

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
March 15, 2012**

The March 15, 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)  
John Scott, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)  
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)  
Allen Roper, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA) Alternate  
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate  
Dan Reinkensmeyer, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Alternate  
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large  
Eric Ferchau, At-large, Development Community  
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community

Non-Voting:

Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate  
Kathy Griffin, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate (via conference call)  
Lee Spann, Public At-Large 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 March 15, 2012 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00 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 February 15, 2012 MEETING MINUTES:** Moved by Navy, seconded by Scott to accept the February 15, 2012 meeting minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

**Audience:**

The following were present in the audience for the meeting:

- Al Pfister, Retired USFWS
- Nathan Seward, CPW
- Samantha Staley, BLM
- Christina Santana, NRCS

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:**

**NRCS:** Scott introduced Christina Santana, the new NRCS Private Lands Wildlife Biologist. Scott explained her position to the Committee.

**USFS:** Vasquez informed the Committee that the USFS put together a proposal to their Remote Sensing Committee to find a better way to monitor sage-grouse habitat. Vasquez handed out a draft proposal to the Committee. The USFS is asking their committee to try to develop analytical tools. The Committee discussed if their respective organizations are going to participate in the mapping, and the benefits of having this information.

**CPW:** Wenum informed the Committee that the annual big game license recommendation meeting will be on March 29<sup>th</sup>, starting at 9am at the CPW office in Gunnison.

**BLM:** St. George informed the Committee that BLM moved early on road closures due to the mud season. St. George will discuss Road Closures later in the meeting.

**ROBERT L. PATTERSON AWARD NOMINATION REQUEST:** Navy informed the Committee that she received a request to nominate Dr. Pat Magee for the Robert L. Patterson award. The Committee discussed submitting a letter to nominate Pat Magee. **Moved** by Scott, seconded by Navy to have Navy draft a letter for nomination of Pat Magee for the Robert L. Patterson Award. Motion carried unanimously.

**FESTIVAL UPDATE/DISCUSSION:** Wiens informed the Committee that the Festival is at the Western State College Ballroom on April 14. He explained that they are obtaining student volunteers. This year will have a similar slate of events, with the addition of a raptor display, a bicycle race, and more kid oriented events. He informed the Committee that currently Festival funding is not sustainable and in the future the Festival Committee needs to explore more funding alternatives. This will be discussed soon after this year's Festival.

Cochran informed the Committee that last year fund raising began in August for the 2011 Festival and Summit. The Committee discussed that funding requests need to be done in advance, not a month before the Festival. Cochran informed the Committee that he and the Gunnison County Finance Department are working with BLM on a \$4,000 grant. The Committee discussed that in the long term it would be a benefit to formalize the Festival entity somehow so that they can accept and expend funds.

There will be two newspaper inserts for the public, one insert will be Festival specific and the other insert will have year round sage-grouse information. Cochran informed the Committee that he spoke with Roger Haga, USFS, and the year round insert will need to be completed after the Festival.

Seward informed the Committee that the Crawford Working Group has not heard much about the Festival and was wondering if this is just a Gunnison area event or if they could contribute. Seward commented that he informed the Crawford Working Group that they can get a booth at the Festival.

St. George showed the Committee a new informational sign for trial use at several high-use recreational areas near Gunnison. Ten signs were created to be posted this spring. Funding for the signs was provided by Gunnison County and the National Park Service. BLM and Gunnison Trails provided the sign design and implementation.

**2012 ROAD CLOSURE UPDATE:** Cochran informed the Committee that ads have been published in the papers. County road closures and BLM closures not already in place begin today. The Committee reviewed the advertisement, staff directions, and the log that the public signs to obtain the combination. The primary entities that enforce the road closures are BLM and Forest Service law enforcement. The Gunnison County Sheriff will enforce closures if they can identify a violation of a barrier.

Wiens informed the Committee about the small brochure for recreational users to carry and distribute to recreational areas for the public. Wiens provided a draft to the Committee members to review.

**I&E FUNDS THANK YOU LETTER:** The Committee reviewed the letter and agreed to send a letter to Pat's Screen Printing with Stahlnecker's Signature.

**GRAZING MANAGEMENT:** Robbie LeValley was present for the meeting via conference call. Cochran commented on the report provided in the packet. St. George informed the Committee that BLM has requested the raw data to help develop a grazing allotment monitoring approach for the CCA. St. George explained that BLM is asking for this raw data on behalf of the Committee and CCA stakeholders. St. George would like data before the next field season. Staley is working on acquiring this data, which she will be working on this summer.

LeValley recommended that the Strategic Committee write a letter recommending they move forward with this analysis. LeValley also asked that the Strategic Committee inform CPW about what they will use the data for. St. George commented that he is supportive.

**RATIFICATION OF CCA WHITE PAPER:** The Committee reviewed the packet materials. St. George informed the Committee that he wanted to get a pre-description of the CCA process in front of agency heads to inform them that we are continuing to work on conservation for the sage-grouse. St. George noted that the Director of the USFWS will meet with the Director of BLM at some point in the near future.

**USGS PROPOSAL FOR FEATHER COLLECTION ON LEKS:** Seward informed the Committee about a late request for feather collection. After reviewing the proposed protocol and thinking about giving permission, he had concerns and consulted with other CPW staff. It is a research project to look at sage-grouse DNA. Last year they collected feathers off of leks between the end of April and early May in the afternoons. There was a discussion if sage-grouse can detect scent. Wenum expressed he has concerns with the request from last year.

**HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL:** Gunnison County GIS Manager Mike Pelletier was present for the discussion. Pelletier showed the tool to Al Pfister and Linda Joseph on his laptop. Cochran informed the Committee that the County is using this tool to help with land use related sage-grouse habitat site analysis, including permit conditions necessary to protect Gunnison Sage-grouse and their habitats. Cochran informed the Committee that this tool allows him to see habitat types, priorities and relationships prior to a field assessment, and that it is a useful tool for him. Pelletier is using this tool for a Gunnison County strategic land use project. Cochran informed the Committee that the Draft Strategic Plan (Strategic Result B-1, Gunnison County Land Use Identification and Designation) will be presented at the joint BOCC and Planning Commission meeting on 3/30/2012.

The Committee discussed: What if a land owner is in a "red area" on the prioritization Tool? The Committee discussed possibilities of land banking, and that land owners need an economic incentive to participate in conservation. The Committee agreed that the Prioritization Tool needs to stay updated as information comes in. The Committee will not make the entire tool public because it does disclose lek locations. A public version showing only private lands information will be available.

**CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT (CCA):** Samantha Staley gave a presentation on the CCA. Staley provided two documents at the meeting with timeline scenarios. Staley commented that she is trying to get the Core Document to the Committee by March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Below are the two possible timelines presented by Staley:

**Review Process – Timeline #1:**

- March 30 - Core Document available for review. Strategic Committee review including agency leads and FWS review.
- April 19 – Strategic Committee Core Document approved, pending revisions. Full draft/backgrounds available for review
- May 9 – Revised full draft and revised core document available. Public comment period on revised full draft
- June 11 – Final CCA available for agency/county review & signatures.
- Late June – Strategic Committee submits CCA to FWS

**Review Process – Timeline #2:**

- March 30 – Core document available for review. Strategic Committee review including agency leads and FWS review.
- April 19 – Strategic Committee determines major work and changes necessary to revised core document
  - Ad hoc team forms to resolve

- Full draft/background available for review
- Week of May 7 – Special session of Strategic Committee:
  - Final Core Document approved
  - Public comment period on revised full draft & Core Document
- June 11 – Final CCA available for final agency/county review signatures
- Late June – Strategic Committee submits CCA to FWS.

The Committee discussed allowing a full 30 day comment period in June. The Committee had a discussion on how to notify the public, and the possibility of holding an open house. St. George commented to the Committee that if they want to go with another approach to the CCA being approved, the proposed dates and time lines presented will not be accurate and the dates will have to be revised. The Committee discussed taking the longer route to give more public exposure to ensure public trust. There may be a conflict with the USFWS releasing the Proposed Rule if they wait longer to get approval for the CCA. Staley will work on the Core Document and St. George will work with BLM's internal public affairs.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Notes</i>
April 14, 2012	9a-3p	Sage-grouse Festival
April 19, 2012	10a-2p	Regular Meeting
May 16, 2012	10a-2p	Regular Meeting

**ADJOURN:** MOVED by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The March 15, 2012 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:52 pm.

**CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL:**

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Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson

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Absent  
Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By:

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Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III