

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
January 18, 2012**

The January 18, 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:**

Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)  
John Scott, Vice-Chairperson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate  
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)  
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)  
J Wenum, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW)  
Dan Reinkensmeyer, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large  
David Wiens, Recreation Community At-Large  
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
Russell Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate

**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 January 18, 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.

**APPROVAL of November 16, 2011 MEETING MINUTES:** **Moved** by Scott to accept the November 16, 2011 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Navy. Let the record reflect that Peterson was absent for the November 16, 2011 meeting and therefore did not vote on minutes approval. Motion carried.

**2012 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee Meeting Agenda Posting Location:** The Committee discussed that the current posting locations are outside the courthouse on the bulletin board and outside of the Commissioner's meeting room. **MOVED** by

Chamberland to continue using the same locations to post agendas, seconded by Navy. Motion carried.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:**

**Land Preservation Fund:** Navy informed the Committee that they are moving along with the effort to renew authorization of funding.

**Sage Grouse Festival:** There was a meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> that discussed broadening the Festival to cover other subjects such as endangered creatures and habitat. The Festival Committee will discuss how to work the CCA into the Festival. The Committee discussed that the Festival needs to show how to use conservation in a positive way. The Festival might be held at Western State College (WSC).

The Committee also discussed the insert that will go in the paper. Roger Haga with the USFS will do a 2 part insert for the papers. The first part will be all about the festival. The second part will be a general content piece that can be inserted in the paper year round. The tentative date for the Festival is April 14, 2012. The Festival will incorporate more activities for kids and encourage people to go out after 9am for their recreational activities in the spring. Chili will be provided for lunch. The Festival Committee is investigating having live predators for demonstration at the Festival.

Cochran informed the Committee that Pat Magee, representing Sisk-a-dee, informed him that Sisk-a-dee does not want to be the fiscal agent for the Festival. Sisk-a-dee is holding approximately \$2,800 from last year's event that the Committee agreed will be available for the 2012 Festival. Sisk-a-dee would like to transfer the money to a different entity. Cochran mentioned that the County can possibly create a fund to accept the money from Sisk-a-dee, but if they do it may affect the ability to apply for certain grants that are only available to non-profit entities. The Committee discussed the possibility of creating a 501c3 non-profit organization. Caloger will look into the details for a 501c3. The next Festival meeting is on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

**US Fish and Wildlife Service:** Reinkensmeyer informed the committee that the proposed listing rule for the Gunnison Sage-grouse should be posted in the federal register in February.

**County Commissioners Appointed:** Chamberland informed the Committee that he was appointed as the regular member and Commissioner Hap Channell as the alternate, representing the Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners.

**Colorado Parks and Wildlife:** Wenum informed the Committee that the merger is moving forward. The Legislature is in session. The draft Merger Implementation Plan is available online. Wenum informed the Committee that recommendations for the transition team can be submitted. Wenum mentioned that they performed aerial classification flights to enumerate and classify big game in the basin. Animals are scattered everywhere in the Gunnison Basin due to the lack of snow. Wenum informed

the Committee that since it has snowed the aerial classification flight results may have changed. Wenum commented that since it has been a mild winter the sage-grouse should be in good shape.

**PREDATOR CONTROL:** Allen Moores was present for a part the discussion. The letter that was sent out to the CPW and USFWS was provided in the packets. Wenum informed the Committee that he does not know when the Committee will have a response to their letter.

Wenum commented that Mike Phillips will need to address the sage-grouse research because currently the lek count numbers have been high, not low. Wenum opined that it is hard to argue that predators are having a suppressive affect on the sage-grouse. Reinkensmeyer commented that the USFWS may have the same issues.

There was discussion that the Committee would like to have the CPW include in their response letter the protocol to follow if the Committee decides to move forward on this issue, and include the steps they would need to take. Wenum will pass this on to the CPW.

Reinkensmeyer commented that this would need to be approved by the Rangewide Plan Steering Committee and their experts. The Committee would need to get information on where the populations are now and what we can learn. Caloger asked what was learned about predation in Miramonte. Reinkensmeyer commented that they are still learning about what is going on. At Miramonte the focus was on removing predators to increase survival of nesting sage-grouse.

Caloger proposed that after they receive a response, the Committee should approach CPW, asking them what results have been in other states. Peterson recommended that the Committee send a letter asking when is the appropriate time of recognition that there is a direct correlation between predators and survival of sage-grouse.

**I&E FUNDS:** Navy informed the Committee that HCCA would like to transfer the Committee's I&E Funds out of their accounting system, because the money interferes with their non-profit accounting. Cochran commented that he spoke with the Gunnison County Finance department, and they can create an account to hold these funds. The Committee discussed that they need to request that Gunnison County create an account to hold these funds. Navy informed the Committee there is roughly \$7,000 in the account, and there is currently no restriction on how these funds can be used. The Committee would like to get this done as soon as possible and preferably before the next meeting. At the next meeting the Committee will set parameters for spending the money. **MOVED** by Caloger and seconded by Peterson to request that the Gunnison County Finance Department set up a separate account for I&E Funds. Chamberland abstained from voting on the motion. Motion carried.

**ACTION PLAN:** Cochran informed the Committee that he met with the BOCC and they discussed his Prioritized Work Plan for 2012. The BOCC is concerned that the Committee is spending too much time revising the Action Plan, and they are not focused on accomplishing what is in the Action Plan. Cochran informed the Committee that the BOCC would like to see a prioritization of actions from this Committee. The Committee was asked to create a list of what

they think needs to be a priority within the next year. At the next meeting the Committee will review Cochran's work plan and discuss what they wish to designate as priorities for the Committee.

**HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL:** Mike Pelletier was present for presentation. Scott gave the presentation with Pelletier. Scott handed out information for the Committee to review. Pelletier presented the tool and described how it works. Scott commented that the Committee needs to discuss how they will use this tool and for what projects. Peterson had concerns on how this will be used by the County. Peterson opined that this tool is helpful but hopefully this tool will be used as incentive for private land owners instead of a punishment. Cochran commented that the BOCC wants to have a recommendation in the very near future from the Committee on how to use this tool.

**CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT:** Samantha Staley was present for discussion. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader for the Regional Director Susan Linner participated by conference call. Staley provided a revised draft of what was in the packet. Staley commented that this is very preliminary and will continue to be revised. Staley informed the Committee that a component of the development team's task is to look at weed management. Staley gave a presentation and reviewed the draft she provided to the Committee. There was discussion on what this will be used for and if it is sufficient for the next level of management. The Committee discussed how this process needs to work to flow smoothly. Staley discussed that the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP) says avoid power lines, bury when possible, and do not put up structures that may provide predator perches. The CCA is taking the direction to be more specific than the RCP. Reinkensmeyer opined that he agrees with Staley that there needs to be a definable area for this process. Staley intends to have the initial draft completed by February 18, 2012. Staley's goal is to have the final draft completed by March.

Japuntich commented that the BLM could have done this CCA and then taken it to the USFWS and finalized it. They branched out to the other organizations because they are all stakeholders in this process and BLM wanted to involve everyone to incorporate concerns and wishes. USFWS has to approve this for it to be applied.

Staley asked the Committee to set a threshold range. Staley informed the Committee on the three things that jump out that are different in the CCA than before: 1) Proposals in priority habitat, 2) Proposals proximal to Priority Habitat, and 3) Proposals in non-priority occupied habitat. Cochran commented that the USFWS needs to determine at what level they would like to be involved. **MOVED** by Scott and seconded by Peterson to establish the following: Development and Motorized Recreation >15, Non-motorized Recreation and Grazing >20 (Prioritization Tool habitat scores). This is a recommendation to all the teams to begin working on this project with these numbers and possibly refine the numbers as they work with them. Peterson expressed he has concern with the low number for development and motorized recreation. Motion passed unanimously.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Notes</i>
February 15, 2012	10-2	Regular Meeting; Election of Officers; review subcommittees
March 15, 2012	10-2	Regular Meeting
April 14, 2012		Sage-grouse Festival (tentative)

**ADJOURN:** **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The January 18, 2012 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 2:17 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