GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 17, 2019

The July 17, 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:
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)
Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large, by phone
Dan Olson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Others in the Audience:
Jim Cochran
Jim Mendonca
Ashley Merkel, USFS
Sam Liebl, Gunnison Conservation District

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

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Houck called the July 17, 2019 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 MAY 15, 2019 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Wenum and seconded by Ferchau to accept the May 15, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously, Peterson abstains.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS

Childers reported that starting in August she will be gone for four months for a temporary position at Colorado National Monument. The NPS will turn in a letter to the Board of County Commissioner for Jessica Frey cover her temporarily. Houck isn't sure if they are able to do that and recommends that they change their alternate to her instead.

Houck reported that they are looking for an alternate for Recreation-At-Large for the committee.

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Vasquez reported that they will have an open house tomorrow at the Fred Field House for comments for the Forest Plan. Introduced Ashley Merkel, wildlife resource assistant. She will be with them for at least six months.

Timberman reported that Creed Clayton was selected for the supervisory _____ biologist position.

Olson reported that they hired Sam Liebl as the new district manager of the Gunnison Conservation District office.

Wenum reported that the new Director for CPW is Dan Prenzlow and the new southwest regional manager is Cory Chick. The commission meets tomorrow and Friday in Telluride and should be deciding and do the final approval with the big game season structure. Originally it was to be a five year period but now it looks like it will be a seven year time frame, through 2026. There will be some big changes to the structure to put more gaps in between to allow wildlife to redistribute on the range. CPW had not changed the fine amounts for different violations had not been adjusted since 1985 so they made some changes. A lot of the basic level fines went from $50 to $100. He also stated that he would like to reconvene the Watchable Wildlife Sub-committee briefly to discuss the site and some of the options and would like to bounce them off that group and get things in place for next year. Houck wanted to know if they could get the update at the next meeting and that they would be it on the September agenda.

Houck reported that the STOR committee was able to partner with the National Forest foundation and create a stewardship fund. The fund is funded from people who have a permit on the National Forest who can choose to put money towards the funds. Vail and CMBR agreed to contribute, along with some others. The National Forest Foundation can match fifty cents to a dollar. They get to take the money and prioritize projects that fit into trying to address the issues. The four projects chosen were: finishing and completing to toilet at the trailhead up at West Maroon Pass and a full outreach program, getting the Cottonwood Pass toilet installed, Crested Butte Conservation Core for trail maintenance and cleaning up legal campsites, and Wet Meadow Restoration projects.

WET MEADOW RESTORATION UPDATE

Vasquez gave update on what is going on this year. This year water was running through the whole month of June and into July. Vasquez went over the awards received, current restoration projects in 2019 and gave visuals of the recent restoration work done. Handout provided.

USFWS RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

Timberman reported that the SSA is publicly available and encourages people to look over it and turn in comments. They can update them with new information as they go. They need to submit their final draft to the regional office by August 2, 2019. The federal register notice has to be noticed by October 5, 2019. Then there will be a notice of availability and she can give a presentation at that time. Timberman will send the document to send to everyone who could be interested.

LEK COUNT UPDATE

Wenum reported that the final lek count showed the numbers were down. He only had information for Gunnison and Crawford areas. The high male count was 363, down from 627 in 2018 and 758 in 2017. The high female count was 163, down from 233 in 2018 and 254 in 2017. They use two different formulas for population estimate, the Rangewide Conservation Plan and the Gunnison Basin Conservation plan. Rangewide population formula produced a population estimate this year of 1,781 and using the Gunnison Basin plan it is 1,452. The three year average for the range wide conservation plan is 2,858 and using the Gunnison Basin plan it is 2,331. For Crawford the high male count this year was 7, compared to 19 in 2018 and 22 in 2017. The high female count this year was 9, compared to 15 in 2018 and he does not have a number for 2017. Using the Rangewide Conservation Plan, which is the only one they use for the Crawford

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area, this year's population estimate is 34, last year would have been 94 and 2017 would have been 109. The year average population estimate came to 79.

Mendonca reported that March totals for all birds was 160, 196 in April and 140 in May. Total birds for the season were 554, 496 in the pasture and 58 on the East Ridge.

CHEATGRASS PROJECT UPDATE

Liebl reported that there has been progress with the Cheatgrass Project. They held a community workshop in the spring and will have another one in the fall. Reported that he is working on a podcast series. He has done some interviews for the short film.

Rummel reported that the Conservation District is starting a cost share program with landowners. With funds from the CPW HPP committee they were able to purchase Panoramic 2SL that they were able to provide for free to owners to treat cheatgrass. They are launching it this week. She was contacted by Craig Dremann, who is interested in coming to the September meeting to hear about cost and restoration and has concerns about cheatgrass, specifically how well our grass species is recovering. She would like to collect some data before he comes so he can provide some perspective.

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.

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 July 17, 2019 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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