitute the field study this year and that they could give the award to them at that time.

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SAGE-GROUSE MURAL

Houck reported that Magee contacted the artist and that he just wants to do the one mural and is requesting additional funding from the committee. Different locations to put the mural were looked at but they have not found one that would work. Magee suggested to Houck that they are back at the drawing board to figure out where to put it. Houck asked that everyone think about where the mural could go and whether they want the committee to spend money on it.

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.

March 21, 2018 meeting moved to March 28, 2018, unless no need for the meeting.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
03-28-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
04-18-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
05-16-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
06-20-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
07-18-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
08-15-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
09-19-18	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: MOVED by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The February 14, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 2:08 P.M.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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