

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

The July 21, 2021 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO, 81230 and 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  
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)

**Non-Voting Members**

Nate Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate

**Others in the Audience:**

Leah Waldner, BLM  
Liz Smith, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners

**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 July 21, 2021 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.

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** Agenda approved as presented.

**APPROVAL OF APRIL 21, 2021 MEETING MINUTES:** Moved: by Peterson and seconded by Kugler to approve the April 21, 2021 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS**

Vasquez reported that they are visiting new sites for wet meadow restoration today. They have a WRB event that is being planned from September 4-6, 2021. They will be doing some work on existing structures. They are nearing having a draft EIS for the Forest Service Plan later this summer. There will be a series of public open houses. He will let everyone know when they will be.

Childers reported that they are working on the Crawford population and a North Rim project is planned. She has been putting together a BA for it and they will be reaching out to Fish and Wildlife Service later and are hoping to start it this fall.

Timberman reported that two weeks from today, Alec Blair, nickname Whit, will be starting as their wildlife biologist. Nicole Alt is the official new project lead, supervisor, for all of Colorado. Seward has a seasonal

crew and he is looking for two more technicians and would like to have Whit come over and help with the Wet Meadow Restoration work. Timberman said that he will be there.

Brodhead reported that they have a new acting field manager, John Kaminsky. He will be here until they get a new field manager. They don't have an archaeologist and can't do a lot of work on the ground for clearance. They are going to be doing juniper removal in sage-grouse habitat, road decommissioning in habitat and are trying to get a handle on cheatgrass.

Diamond reported that over the last couple of years he has been in a lot of conversation about wildlife friendly fencing. They have engaged with CDOT, they are replacing woven wire with woven wire, in that instance they were behind to evaluate their fence design. It's a modified wildlife friendly design but that it isn't good for sage-grouse. Their ability to engage in fence design along the highway will have long term benefits for all wildlife and they would like to make sure they don't miss any other opportunities.

Seward reported that a new weather radar is being proposed on Big Mesa, southwest of town. The review process has been done really well with the County. The applicant heard the concerns of each entity and moved the location to where they are further from the lek that is located out there. State Bill 19-181, Wildlife Rules for Colorado Oil and Gas Commission. They expanded the 6/10 of a mile buffer around leks to a one-mile buffer and was formally accepted. The one-mile buffer carried on to the Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind.

Kugler reported they are in the middle of their field season. They had a crew of seven and are now down to six. They have been working with the Forest Service. They have built a mile trail in Signal Peak. They ran into cheatgrass and are hoping to treat it soon. They are hoping to utilize conservation crews to help spray the patches. They are utilizing some of the Great Outdoors Act funding to work into the West Elk Wilderness.

Peterson reported that this year one of the locked gates on Razor Creek was locked with a private lock and isn't sure what happened and they cut the lock and chain.

Houck stated that Gunnison County were pretty specific on the GMUG Forest Plan revision in regards with the Gunnison Sage-grouse management. There is a lawsuit from some environmental groups. The Stockgrowers' Association and Gunnison County have teamed up to make sure that they are not losing ground through litigation for the good work the community is doing and using all the resources they have to make sure the management plan is beneficial for the sage-grouse. The Gunnison Community Development Department reported that the number of permits is through the roof and have kept sage-grouse habitat in mind. Went over the status/past of the current work to change the requirements on size limits for residences. Reported that Gunnison County has the lowest unemployment rate in the State, around five percent.

## **COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP REVIEW**

Houck stated that he will have to step off the committee because he was reported to the technical subcommittee for the wolf reintroduction and they decided to meet on the third Wednesday of every month for the next few years. Liz Smith will take over his membership on the board. There are few other vacancies; development community, etc. They will need to re-elect Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary at the next meeting. Had a conversation with Seward and Diamond and Seward expressed a willingness to chair the committee.

Diamond and Seward will switch positions on the board. CPW will need to turn in a letter to the Board and the Board will take formal action to appoint Smith and Seward. Peterson expressed interest in either the Vice-Chair or Secretary position. He would elect to stay as the Secretary.

Peterson recommended that they send the bylaws out before the next meeting for review. Timberman asked whether it would be a good idea to have someone who works with other counties as the Vice-Chair. Houck asked them to think about who would be best to serve in the Vice-Chair position.

Standing Subcommittees: Executive Subcommittee, Technical Subcommittee and Information and Education (I&E) Subcommittee.

Ad-Hoc Subcommittees: Predator Control Investigation Subcommittee, Signal Peak Recreation Area Subcommittee and Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site Subcommittee.

Chairs will need to be decided for each subcommittee and a selection of members at the next meeting. Members do not need to be an acting member on the committee to be a participant on the subcommittees.

Rummel suggested that they let her know who the regular and alternates will be for each agency.

### **VOTE FOR CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND SECRETARY**

Will occur at next meeting.

### **LEK COUNT UPDATE**

Seward reported that the counts increased this year. They declined in 2017 due to the hard winter that year, 2018 was a drought year, 2019 was another intense winter, 2020 was a prolonged drought. The high male count this year was 629. The population estimated bird count is 3,086 birds, an increase of 884 birds from 2020. Range wide they are around a 3,500 bird population of Gunnison Sage-grouse. This year they visited 87 leks. In the past it was 82 leks but this year they were able to do some monitoring on the Ute Mountain property on Creek Mesa. He is working with the tribe to let them know that they want the best population estimate to move forward and is hopeful they will come around and share their data. Hopeful that with the precipitation this year they will have another population increase next year.

Seward stated that he took two photographers out this Spring. Brian Small, who does State birding books. He spent three mornings with Brian on three different leks and he got some decent photos and some could work for the next revision of the Colorado book. Also took Patrick Newcombe out for two days. He is working with the Princeton Conservation Society and they are focusing on making a short film on Gunnison Sage-grouse.

### **WAUNITA LEK COUNT UPDATE**

Will occur at a future meeting.

### **GB-SEA CHEATGRASS PULL DAY SUMMARY**

Rummel reported that in May they had a cheatgrass pull day and 30 people showed. On September 9<sup>th</sup> they are working on putting together another event.

### **STREAMLINED BUILDING SITES DISCUSSION**

Seward reported that Rummel and him were thinking that since they are receiving more requests for communication towers they are hoping on being proactive and steer applicants where there are already existing impacts to the sage-grouse habitat. They will discuss at next meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

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

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|----------|-------|-----------------|---|
| 8-18-21  | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room |
| 9-15-21  | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room |
| 10-20-21 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room |

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| 11-17-21 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room |
| 12-15-21 | 10-12 | Regular Meeting | Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room |

**ADJOURN:** The July 21, 2021 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:34 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Gunnison County Community Development