GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 15, 2013

The May 15, 2013 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)

Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
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
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) by conference call
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community

Non-voting:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate
Alli Melton, High Country Citizens' Alliance Alternate
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Alternate
Charlie Sharp, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Alternate
Polly Oberosler, At-large Recreation Community Alternate

IN THE AUDIENCE:
- Jenny Nehring, Saguache County
- Nicole Alt, USFWS
- Theresa Childers, NPS
- Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County GIS

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 May 15, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:03 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: The agenda was modified. The Committee agreed to swap the CCA and CCAA agenda items with the Gunnison Sage-grouse Proposed Rules item.

APPROVAL April 24, 2013 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved** by Navy and seconded by Bove to accept the April 24, 2013 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

USFWS; Yellow-billed CUCKOO: Gelatt reported that the Proposed Rule for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is scheduled for publication in the Federal Register on July 17th.

Gelatt also informed the Committee that the USFWS is anticipating that the Gunnison Sage-grouse proposed rules public hearings will be held sometime in the middle of July.

BLM; ROAD CLOSURES: St. George informed the Committee that the gates and roads are open. He also informed that there will be an upcoming meeting regarding the process of opening and closing the gates.

He also reported that the BLM finished a prescribed burn up on Sapinero Mesa, which was very successful.

BLM; PROPOSED TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULES: St. George reported to the Committee that BLM published the Proposed Travel Management Rules in the Federal Register. He explained that law enforcement will now be able to take action on the decision that was made in 2010. The Rules will be enforceable after the comment period closes.

NPS; FEDERAL REGISTER RULES: Stahlnecker informed the Committee that NPS also adopted travel management rules for the Curecanti Recreation Area that were published in the Federal Register.

USFS; TNC RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT: Vasquez informed the Committee about The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Riparian Resiliency/Restoration Project. He informed that they are identifying rock sources, identifying sites and making headway. He reported that the work period will be July 30th to August 9th.

RIPARIAN RESILIENCY FENCING PROJECT: Cochran informed the Committee that he will be meeting with the Moncrief Ranches manager, TNC, consultants and CPW in Kezar Basin regarding installing drift fences to reduce cattle trailing in riparian areas. The drift fences will not reduce availability of grass or use of the pasture. Cochran informed the Committee that this project is looking for funding. Vasquez mentioned he is interested on how this works because they may try this system on Flat Top. The Committee discussed funding sources.

GUNNISON COUNTY; PROPOSED RULE: Cochran gave an update on the meeting with USFWS Regional Director Noreen Walsh, Assistant Regional Director Mike Thabault, and Deputy Assistant Regional Director Nicole Alt. He reported that Commissioner Swenson, Attorney Baumgarten and Cochran discussed Gunnison County's Land Use Regulations,

what has changed since the 2010 Status Review (nothing), and development projections. Alt informed the Committee that the USFWS met with Gunnison County staff earlier today and discussed Gunnison County Comments and development in Gunnison County. Cochran informed that Gunnison County volunteered to be the clearing house for addressing questions from a rangewide perspective.

GUNNISON COUNTY; RAVEN CONTROL: Cochran informed the Committee about issues with raven control. He informed that Pat Magee will be putting together a basic study to try to determine the number of ravens in the Basin. The Committee reviewed the proposal that was provided in the packet materials. Cochran reported that there may be possible funding through CPW for the project. Cochran also reported that he recommended that Magee apply for Landfill Mitigation funds for the project. The Committee discussed when it is appropriate to take the studies to the next level. Caloger suggested doing a study on raven droppings to determine what they are preying on. Bove suggested that a nest predation study may be appropriate and timely.

CPW: COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION: Cochran informed the Committee that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission will be meeting in Gunnison on June 6 and 7. Wenum suggested having a presentation for the meeting instead of a social setting.

CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT UPDATE: Sharp informed the Committee that the Agreement was submitted to the USFWS on April 12th. He anticipates that a conference opinion will be completed in June or July.

CCAA UPDATE: Seward informed the Committee that two CIs under review by the USFWS are close to being done. The CIs have to be approved by the USFWS and obtain landowner signatures. Six CIs for properties with baseline reports are in progress. Three more CIs for properties with baseline reports need to be started and completed. He reported that nine additional properties totaling approximately 24,531 acres are being considered for enrollment this year, bringing the total potential acreage enrolled to 57,100 acres in the Gunnison Basin. That will put the Gunnison Basin over the CCAA goal, however several of these properties are already under conservation easements, so the USFWS may interpret the numbers differently. Seward is prioritizing his work with interested landowners, depending on the quality of sage-grouse habitat, distance to leks and size of the property.

Peterson commented that the landowners that have participated in the CIs are enrolling because of the benefits with the assurances and also are buying-in to the conservation efforts in the Gunnison Basin.

Committee discussed even if there was a 3 month extension of time, CPW would not have enough time to enroll a landowner because during the summer CPW needs to perform the vegetation transects and also study the growing season. Seward has been passing on additional interest in the program to USFWS.

Seward reported on the spring lek count. He noted that CPW is still collecting data sheets, and these numbers are not final. The spring lek count numbers are as follows:

LEK COUNT	Spring 2013
Males	877
Females	230

Seward informed the Committee about the trap and transplant effort this spring. He informed the Committee that CPW transplanted a few more birds to Crawford and Pinon Mesa. Pinon Mesa received 30 birds and Crawford received 27. There were 58 birds total transplanted.

Wenum informed the Committee that CPW recently announced a request for proposals for their Habitat Protection Program. This is the CPW annual effort to secure conservation easements to provide habitat protection and access for hunting and angling. He informed that the funding level is $10 million this year.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE PROPOSED RULES: Sharp informed the Committee they have been reviewing comments and working on responses. Alt informed that the draft Economic Analysis is still pending from the contractor, and they are anticipating it to be completed the end of June, or early July. She reported that the bulk of the work right now is to review comments. She informed the Committee that the USFWS has made a commitment with Gunnison County that they will work on understanding the regulations in the Gunnison County Land Use Resolution (LUR).

Alt informed the Committee that the statute (Endangered Species Act) does have the ability to call for an extension if there is significant new data that needs to be analyzed. She informed that there has been no decision at this time as to whether the USFWS will extend the process.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE FESTIVAL: City of Gunnison Event Planner John Messner was present for the discussion. He explained the pre-festival discussions on what the goals were for the festival. He informed that the main goal was to make it a learning and educational opportunity. He opined that this festival is held in a very difficult time of year. He understands that the festival is held that time of year because of the educational standpoint and the correlation with road closures and lek activity. He suggested using the funds generated from the festival by putting up an educational booth at already existing events and creating an educational campaign. He also suggested having the Festival in the early afternoon so that it can be similar to other evening banquets where you can serve alcoholic beverages.

The Committee discussed that if any agencies are not interested in continuing involvement in the Festival, they need to inform the Committee. There was a discussion that staff time and budgeting are difficult things to anticipate. Wiens informed that the educational outreach is very successful to the recreational community.

Cochran informed the Committee that the last Summit was in 2011, and needs to be held in 2014 if the informal agreement to hold a Summit every three years is to be adhered to. He mentioned that there was discussion in 2011 to have the Summit in Grand Junction. Cochran informed that there were 200+ participants that attended the Summit in 2011. Due to the availability of new research and conservation information, Cochran opined that a Summit needs to be held in 2014.

COUNTY COALITION FOR THE GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE AND UMBRELLA (RANGEWIDE) CONSERVATION PLAN: Cochran informed the Committee about the 11 county, 2 state draft agreement. He introduced Montrose County External Affairs Coordinator Jon Washbush. Cochran explained that this agreement was created for the conservation of the

species and that Gunnison County Attorney David Baumgarten drafted the document. Cochran confirmed that this agreement is not intended to re-write the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP). He mentioned that the RCP needs to be updated but it is the basis for what has been accomplished throughout the years and is central to this agreement.

Cochran confirmed that they are proposing putting timeframes and ramifications for not doing what is agreed upon in the contractual agreement. Cochran asked the Committee to share this agreement with their organizations to keep everyone current on what is occurring with the 11 counties and 2 state (MOU) Group. St. George suggested adding the Action Plan to this agreement.

SAGUACHE COUNTY GUSG CONSERVATION ACTIONS: Joseph informed the Committee that it is too late for them to create a CCA. Nehring informed that for years the landowners in the Poncha Pass area have been discouraged about sage-grouse conservation. She commented that the conservation easements need to have more language regarding sage-grouse conservation. Joseph discussed more about these difficulties, therefore on Friday, May 17th they will be holding a small strategic committee-like meeting. At this meeting they plan to discuss the Proposed Rule and road closures. Joseph informed the Committee that Saguache County passed a resolution regarding the regulation of 35 acre parcels. She mentioned that Bill Zeedyk (riparian restoration expert) will be going to Poncha the week of 6/10/2013. Joseph expressed that she is interested in looking into having professional staff that can perform inspections.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Date	***Time***	***Notes***
6/19/2013	10-2	Regular Meeting
7/17/2013	10-2	Regular Meeting; Public Hearing for USFWS will be the same day?
8/22/2013	10-2	Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The May 15, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:42 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