

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 21, 2021**

The April 21, 2021 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)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Tim Kugler, Recreation At-Large
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA)
Matt Vasquez, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Kathy Brodhead, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alternate
Brandon Diamond, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (UFWS)
Dan Olson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Non-Voting Members

Nate Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA)

Others in the Audience:

Leah Waldner, BLM
John Scott, Scott Resource Management Services
Dayle Funka, USFS
Pat Magee, Western Colorado University
Marcella Tarantino, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Staff Members Present:

Aleshia Rummel, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist
Rebecca Ricord, Gunnison County Community Development

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Houck called the April 21, 2021 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.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 17, 2021 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Houck and seconded by Navy to approve the February 17, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS

Reed stated that they have some projects in line up Ohio Creek and south of Gunnison. Houck reported that if they continue to see positive COVID results projects outside will not have as many roadblocks this year as last year.

Kugler reported that currently in Signal Peak they are still under the sage-grouse closures in the northwest area. Chatting with the BLM, compliance has been good. The rest of the Signal Peak area is still closed to mechanized and motorized use through the end of the month. Trails to the east of the closure are open to

foot. Things are starting to dry out. At Hartman Rocks they have 30 miles of single track that people can go to. He stated that it hasn't been as busy as last year. They are working with the IRE class at Western and have been working on interpretive signage for the Signal Peak trailhead and hope to install it in the next week. They finalized the map for the kiosks at Signal Peak. More and more people are starting to understand the closures in Signal Peak.

Scott reported that the Gunnison Rising Habitat Prioritization Plan is at the national headquarters. It is still in review there. Houck asked what the public comment timeline is. Scott stated it is between 30 and 45 days and then final decision.

Olson stated that the soils update for the Gunnison area have been published. There is some good information regarding sage-grouse habitat. Mentioned that the five-year update for the working lands for wildlife sage-brush biome framework conservation action has been published. IT was shared through an email forwarded from Timberman.

Houck reported that they are putting together a committee for the wolf reintroduction program. Stated that he applied to join the Board. Diamond stated there was tremendous interest, approximately 150 applicants across the state applied and reported they have been evaluating the applicants and believes it will move along quickly in the next couple of weeks. Houck stated that he has had some good conversations with Congressman Joe Negous' office regarding a funding for a modern version of the civil conservation core, to provide funding to put people to work on public lands for habitat conservation. Houck will keep the group up to date and send out an email with more information. Houck reported that that there is going to be another busy year for building permits in the County.

Reed asked if there is a new senior wildlife biologist in Durango, including the Gunnison area and when they will be starting and their background. Diamond stated that they do have a new senior biologist in the southwest region, Jamin Grigg and gave his background. They will introduce him to the group.

Houck stated that the CPW had 38 proposals for State Park interests. It is in process now but they haven't heard anything back but will update when they do.

Funka gave the update for the USFS. Stated that litigation is underway. The USFS entered into an agreement with Western to conduct all monitoring criteria that was agreed to from the CCA and BO signed in 2014.

Peterson asked that at the next meeting that they have it in person for the people who would like to join.

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Houck plans on reaching out to all of the chairs with the subcommittees regarding updates and memberships over the next couple of months. Then they will hold an election for Chair, Vice- Chair and Secretary and asked everyone to think about whether they would like to take on the positions. Also, interested whether there are other subcommittees that would be needed and whether the current ones are still active and needed. Peterson asked that the committee list be sent out before the next meeting. Reported that Saguache County has appointed Amber Wilson as a regular member.

REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Timberman stated that they have hired someone to start August 1, 2021 for a Gunnison Sage-grouse biologist. They will be helping implement the Gunnison Sage-grouse Recovery plan. She received \$50,000 funding to help with on the ground projects. They put together a grant request through the Bird Conservancy for one million dollars. Hoping to hear on that in wither August or September.

Houck asked if she is asking people if they can help with how to spend the money, projects that it could be used for. Ann stated that yes, they are. If people have ideas she would like a list of projects that are ready to go and ranging in costs and then she could submit them.

Seward stated that Kathy Griffin is working with someone in Denver to get the \$50,000 the mesic restoration work this summer. Navy asked how they are doing on getting any further projects done on private lands. Seward stated they are making progress, met with a larger homeowner in the basin and did some work on their forest service allotment last fall. They were able to go out in the field and look at it and discuss the goals for the property. The owner is interested in having them come out this fall to tour their property and look at it. There are several miles that they can treat and increase the productivity.

Seward asked that the 2009 action plan for the committee be reviewed. Houck will reach out to Jim Cochran to get together with him and go over it also and figure out to update the plan to be more reflective to where they are at now. Discussion followed on the need and it was decided that they will review and update it in the future.

USFWS GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE RECOVERY PLAN AND CATALYST GROUP MEETING UPDATE

Magee gave a summary of the February 24, 2021 pre-summit event. They are starting to think about the 2022 summit and has a draft agenda to send out for feedback.

MID-SEASON LEK COUNT UPDATE

Seward gave the update. Yesterday, April 20, 2021, was the half way point for the official lek count season. Every year they monitor 82-83 leks in Gunnison Basin, from April 1-May 10. He is cautiously optimistic that they will be up this year compared to the last couple of years. The trend he is seeing is that they are on par with the spring of 2018. The numbers this spring are within one for males and females for the early count this spring. In 2018 their high male count was 627. Hoping to be up in the high 500 low 600 for high male count this year. Has seen seven or eight hens being bred this year. The count at the Waunita Watchable Site at the end of March on the north meadow was 27 males and 1 female. They don't seem to be using the east ridge as much as in the past. They haven't seen any on the traditional lek. Seward stated that they were able to get on the east side of the ridge and saw some birds.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

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

5-19-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
6-16-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
7-21-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
8-18-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
9-15-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
10-20-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
11-17-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
12-15-21	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: The April 21, 2021 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Gunnison County Community Development