GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 23, 2012

The August 23, 2012 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room in the Courthouse at 200 E. Virginia, Gunnison CO 81230.

Committee Members Present:
Voting:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) (arrived at 11:15am)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regular
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
John Murphy, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regular
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
David Wiens, At-Large Recreation Community

Non-voting:
Kathy Griffin, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate
Lee Spann, Public At-Large Alternate (arrived at 10:47 am)

Staff Members Present:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the August 23, 2012 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:01 am.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Stahlnecker confirmed that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Stahlnecker verified that proper legal public notice had occurred.

AGENDA APPROVAL: No modifications to the agenda were requested. The agenda was approved as circulated.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS FROM MONTROSE COUNTY: There was no one representing Montrose County present at the meeting.

In the audience:

- Samantha Staley, BLM
- Steve Westbay, City of Gunnison Community Development
- Allen Moores, Gunnison County Public Works
- Mike Philips, CPW
- Evan Philips, CPW
- Scott Wait, CPW
- Renzo Del Piciolo, CPW
- Tony Gurzick, CPW
- Dave Moreno, USDA WS
- Mike Yeary, USDA WS
- Ron Haining, USDA WS
- Charlie Sharp, USFWS

APPROVAL OF JULY 18, 2012 MEETING MINUTES: The Committee reviewed the minutes. **Moved** by Bove and seconded by Peterson to accept the July 18, 2012 meeting minutes. Navy abstained because she was not present for the meeting. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

SAGUACHE BOCC: Linda Joseph informed the Committee that the Saguache BOCC received information regarding the CCA and will look into the listing issue. The Saguache BOCC will be discussing the CCA and sage-grouse listing at their 8/30/2012 meeting.

USFWS; PROPOSED RULE DEADLINE CHANGE: Gelatt informed the Committee that the USFWS has received court approval to change the deadline for the Proposed Rule from September 30, 2012 to December 30, 2012. The Final Rule deadline remains the same, September 30, 2013. The Committee discussed why there isn't a year between the Final Rule and Proposed Rule. Gelatt informed the Committee that the court granted the USFWS an extension to the end of December to allow for more time to prepare the Proposed Rule and gather more input from stakeholders. Gelatt informed the committee that after the Proposed Rule comes out there will be a 60 day public comment period, and a 60 day public comment period on the economic analysis for proposed Critical Habitat.

USFS: Vasquez informed the Committee about the USFS Travel Management Implementation being performed on the forest. The USFS is working on the 2010 Travel Management Implementation. He provided a map at the meeting for the Committee to review. Vasquez explained that there are 19 miles total of sage-grouse habitat being monitored, 2 miles in the Almont Triangle area and 17 miles in the Lost Canyon area. The Committee reviewed the pictures he passed around at the meeting. The USFS will be monitoring these areas to ensure there are no noxious weeds growing, especially cheat grass. Vasquez explained to the Committee that the USFS performed full restoration in these areas and tried to reseed with a native grass mix.

WSCU OUTREACH: Wiens informed the Committee that the Western State College University (WSCU) freshmen are arriving in town and school begins 8/27/2012. Gunnison Trails is involved in an outreach program to spread the message to the freshman about recreation in the Gunnison Basin. Next year Gunnison Trails would like to provide a film to incoming freshman, instead of just an orientation.

USFWS; MEETING WITH SATELLITE POPULATIONS: Cochran informed the Committee that the USFWS met with other local working groups for the satellite populations in Montrose on August 22. He informed that it was similar to the June meeting with USFWS. Griffin opined that what was interesting at the meeting regarding satellite populations is they are more concerned in Dove Creek and Monticello with the Farm Bill because majority of their sage-grouse habitat is on private land. Cochran informed that with a listed species, NRCS activities on private land are a federal action subject to formal consultation. There is a conference report on NRCS practices that needs to be taken to the next level of a conference opinion/ biological opinion. Gelatt confirmed with Cochran that once the bird is proposed, the conference report becomes a conference opinion, and then once the bird is listed it can be converted into a biological opinion.

RIPARIAN ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE PROJECT: Cochran informed the Committee about the Riparian Ecosystem Resilience Project. He informed that two sites have been selected by the Gunnison Climate Change Working Group. Both sites are on private land. The first site is located at the base of Flat Top on Redden Ranches. The second site is southwest of town in the Wolf Creek drainage. Cochran explained that the Wolf Creek site has wetlands, so it needs a 404 permit from the Corps of Engineers (COE). Materials will be delivered to the sites in early September. Cochran suggested that the Committee visit the two sites and participate in the construction during the September meeting. The Committee agreed to visit the sites during the September meeting. Cochran asked the Committee to come dressed appropriately for the outdoors and expected weather conditions.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT DISCUSSION WITH MONTROSE COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES: Montrose County was not present for the discussion. Cochran informed the Committee that he met with new Delta County Manager Robbie LeValley. He informed that they discussed meeting with Delta County after LeValley formally assumes her new position October 1. Cochran opined that San Juan County in Utah seems to be very involved with sage-grouse issues. Cochran informed he will be meeting with Linda Joseph to see where the Saguache BOCC is in this process. The Committee discussed there might be a video conference due to the issue of travel time and distance.

CCA UPDATE: The Committee discussed what their agencies have decided regarding the CCA document:

GUNNISON COUNTY: Cochran informed the Committee that the Gunnison County BOCC met 8/21/2012 to discuss the CCA, and that County Attorney David Baumgarten reviewed the draft CCA. Cochran informed the Committee he received direction to work

with BLM and the Committee on the document. Cochran mentioned that he does not want to ask the BOCC to sign an incomplete document. Cochran provided the Committee with the draft support letter the BOCC will be sending to USFWS and BLM. Staley opined that it was helpful to receive the County Attorney's review.

USFS: Murphy informed the Committee that Acting Forest Supervisor Sherri Hazelhurst reviewed the CCA document and is ready to sign the document. Murphy informed the Committee that there is a new Forest Supervisor coming in September. If the final CCA is not ready until after the new supervisor is here, then it will have to reviewed again.

SAGUACHE COUNTY: Joseph informed the Committee that Saguache County will provide a support letter because there is an entire section in the CCA regarding Saguache County.

NPS: Stahlnecker informed the Committee that NPS had comments regarding the most recent draft, which were shared with Staley. Stahlnecker commented that the NEPA issue is a main concern for NPS, specifically, if it needs to go through NEPA or not.

NRCS: Bove informed the Committee that NRCS is ready to sign after correction of a few amendments, and after review of the final document.

CPW: Griffin informed the Committee that the CPW supports the document, they are just trying to narrow down who needs to sign the final document.

USFWS: Sharp informed the Committee that the USFWS has some comments after review of the CCA and is working on the mitigation section with Staley. He informed that the document will be under a formal conference process which will require a 135 day period of review.

BLM: Staley informed the Committee that BLM is happy with the document. She will send out the most recent draft CCA document to the Committee for review. Staley proposed that once the final CCA is ready we need to compile the support letters and signed documents along with the Biological Assessment (BA) to begin the "conference". Staley informed the Committee that Japuntich is working on finishing the BA by the end of September.

PREDATOR CONTROL INFORMATION GATHERING SESSION:

Cochran handed out the response letter the USFWS provided to the Committee in March, 2012. The following agencies presented information regarding predator control:

CPW: Wenum informed about the response letter from the CPW. He introduced CPW employees in the audience. Griffin began by commenting on the triggers in the Rangewide Conservation Plan. There was discussion regarding the population target of 3,000 sage-grouse for the Gunnison Basin. Griffin informed the Committee that the 2012 population estimate is 4,082 birds. Smaller populations meet the RCP predator control criteria because they have less than 25 birds and/or because are at less that 25% of

their population target. Griffin commented that CPW is not going to consider revising the Range Wide Plan until after the USFWS final listing decision.

Evan Philips provided an information sheet/diagram to the Committee to review regarding the Miramonte (San Miguel population) predator control program.

Wildlife Services: Moreno gave a presentation to the Committee. He informed the Committee about their predator control projects, and the actual cost for the 2 year predator control program at Miramonte was approximately $80,000. There was a discussion on starlacide and the reason it was not used by WS was because it was disapproved by the Wildlife Commission. The Committee had a discussion regarding ravens at the landfill.

PUBLIC AT-LARGE: Caloger informed the Committee he contacted field researchers regarding predator control. Caloger presented the articles he provided in the packet materials. Caloger queried the Predator Control Subcommittee members regarding any additional information they wished to provide to the Committee.

USFWS: Kevin Kritz on conference call. Gelatt referenced a letter from the USFWS Migratory Bird Management Program regarding a list of questions for Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) permit applications to control Common Ravens in order to benefit Sage-grouse populations, and a response letter to the Strategic Committee regarding predator control. She commented that the Gunnison Basin has not reached the population triggers provided in the Rangewide Conservation Plan, suggesting that there is no need for predator control at this time. In the letter, Gelatt referenced that the USFWS is recommending that the Strategic Committee and the Range-wide Plan Steering Committee re-examine the 25 bird population trigger and the population viability analysis that was used in the development of the population trigger. The USFWS also recommends in the letter that the Committee review available data on nest success, brood survival and female survival in the Gunnison Basin to see if there is any evidence that predation is reducing the survival rates and to identify any localized areas this is occurring.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Date	*Time*	*Notes*
September 19, 2012	9am-10am	Meeting in BOCC Boardroom
September 19, 2012	10am-4pm	Riparian Ecosystem Resilience Project; travel from Gunnison to project sites
October 17, 2012	10-2	Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The August 23, 2012 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:59 pm.

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL:

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Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

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Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

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Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III