GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 15, 2019

The May 15, 2019 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:
J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates
Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large
Kathy Brodhead, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Alternate
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large, by phone
Roland Mason, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), Alternate
Dan Olson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Tim Kugler, Recreation At-Large

Non-Voting Members
Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
Polly Oberosler, Development Community At-large, Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Jim Cochran
Jim Mendonca
Pat Magee, WSCU
Marcella Fremgen

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

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Vice-Chairperson Wenum called the May 15, 2019 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:03 A.M.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Wenum confirmed that a quorum was present.

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

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as amended. Pat Magee is going to present after Committee Member reports.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 20, 2019 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Navy and seconded by Ferchau to accept the March 20, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS

Childers reported that they hired Jessica Frey in a permanent position with the Parks as the Biological Science Technician. They hired Tania Banelis for the Crawford working group position.

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Brodhead reported that they are opening gates today and they should all be open by noon. Sage-grouse closures are done. They had one issue on McCabe lane during the closures where someone broke the combination and broke the gate open.

Olson reported the soils survey staff will be here at the end of June, specifically for dry exposure sites. Lidar will be flying this summer and they should have results in a year or so.

Wenum reported their extended antler collection prohibition ends after today. They had some violations this year both for the May timeline and prior to that. The current fine is $70.90 per antler and five violation points against license. They also compensate the antlers.

Kugler reported that Bambi trail is now open to motorized vehicles and bikes. The Signal Peak area is open.

WAUNITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE UPDATE

Pat Magee gave update on the Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site. He brought in the summary of what they are planning on doing next year and the updates for this year. They started March 21, 2019 for their training day and went through May 11, 2019. There was one individual they didn't trust with their counts so they did not use their numbers. There were 208 visitors, 71 cars, 55 volunteer cars and 72 volunteers. They are seeing a decline from last year. They counted the birds on the Main Lek, North Meadow and East Ridge leks. The high male count for the Main lek was 2 on April 9th and the high female count was April 8th at 1. At the North meadow the high male count was 13 on May 7th and the high female count was 6 on April 5th. At the East Ridge the high male count was 13 on April 15th and April 17th and the high female count was 10 on May 8th. The highest count on a single day on all the site was 42 birds.

Magee went over the proposed changes to the Waunita. They are going to change the season from 40 days to 30 days. They are going to still have two day closures each week. All visitors will have to make a reservation for the trailer and are only allowed to view from the trailer. They will continue to monitor the sites. The closed dates in 2020 will be April 7, 8, 12, 13, 22, 23 and May 1, 2. The closed dates in 2021 will be April 7, 8, 12, 13, 22, 23 and May 1, 2. They will have signage for the parking lot to inform visitors of closed dates. The Sisk-a-dee webpage will serve as the main communications hub for the public. Wenum reported that because it is a State wildlife area the changes have to go through the Parks and Wildlife Commission and they will have to take formal action on it. It will not go through the Commission until November and then will be approved in January. Discussion followed

UPDATE ON CHEATGRASS PROJECT

Liebel reported there will be a Cheat Pull Day at Legion Park this weekend, May 18, 2019. They will start at 9 am and then break out in teams to go pull cheatgrass around Gunnison. Following the Chat Pull Day the focus of the campaign will shift to the production of media- a podcast series and a short film about cheatgrass invasion in the Gunnison Valley.

LEK COUNT UPDATE

Seward reported that this Spring was challenging as far as lek count access due to the snow and mud seasons. They did not get as many lek counts completed this Spring as they normally do. They didn't have access to three of the 11 leks at the end of March. In the last week of March they only counted 14 males and 7 females, compared to 2018 when they had access everywhere at the same time 47 males, 18 females. He is trying to figure how to handle the variation in the weather patterns and how to combat that so they can get lek counts completed efficiently and get enough lek counts completed so they can come up with their annual statuses of active and inactive leks. Because everything seemed to be delayed they sent out an email to all counters to do a late count between May 11 and May 20. That was because they didn't pick up a peak of breeding activity this year. At the Waunita Watchable Lek he saw 10 hens come in on May 8th. Hopefully they will get a higher count during the late count. He is also looking at how many of the leks were impacted due to the snow conditions.

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LEK PHOTOGRAPHY SUMMARY

Seward reported that Alex Clark was approved by the Committee. He came May 2 and 3. There weren't enough birds at the Ohio Creek site in April when they originally planned because the owner believed the counts were low. When he came they had good weather. He got a few photos the first day, but not as good as he was hoping due to low light. The next morning they tried a different lek further up Ohio Creek Valley. He had the same situation with low light and the birds leaving at 6 a.m. The photographer made a story about it on his website. The photographer doesn't feel that the pictures are professional enough for a magazine. He is hoping he might be able to come out again in the next couple of years to get better pictures.

SUMMARY OF THE USFWS RECOVERY PLAN MEETING FROM CPW AND GUNNISON COUNTY

Seward reported that the meeting was on the SSA update and Recovery Plan in Delta. They didn't get a lot of community involvement due to Delta not being a big area for the birds. Discussion followed on the different experiences everyone had at the meeting.

WET MEADOW RESTORATION UPDATE

Grant gave presentation on the update. The goal for the draft handout is to give an update of the work done at each site. The goal for the Wet Meadow Restoration Project is to rebuild the ecological and hydrological functions of the systems and make the systems healthier and resilient. They are doing a two day volunteer group with HCCA on September 13-14 at Black Sage Pass.

WINGS ACROSS THE AMERICAS HABITAT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD UPDATE AND PLANNING FOR LOCAL AWARD CEREMONY

Grant reported that they requested 44 awards for the Gunnison Basin area; plaques, awards, and certificates. They believe it might be best to do the award ceremony in September during their Wildland Restoration Volunteer event, most likely on September 6, 2019.

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.

06-19-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
07-17-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
08-21-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
09-18-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
10-16-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
11-20-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room
12-18-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: The May 15, 2019 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:16 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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