**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE**
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**
**September 19, 2018**

The September 19, 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)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Non-voting Members:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate

**Others in the Audience:**
Jim Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Cary Aloia
Jenny Nehring
Marcella Fremgen
Kathy Griffin, CPW
Jim Mendonca
Brandon Miller, USFWS
Bridget Stahl, CPW Intern
Pat Magee, WSCU
Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County Geographic Information Systems
David Baumgarten, Gunnison County Attorney
Tom Grant, Wet Meadows Restoration-Resilience Project Coordinator

**Staff Members Present:**
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant
Aleshia Rummel, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist

Others present as listed in text.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Houck called the September 19, 2018 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 June 20, 2018 MEETING MINUTES:** **Moved:** by Wenum and seconded by Navy to accept the June 20, 2018 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

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## COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Waters reported that they have a new range management specialist, Ryan Kaye, and a new district manager, Kathy Cook. They are going to be hosting an open house on October 30, 2018 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the BLM office for everyone to meet them.

Timberman reported that the USFWS is hiring and they are looking for a replacement for Mark Brennan. They are down three vacancies in the Grand Junction office. Houck wanted to know what the Committee would need to do to put a word in to make sure the Denver office knows that they need someone who is qualified and familiar with the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse and make sure someone gets in there as quickly as possible as a replacement. **Moved:** by Houck to do a letter on behalf of the Committee to the Denver Regional office stating their desire for a quick, reasonable, thoughtful and qualified filling of that position that allows continuity of work between the community and their partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, seconded by Peterson. Timberman abstained from voting. Motion passed unanimously, with Timberman abstaining.

Vasquez reported that Grant and Navy have been a big help with the Wet Meadow Restoration work. They have been working at Flattop Mountain and Black Sage Pass. They brought mules in to help with hauling rock, which they couldn't have done without them. At Black Sage Pass they had 17 local community volunteers and built 16 structures. They had two people from the Forest Service Washington office, Office of Sustainability and Climate, come out and they heard about the project and it will be one of five projects that they are going to acknowledge on what National Forest Services are doing for climate change. They are trying to write up adaptive narratives on what National Forests are doing for climate change and resiliency in ecosystems. It will get positive attention from the Washington office and hopefully is something they can leverage in the near future to maintain the support for it and get more funding from the agency.

Wenum reported they have a new person on staff with CPW, Brooke Vasquez, and that Aleshia Rummel has taken over her old position at the Gunnison Conservation District and will be working with the Committee.

Houck reported that the County Coalition has started a five year review of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse since the listing. After the five year review there is the opportunity for the status of the listing being maintained, it could trigger it to be delisted or it could trigger an up listing, depending on what is brought forward. The commenting time ends October 9, 2018. Cochran wanted to make sure everyone is working together to communicate with each other and that they are reporting everything that has been done since the last report. It is a formal process required by the Endangered Species Act and it is important that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have all the data they have. Griffin reported that they are hoping to update their maps for conservation and habitat treatment maps and that they will include the data call, part of the CAF project, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species status assessment. Discussion followed on collaboration and getting together all of the information.

## WAUNITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE UPDATE

Magee gave update. This year they continued their effort to monitor sage-grouse activity at the site. They had 96 hours of training, 248 volunteer hours at the site, 200 hours of coordinating hours and 60 hours of supervision and 32 hours of students going out to look at the site. Total of 636 of volunteer hours. They had 358 people at the site, 10 people per day. They had 28 active days at the site. People visited the site 25 of the 28 open days. There were 143 vehicles, 98 of actual visitors and not volunteers. The people that came to watch the sage-grouse spent approximately $256,000. The high male count was 17, lowest high male count since 2004. The high female count was 5, lowest high since 2015. The total bird count was 20 birds in 2018, the lowest since 2003. They have had more use in the North Meadow during the first part of the season. On the East Ridge they had 15 males on April 19, which was the high. 26 out of the 28 days birds were present. The first few years the vehicle violations were around 30-35%. This year it was 11%. The main violation was showing up late, leaving early and noise. Visitors from 31 different states and 9 different countries. They closed the site for 12 days, each week 2 consecutive days of closure. They had volunteers at the site only on the open days. From April 1-22 on the closure days they put a volunteer on the road off

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of Highway 50 with a closure sign. They get the word out on the website for Sisk-a-dee. They had a camera out there April 23 to May 21. This is the first year that they didn't have people out on the site for the entire season. The camera showed that May 3, they had three vehicles show up on the site, May 4 there was 1 vehicle and May 9 they captured the sheriff coming on the site.

Seward reported on the East side of the ridge, Monson Gulch. This is the first year they have had the opportunity to count birds at the same time the Waunita Watchable site was being counted. He found that the number of birds that are using the East Ridge; 13 male high count, 7 female high count. Almost half of the birds are in that area. It wasn't clear, looking at the times and counts, if the observers are seeing the same birds at Monson Gulch as at Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site, so there may be some double counting. Discussion followed on the counting process. The high male count looks to be at 24. Wenum wanted to know if what we have been doing is effective and if he had any recommended changes for the future. Houck suggested that they add to the next agenda reactions to the report and next year's plan.

Mendonca gave update on what he has been seeing out on the site.

**COLLABORATIVE ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Jenny Nehring and Kathy Griffin gave the presentation on the Collaborative Action Plan.

**HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL PRESENTATION**

Pelletier gave the habitat prioritization tool presentation. Cochran gave the background on the tool.

**SAGEBRUSH WORKSHOP REPORT**

Marcella Fremgen reported that 17 agencies attended the Sagebrush Workshop that the committee helped fund. The second day was a field tour up Lost Canyon, there are seven different species of sagebrush in the area.

**WET MEADOW RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Grant reported that they have had a productive year in Gunnison County, San Miguel County, Crawford and Grand Junction. They have worked on Graze Gulch, where they built 30 new structures this year and Black Sage Pass area, where they built 16 new structures (two year project for that site) They are currently working on Henkel Road and Flat Top Mountain. They have moved a lot of rock. They have been working on the BLM site in Sapinero Area, tons of rock work and hope to finish it next week so do not have to disturb the sensitive area.

**FIVE YEAR SPECIES STATUS REVIEW**

Houck reported that the County Coalition has started a five year species review of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse since the listing. After the five year review there is the opportunity for the status of the listing being maintained, it could trigger it to be delisted or it could trigger an up listing, depending on what is brought forward. The commenting time ends October 9, 2018. Cochran wanted to make sure everyone is working together to communicate with each other and that they are reporting everything that has been done since the last report. It is a formal process required by the Endangered Species Act and it is important that Fish and Wildlife Service have all the data they have. Griffin reported that they are hoping to update their maps for conservation and habitat treatment maps and that they will include the data call, part of the CAF project, as well as the Fish and Wildlife Service species status assessment. Discussion followed on collaboration and getting together all of the information.

Houck reported that the commenting does not just have to be done by the agencies, public and others can comment. The County has gone through different analyses done since listing, specifically looking at the ones that caused someone to alter their building permit application.

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Vasquez wasn't aware that there was a review period but does believe it is important to have.

**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.

Include Mural update to the agenda for the next meeting.

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| 10-17-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |
| 11-21-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |
| 12-19-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |
| 01-19-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |
| 02-20-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |
| 03-20-18 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room |

**ADJOURN: MOVED** by Waters, seconded by Houck to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The September 19, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:37 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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