GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 19, 2013

The June 19, 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)
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Linda Joseph, Saguache County
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS) Alternate
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)

Non-voting:
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Alternate
Connie Rudd, National Park Service (NPS) Alternate
Elinor Laurie, Saguache County Alternate (on conference call)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Bobbie Lucero, Administrative Assistant III

Others present as listed in text.

IN THE AUDIENCE:
- Jenny Nehring, Saguache County (on conference call)
- Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County GIS
- Jason Anderson, Saguache County BOCC
- Ken Anderson, Saguache County BOCC

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the June 19, 2013 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 May 15, 2013 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved** by Bove to accept the May 15, 2013 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Gelatt. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

BLM; INDIAN CREEK PRESCRIBED BURN: St. George reported to the Committee about the prescribed fire burn the BLM initiated 2 weeks ago on Indian Creek. He reported that BLM had tremendous success with this burn. He feels that BLM now has better information to do prescribed burns in sage habitat as well, which they have been shying away from in the past. He informed the Committee that the BLM still has policy in place that allows them to burn in sage, and they have updated their policies to perform burns in sage. St. George informed that during a wildfire they will perform suppression in sage habitat. Gelatt opined that fire can be a valuable thing if controlled. The Committee had a discussion on what fragmentation really is in regard to burns.

BLM; HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL (HPT): St. George inquired to the USFWS if there is a way to put a "stamp of validity" on the HPT as a useful and valid approach to identify habitat and prioritize habitat. Gelatt opined that it will be addressed in the Conference Opinion on the Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA), and to her that gives it validity.

CPW; HABITAT PROTECTION PROGRAM RFP REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS: Wenum informed the Committee that the HPP applications are due today at 5 pm. After the deadline CPW will begin the review process.

CPW; PRESENTATION TO THE CPW COMMISSION: Wenum informed the Committee that the presentation provided at the CPW Commission meeting went very well and was very well received. He thanked everyone who participated at that meeting.

CPW; THANK YOU-2013 LEK COUNTS: Wenum thanked everyone that helped assist with the lek counts, access to leks, including private land owners, organizations, individuals and Sis-Ka-Dee. Wenum thanked Sis-Ka-Dee for recruiting students and engaging students in assisting at the Waunita watchable lek site He informed the Committee that there were visitors from 29 different states, 9 different countries, and 3 different locations in Canada. Visitors come from all over the world for this opportunity. Wenum acknowledged that he appreciated everyone's help and assistance with this project.

GUNNISON COUNTY; ANTELOPE HILLS WATER LINE: Cochran informed the Committee that the Antelope Hills Water Line Project has been completed and re-seeding/reclamation was accomplished according to the specifications that were set forth

with NRCS and BLM. Some re-vegetation in the pipeline route as it runs right by the County road may be problematic as there is no top soil, so that area will be closely monitored.

USFWS; ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: Gellatt informed the Committee that the USFWS is wrapping up their internal review on the Economic Analysis (EA) this week. Then the EA will go back to their consultants for changes. After the changes are complete, the EA will be published in the Federal Register around mid-July. She informed that the public hearings will occur no sooner than 10 days after it is published.

NRCS; GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM: Bove reported to the Committee that there was a deadline for applications for the Grassland Reserve Program for permanent easements. The Gunnison NRCS office received 2,500 acres worth of applications. He reported that that the 2,500 acres would be worth over $5 million, and NRCS has $3.3 million allotted. He reported that NRCS will have it all ranked by the end of June.

CLOVER SEEDLINGS: Peterson informed the Committee that in the Razor Creek draught area there are clover seedlings growing in the sage-grouse habitat. He opined that it is interesting to see the seedlings and growth after last year's drought.

GUNNISON COUNTY; LAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION: Cochran informed the Committee that he has not seen anything proposed for the Land Protection Legislation. There will be a meeting about this soon. Houck informed that Committee that the Public Lands Bill is not necessarily sage-grouse or sage habitat specific. He informed the Committee that the overarching goals of the Public Lands Bill are for animals and resources.

CCA UPDATE: Gelatt reported to the Committee that the USFWS is in the process of writing the Conference Opinion and will be wrapped up by the end of July.

CCAA UPDATE: Seward reported to the Committee that the two CIs that were waiting for final approval are now final. He reported there are 8,100 acres enrolled in these two properties combined. There is one CI pending final approval right now that has 182 acres.

CITY OF GUNNISON; GUNNISON RISING: Cochran distributed a document finalizing the conservation easement recommended by the Strategic Committee as mitigation for the Gunnison Rising project.

PREDATION – RAVENS: Cochran informed the Committee that Pat Magee has put together an application for funding from the Landfill Mitigation Trust Fund for a raven assessment in the Gunnison Basin. Magee is working with Seward to find additional funding. Cochran informed that Assistant County Manager Marlene Crosby reported that ravens are now becoming an issue at the Gunnison/ Crested Butte Regional Airport. The USFWS Migratory Bird permitting section wants to meet with the local working group for alternatives. Cochran informed that nest predation is not a part of the study proposed by Magee. The study will determine the numbers of ravens. He clarified that the study is not looking right at the impacts of ravens on sage-grouse.

USFWS DIRECTOR DAN ASHE VISIT: Cochran informed the Committee that USFWS Director Dan Ashe will be visiting Gunnison on 7/16/13. He passed around the draft itinerary for 7/16/13. He reported that he has been working with Colorado Department of Agriculture Commissioner Salazar's Office to schedule this visit and come up with this draft itinerary. Cochran mentioned that he has not received confirmation from Ashe or USFWS if the itinerary is O.K. with them. Cochran informed that he will communicate with BLM and USFS about getting them on the day's agenda. Cochran explained that the itinerary is a draft, and it can change depending on Ashe's desires.

RANGEWIDE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT: The Committee reviewed the agreement that was provided in the packet materials. Cochran informed that the appendices are not attached because they are very large. He reported that the 11 county group met last Thursday and approved some minor changes to this agreement & discussed signing a final agreement. He reported that Gunnison County Commissioner Paula Swenson is working on getting signatures from the counties and states by June 29th. This document is at the Governor's office now and is being reviewed. He reported that the Governor for the State of Utah is interested and is considering participating in this agreement.

Cochran informed that the HPT is in this agreement, and all signatories to the Agreement would agree to develop a HPT. The Committee discussed the collaboration and common goal of all entities in accomplishing what the agreement needs to accomplish. Chamberland informed the Committee that if any of the Committee members have any feedback regarding this agreement, direct their feedback to County Attorney David Baumgarten.

Houck informed the group that Montrose County is holding off on approving a gravel pit being installed due to the Proposed Listing Decision for the sage-grouse. Gelatt confirmed that this is the first that she had heard of the gravel pitin Montrose. Gelatt informed the Committee that the USFWS had a staff member review the Agreement and gave feedback. She informed that it is now being reviewed in the Regional Office.

GUSG BROOD REARING RESTORATION/ RESILIENCE PROJECT: Cochran informed the Committee that on the morning of 7/30/13 there will be training at the Multipurpose building, and in the afternoon the group will go up on Flat Top or Wolf Creek for hand-on training. He reported that they can accommodate 30 people. Cochran recommended that the Committee members attend this training day and attend the field day also. The Committee scheduled the field work day for 8/5/2013. The group will be building structures by hand.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Date	*Time*	*Notes*
July 16, 2013	12 am -1 pm	Luncheon with USFWS Director Dan Ashe; Multipurpose Building
July 17, 2013	10 am -2 pm	Regular Meeting
July 30, 2013	8:30 am	AM Training @ Multipurpose Building; PM Training at Wolf Creek or Flattop
August 05, 2013	8 am -5 pm	Brood Rearing Restoration/ Resilience Project on Flattop

August 22, 2013	10 am -2 pm	Regular Meeting
September 18, 2013	10 am -2 pm	Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The June 19, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11: 52 am.

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