Gunnison County
COLORADO

GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
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Director Rick Cables
Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

Dear Director Cables:

The Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee has recently had several public discussions regarding the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP) relative to ongoing and new conservation activities in the upper Gunnison River Basin. The RCP was published in 2005 as a multi-agency effort by the Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Steering Committee. The former Colorado Division of Wildlife assumed the responsibility for implementation of the Plan by a Conservation Agreement dated May 3, 2005. It is our understanding that the Division also assumed responsibility for coordination of the Steering Committee after the RCP was completed.

At the time it was published, the RCP was the most complete, rigorous, science based Gunnison Sage-grouse conservation planning tool available. It continues to be the primary guidance for conservation planning and implementation for the Gunnison Sage-grouse. Often it is mentioned as the basis for a Recovery Plan should the Gunnison Sage-grouse be listed under the terms of the Endangered Species Act.

As with all planning documents, new research and other information begins to date the document, potentially limiting its usefulness. The purpose of this letter is to invite Colorado Parks and Wildlife, as the custodian of the RCP, and the RCP Steering Committee to a targeted meeting in the near future to discuss issues of concern regarding the RCP. The Strategic Committee considered a number of issues they would like to discuss, but in order to focus the subjects, at least initially; we suggest that the issues be limited to the following:

1) Predator control triggers (Predation, Objective #1; RCP Page 243)
2) Current science and information synthesis (in the context of how to keep the RCP current)

We know that other working groups may be interested in these discussions, and will likely want to bring other concerns and thoughts to the table. We are suggesting that they be invited to this first meeting, but the subjects be limited to those above. It may be appropriate and productive to have another meeting with the other working groups in the fall that will include a broader range of topics.

With a listing decision imminent for the Gunnison Sage-grouse, we believe a meeting with appropriate CPW staff and the RCP Steering Committee is timely and necessary. We appreciate your thoughts and guidance and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ken Stahlnecker

Ken Stahlnecker, Chair

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