GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 28, 2018

The March 28, 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)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large (here at 10:20 a.m.)
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Non-voting Members:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
Kathy Brodhead, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Pat Magee, WSCU
Jim Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Suzie Parker, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Marcella Fremgen
Cinnamon Levi-Flinn, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
John Scott
Sam Newman, WSCU
Bruce Stevens

Staff Members Present:
Brooke Vasquez, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant
Cathie Pagano, Director of Community Development
Neal Starkebaum, Assistant Director of Community Development
Matthew Bernie, Gunnison County Manager
David Baumgarten, Gunnison County Attorney

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Houck called the March 28, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:02 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.

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APPROVAL of February 14, 2018 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Waters and seconded by Navy to accept the February 14, 2018 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

GUNNISON COUNTY AND USFWS SAGE-GROUSE REVIEW PROCESSES

Houck gave an overview of what the purpose of the discussion will be. The process to protect the sage-grouse started in 2007. The listing of the Gunnison Sage-grouse has required more requirements of the owner. The purpose of today is to walk through the process the owners will go through from start to finish.

Starkebaum explained that Gunnison County has adopted specific regulations in the Land Use Resolution, protection of wildlife habitat areas. They incorporated specific review standards for Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse. The first step for the owner is to come in with a Request for Pre-Application Conference Application to see if their property is within sage-grouse occupied habitat. There are now fees to cover the cost of the staff and the wildlife biologist. The application is then sent to the wildlife biologist, Brooke Vasquez, to review. The other way to get a review done is to submit a building permit, OWTS (septic), and Land Use Change applications. Once the County receives comments back from B. Vasquez the review is sent to the owners with requirements the owner will have to do in order to develop in that area.

B. Vasquez explained that when she gets an application she pulls it up in the Gunnison Sage-grouse Habitat Prioritization Tool. If it is in a Tier 1 habitat she will automatically contact Nate Seward with CPW to determine if they need a site visit. It will usually include her, the owner, CPW, Community Development, Public Works and BLM. Seward explained that they try and get as much information as possible from the owner on their plans for the property. After the visit she will then send a report to the County with recommendations on what the owner should do to protect the sage-grouse for that specific site. Starkebaum explained that once Community Development receives those recommendations the County will then make the recommendations conditions of any permits and land use changes they apply for.

Starkebaum explained that after the review or site visit, when the application comes in from the owner and if it is different then what they originally wanted then they will need a new review at the discretion of B. Vasquez. Seward stated that it is a good opportunity for the departments to talk to the owner about different ways to take care of trash, protect the animals etc. Cochran explained that they try from the beginning to make sure the owner has ideas of where they can put their house, their septic, well etc. Cochran explained that the regulations are there for all of Gunnison County.

Timberman explained what happens when the owner has completed the process and received a permit from Gunnison County to what USFWS requires from the owners. (10:37) Timberman explained that there is a website they have that the owner can go to and read the different requirements and options that they have the owners go through. It allows them to see what they may need to do to protect the different wildlife on their property. They have the Gunnison County sage-grouse map. Critical habitat comes into play for federal funding and projects. Timberman explained TAKE (if they are taking habitat from the wildlife). If they determine there is no take they stamp and approve the project. If there is a TAKE problem then the owner will have to get a permit from them. The most common way to get the permit is to have a conversation plan or HCP. At the end of the planning process they are covered under the permit.

Houck wanted to know if there is a legal requirement that the owner contact USFWS. Timberman stated that yes there are legal requirements if they are in the TAKE habitat.

Houck wanted to know if the process is different in other counties. Timberman stated that yes it is different because of the process that Gunnison County goes through. It is more rigurous.

Ferchau stated that his concern is that even though the owner goes through the process with the County and gets approved that USFWS could come back to the owner and they could get in trouble later if they decide to add, as in a garden. Houck explained that it is the responsibility of the land owner to get ahold of USFWS to make sure they don't need any permits.

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John Scott wanted to ask about what the examples of mitigation are for the owners. Pagano explained that it could be time of day and time of year that they do construction. They could also determine a location that wouldn't adversely affect the sage-grouse on the property. Cochran reported that the Land Use Resolution (LUR) has a definition of mitigation. The county has a different definition of mitigation than the USFWS does, which can cause some issues. Discussion followed on different issues that may arise with the difference in definition.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Magee reported that they have gotten a lot of interest in the Waunita site and have the weekends booked through the last weekends of May. They are having a volunteer meeting tonight. There are 15 volunteers so far. Wenum went over monitoring at the site during closure times. His thought is to have someone from Sisk-a-dee near the site during the open time frame with a sign letting people know when it is closed and to get the numbers on how many people visit. Then from April 4 to May 10 they would have a camera on-site and that would help determine whether having monitors on-site helps. It would give them an idea of the amount of activity at the site. Wenum stated that they would lose lek count data, but they could put it into place this year and see how it goes. Seward reported that they will still be conducting their coordinated counts throughout the year and that they will also be looking at the east side of the ridge. M. Vasquez wanted to know if the students have had any issues with the public. Magee stated that they have had some run-ins with private land owners and some public and that he just tells the students not to get involved in any altercations with them. Wenum stated that they do not want them in any kind of enforcement situations.

Navy reported that Magee has been looking for a wall for the mural. The artist is not in favor of doing the water towers. Houck stated that the Committee will have to discuss allocation of funds. Discussion followed on possible locations. Houck is going to add this to the next agenda for allocations of funds and locations.

M. Vasquez gave update on where USFS is with updating the Forest Plan. On March 30, 2018 they will be publishing a notice of intent to revise their Forest Plan, which initiates the 30 day comment period. During the scoping period they will be looking for comments on what needs to change and new issues or challenges. They will be providing more information on how to comment. In March of 2019 they will have a draft of the plan and then in 2020 a final plan. He also reported that beginning April 15 he will be in Delta until August 2018 and Suzie Parker will be taking over his position until he gets back. Matt McCombs and Parker will be helping out at that time.

Waters stated that the gates are closed and Signal Peak is on track and they will have a decision on that by the end of May. Hartmans is open North of the power line.

Kugler reported that they have the growler bike race coming up at the end of May. Requested that the members provide any information to him that they would like in the information packet he will be sending out to the riders. Magee asked that they have some kind of booth giving out information on cheat grass.

Wenum reported that CPW staff have been putting signs out regarding antler collecting. They did their internal license setting efforts and offered their recommendations for big game licenses. The elk are similar in numbers to last year. They will be increasing the numbers of buck permits. The fawn numbers were extremely low last year and this year they are higher.

Houck talked about the Saguache County board members. They do not have a full time manager. They are spread pretty slim. They will try to find resources for the Committee to work with but have not figured it out yet. Houck will dig deeper and see what he can find out.

Houck talked about the sign on Highway 50 and the Waunita Road and who made the request. Houck is just going to have Public Works bring the sign down.

Seward hired Mike Jackson to help count the birds at the leks. They are seeing some good numbers this year.

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I & E FUNDING REQUESTS

M. Vasquez reported that they are working on the wet meadow brochure that was distributed last year. They have discussed passing it out to the public so the information is getting out there. Tom is estimating they may need approximately $1,000 to fund the print job and wanted to know if there was funding available through I & E. Navy said that would be something they could help with through the fund. M. Vasquez will have Tom submit a formal request as soon as possible. Houck requested a copy of the brochure.

Fremgen reported that they are hoping to have a workshop in August 2018 on Sagebrush and gave information on the workshop. She requested that I & E give them $300. Discussion followed on the workshop, who the target groups are, etc. **Moved:** by Ferchau and seconded by Waters to allocate $300 for the Sagebrush Workshop in August, 2018. Motion carried unanimously.

STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Navy reported that distribution of the award is in the works and that Ann is working on the award and they will have the plaque approval soon. They would like to decide when to do the field trip to give the award to the recipients. Houick will work on a situation that would be good to keep it a surprise.

FINALIZE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

The Committee finalized the Subcommittees and determined who will officially be on the seats.

Executive Subcommittee Members:

Jonathan Houck, Chair, Gunnison County BOCC
J. Wenum, CPW
Greg Peterson, GCSA

Technical Subcommittee Members:

Matt Vasquez, Chair, USFS
Liz With, NRCS
Kathy Brodhead, BLM
Tara De Valois, BLM
Gay Austin, Public
Pat Magee, WSCU
Nathan Seward, CPW
Theresa Childers, NPS
Suzie Parker, USFS
Aleshia Rummel, Public

Information and Education (I&E) Subcommittee

Sue Navy, Chair, HCCA
Pat Magee, WSCU/Sisk-a-dee
Sonia Eslit, USFS
Kristi Murphy, BLM
Chris Parameter, CPW
Nathan Seward, CPW
Erich Ferchau, Development At-Large
Mark Brennan, USFWS
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails

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Predator Control Investigation Subcommittee

Peter Caloger, Chair, Public At-Large
Erich Ferchau, Development At-Large
Matt Vasquez, USFS
Mike Babler, Public At-Large
Pat Magee, WSCU/Sisk-a-dee

Signal Peak Recreation Area Planning Subcommittee

Jonathan Houck, Chair, Gunnison County BOCC
David Wiens, Recreation At-Large
Polly Oberosler, Recreation At-Large
Nthan Seward, CPW
Doug Washburn, GCSA
Dan Sabrowski, GCSA
Liz With, NRCS
Jim Lovelace, BLM
Kristi Murphy, BLM
Kathy Brodhead, BLM
Julie Feier, WSCU
Mark Brennan, USFWS

Subcommittee will stay the same until the BLM has made their final decision and signed.

Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site Subcommittee

J Wenum, Chair, CPW
Greg Peterson, GCSA
Nathan Seward, CPW
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County BOCC
Pat Magee, WSCU/Sisk-a-dee
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Mark Brennan, USFWS

Houck appointed all subcommittee members as 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.

The April meeting will only happen if something comes up and will make that decision in the next couple of weeks.

Date	Time	Notes	Building and location
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

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ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Peterson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The March 28, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:45 P.M.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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