GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2020

The August 19, 2020 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting, 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)
Tim Kugler, Recreation At-Large
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) (by phone)
Theresa Childers, National Park Service (NPS)
Kathy Brodhead, BLM, Alternate
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Allison Hearne, USFWS, Alternate

Non-Voting Members
Nate Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Alternate

Others in the Audience:
Marcella Tarantino, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Kathy Griffin, Colorado Parks and WIldlife
Sam Liebl, Upper Water Conservancy 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 August 19, 2020 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:03 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 JULY 15, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Wenum and seconded by Navy to approve the July 15, 2020 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS

Navy reported that HCCA annual meeting is 6 pm on Sunday. Greg _____ will be speaking on Forest issues.

Hearne reported that there is a current funding opportunity through NRCS that's for their RCPP. They are working with their Forest Service liaison about how they can make sure that applications can be scored higher for projects with Gunnison sage-grouse, therefor prioritizing those types of projects. The now former, Colorado Field Supervisor, Drew DaBerry is taking a new position at their Regional office so Ann Timberman will be acting as the Colorado Ecological Services Field Supervisor. She has a 120 day period

where she will be supervising the Lake City and Grand junction offices. In October Hearne will be taking a position with the NRCS as the area biologist, so others in the office will be taking over Gunnison sage-grouse issues. The future contact will be forthcoming.

Childers reported that the North Rim project is still in the planning stages.

Brodhead reported that they have sage-grouse restoration going on at the BLM. They have been decommissioning illegal roads in sage-grouse habitat. Next week they have a crew helping out to do some decommissioning and building barriers in the Gold Basin area. The BLM did an EA to do Juniper removal is Gunnison sage-grouse habitat and they just received permission for it. Their field office is partnering with the Forest Service and Upper Gunnison Watershed to do more wet meadow restoration this year.

Seward reported that Bill Zeedyk is in town and he has spent the last couple of days with him. They started at Cabin Creek on Monday and talked about additional restoration techniques and structures that they can use there. He is moving forward with developing a prescription plan for the various treatments they will be able to use. Yesterday they were out on the Redden Ranch and this year they did not graze the treatment area where they started the work in 2011. That area is where rock structures have been built and the response in the overall productiveness in that area is phenomenal to see what has happened over the past nine years. It is one of their best sites for the increase in riparian vegetation. Houck asked if there is any protocol when the Redden Ranch sells. Seward stated that he would like the partnership to continue with the new owner and will reach out to them to continue the work.

Wenum reported that they have been working with the Forest Service on Cunningham Ditch, which is the ditch that pulls water from Mill Creek and flows through Forest Service/BLM land to Miller Ranch State Wildlife Area. It has been a long process but they were able to get repairs done that were needed and hopefully will have better water flow next year. Effective August 31, 2020 Wenum will be retiring from CPW. Appreciates the opportunity to work with this group.

Houck reported that the BOCC adopted numerus changes to the LUR. They made changes to the sage-grouse language from pre-listing to listing as threatened but that they continue to work on preventing an up listing to endangered and that they still want to continue efforts and would like to see the eventual delisting of the species as well because of the work the community has done to help achieve that goal. At the last meeting the discussed a response to the press release put out by the environmental group and has run into problems with where to put the editorial so the task hasn't been completed yet and is looking into different opportunities of where they can get that message out.

Seward went over Matt Vasquez's update that he sent by email: "Here are a few updates from the Forest Service:

- District Ranger Matt McCombs is on a fire assignment, the Pine Gulch fire. I am acting on his behalf while he is gone.
- We continue to implement CCA vegetation monitoring on Flat Top. We've re-read most of our established transect plots, and hope to finish by next week.
- We continue planning, coordination and implementation with partners for wet meadow restoration work for this year, and making plans for next year. The majority of rock structures on Flat Top Mountain (USFS sites) are now ready for a second layer of rock, making progress in reconnecting channels to the floodplain. We will be looking to plan a big Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV) event next year for adding the second layer of rock, which is exciting because it comes full circle with working on many of the structures that the WRV folks originally constructed.
    - Bill Zeedyk is in Gunnison this week, helping with project design for multiple project sites on multiple land ownerships.
    - We have a wet meadow restoration stewardship volunteer day planned with HCCA for Saturday August 29; we'll be working at the Teachout site on Flat Top which is adjacent to the Redden Ranch.
    - We will be working with the STOR Corps crew September 1 – 3 on the same project at same location.

- Many thanks to HCCA for their success in getting the grant for 40k from the Colorado Water Conservation Board which will contribute significantly to wet meadow restoration. Paul Jones and I are coordinating with Matt Reed and Brett Henderson on use of these funds.
- The GMUG National Forests was recently able to obligate 20K in our agreement with Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District for wet meadow restoration. We appreciate the support of District Ranger Matt McCombs and Forest leadership on this.

- The GMUG National Forest is going into Stage 1 fire restrictions beginning at 12:01 Thursday morning."

2021 SUMMIT UPDATE

Navy reported that they had a meeting and they came up with April 18-20, 2021 for the Summit. They are reserving the space at the college. Rummel reported that Magee said that in the subcommittee meeting they talked about allocating $2,000 from the I & E committee and is pending executive subcommittee approval and will be done soon hopefully. He was estimating the cost of a Western student at $4,000, for them to organize it all so they are still short $2,00 for that position. He is seeking additional funding from any agencies. Hearne stated that the service could help support the framework for a student getting credit or volunteer hours instead of funding.

STEWARDSHIP AWARD NOMINTATIONS

Navy stated that they are asking for nominations at this time. The deadline for accepting nominations is dependent on when they want to present the award. Houck wanted to know if it would work to have the nominations to Navy by the next meeting and then they could talk about when to present. Navy said that would work.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE USFWS GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE RECOVERY PLAN

Hearne reported that she has multiple meetings going on. There were a few things from the last meeting she wanted to revisit. Would like a list of all the activities so she can add them to the list. The Committee continued going through the Recovery Implementation Strategy.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur by Zoom online meetings, unless changed for a specific reason.

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

ADJOURN: The August 19, 2020 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:35 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

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