GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MEETING NOTES
July 16, 2013

The July 16, 2013 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee Work Session was held in the Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center at 275 S. Spruce, Gunnison CO 81230.

Committee Members Present:
Voting:
Ken Stahlnecker, Chairperson, National Park Service (NPS)
J Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife (CPW)
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks & Wildlife Alternate
Connie Rudd, National Park Service Alternate
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Alli Melton, High Country Citizens Alliance Alternate
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners Alternate
Brian St. George, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
John Murphy, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service Alternate
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Eric Ferchau, At Large, Development Community
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Charlie Sharp, US Fish and Wildlife Service Alternate

BOCC and Staff Members Present:
Paula Swenson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners, Chairperson
Matthew Birnie, Gunnison County Manager
David Baumgarten, Gunnison County Attorney
Jim Cochran, Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Brenda Wiseman, Legal Assistant

Others present as listed in text.

LUNCHEON: Gunnison County Chairperson Swenson called for the luncheon to begin at 12:06pm.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Ken Stahlnecker called the July 16, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 12:30pm.

INTRODUCTIONS: Chairperson Stahlnecker introduced himself, members of the Strategic Committee and others to US Fish and Wildlife Director Dan Ashe (Director Ashe). Present were J. Wenum, Greg Peterson, Brian St. George, Charlie Sharpe, Matt Vasquez, Sue Navy, Connie

Rudd, John Murphy, Doug Washburn, Jim Cochran, Alli Melton, Jonathan Houck, Nate Seward, Saguache County Commissioner Linda Joseph, Saguache County Wendi Maez, Saguache County Attorney Ben Gibbons, Patty Gelatt, Phil Chamberland, Peter Caloger, and Eric Ferchau. David Wiens arrived at approximately 1:00pm.

Later in the meeting Chairperson Stahlnecker introduced from San Juan County Utah, Bruce Adams, Phil Lyman, Kelly Pehrsen, and Nick Sandberg.

REMARKS BY DIRECTOR ASHE: Director Ashe thanked the Committee, representatives of Gunnison County, landowners and Commissioner John Salazar for their hospitality and the invitation to visit the Gunnison community. Director Ashe said that "impressive" is the one word that describes what he has seen today. He summarized the meeting in Washington, D.C. with Gunnison County Chairperson Paula Swenson and County Attorney David Baumgarten then commented that after they left he said those people really knew what they were talking about. He appreciated that Chairperson Swenson and County Attorney Baumgarten didn't come to complain - that they were talking our language. Director Ashe acknowledged the commitment of the people of Gunnison County and this visit made a huge impression on him. Further stating, there is commitment here to make sure the people of this community are being good stewards of the bird and the land as a whole. What the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) needs to accomplish is learn more about what is being done here, make a determination whether the species is endangered or threatened in all significant portions of its range. The FWS needs the best scientific and commercial information available to make its determination. Director Ashe said the 2 main questions we need to ask ourselves is what is the status of the Gunnison Sage-grouse and what are the threats of the Gunnison Sage-grouse. If the FWS makes a threatened determination the law makes them look into the future. Director Ashe said it appears to him that we are doing what is necessary to conserve the Gunnison Sage-grouse in Gunnison County. He and the FWS staff are treating this decision with the seriousness it deserves. He said it is great to see the partnership and leadership.

Director Ashe commented that the final determination has been extended by 6 months. The final determination will be made March 31, 2014. He recommended that Gunnison County and its constituents take full advantage of the time extended to comment on their efforts. Director Ashe added that he has received strong reaction from the agricultural community and energy community on this listing and other listings, and reported that Rule 4.d restrictions allow permits for daily agricultural activity and production in such habitats. Director Ashe reported that the Sage Brush Lizard Model provides the best example or model for a proposed listing where community efforts were considered and after reviewing those efforts the FWS concluded that a sufficient amount of conservation was being done and the FWS determined the listing was not warranted. Director Ashe assured that even if the Gunnison Sage-grouse is listed, the Gunnison community would get the credit for their work.

Director Ashe concluded what he has seen here is impressive and an inspiration. He acknowledged that these are people of good intention and thanked all again for the hospitality.

REMARKS BY COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER JOHN SALAZAR: Commissioner John Salazar thanked all of Gunnison County for what they are all doing

here. Commissioner Salazar said he began conservation efforts years ago with Greg Peterson and others in the Gunnison community. He can only hope that Director Ashe takes back the message to Washington that he now knows what the west is like. Commissioner Salazar thanked Director Ashe for seeing what the Gunnison folks have been able to do and added that the work can be done here on the ground, and starts at the community level. Commissioner Salazar is so proud to be part of this project and honored by the Gunnison efforts. Commissioner Salazar concluded that he can only hope the Gunnison community can be a model for all other communities across America.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTS: Greg Peterson thanked Director Ashe for traveling to Gunnison to see the efforts begin conducted on the ground and expressed his appreciation for the 6 month extension of the determination allowing Gunnison community members to further submit additional information. He hopes that Director Ashe will acknowledge when he returns to Washington, D.C. that the most important thing that is happening is the attitude shift. When the Committee first started its conservation efforts it was adversarial to the community, now the attitude of the community has changed. The focus is more on the Gunnison Sage-grouse rather than the listing itself and what can be done to sustain the future of the Gunnison Sage-grouse. Peterson said he is proud of that.

Peter Caloger commented that he has a neighbor that is curious about signing a CCAA but has expressed concerns about private property rights, additional restrictions on the property if the Gunnison Sage-grouse is listed and whether a property owner can withdraw from a CCAA if the bird is listed. He believes that some guidance with private property owners will help get more individual property owners signed onto a CCAA. Director Ashe responded that CCAA's are all voluntary and a landowner can make the decision to withdraw if they chose. NRCS has been a great partner and the combination is a great benefit along with other government agencies and private landowners.

Sue Navy explained that her conservation efforts began around 1995 by participating in the first working group. She asked Director Ashe to provide some guidance as to what might still be needed from the Committee and community prior to March 31st that has not yet been addressed. Director Ashe responded that it is the FWS desire to have a continuing dialogue with Gunnison constituents. The FWS needs to understand what local regulation is in place and needs to learn more about what is on the ground and in place in Gunnison County. Director Ashe said his regional office and field staff will continue to keep an open dialogue with Gunnison constituents. The key aspect is to continue to reach out to other counties, partner with them and continue the dialogue. Director Ashe concluded that the decision by the FWS could eventually come down to the status of the bird and the FWS may not have to regulate activities because Gunnison County is doing everything possible to protect the bird.

Sue Navy questioned whether the FWS was pursuing a listing without regulation. Director Ashe responded if the bird is listed as threatened or endangered, the FWS has to identify its habitat. Director Ashe said the law allows for special 4.d rules to tailor restrictions that FWS does not need to regulate.

Brian St. George, Field Manager BLM, thanked Director Ashe for him coming to Gunnison and for the professionalism of his staff. St. George had two questions for Director Ashe. The first

question was regarding certainty and the other as holding this community as a model for other potential listings. There has been a long concern about what creates regulatory certainty. St. George believes there has been a great deal of commitment and collaborative effort on behalf of Gunnison constituents. He questioned whether the FWS has conducted a PECE analysis that include certainty. Secondly, St. George asked how this community model can be promoted. As to certainty, Director Ashe responded a PECE analysis has not yet been done but is something the FWS will be doing. The FWS will be using the Gunnison community's collaborative efforts as a framework for the PECE analysis. Certainty falls under assurances in CCAA's. If a landowner is complying with those requirements in the CCAA, they will build those assurances into their baseline analysis. Director Ashe further stated the BLM and Forest Service are acting under the CCA. There are no assurances with the federal agencies and federal agencies do not get certainty. Certainty and assurances on private lands will fall under a 4.d Rule. St. George emphasized that the BLM is providing the FWS with certainty - that these certainties are being addressed. Director Ashe replied that if it was determined that certainty could be addressed, there would be consideration for the listing as not warranted. As to holding this community as a model, Director Ashe acknowledged this is definitely a model that can be used. With the potential listing of the Greater Sage-grouse, there are 11 states effected with the same set of federal agencies that are working collaboratively on the conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse. Director Ashe recognized in this community the easements in place that are supporting families to ranch and farm, and believes these are good efforts and an excellent model. The efforts regarding ranching are highly compatible actions for the prairie chicken and sage grouse.

Bruce Adams, San Juan County, Utah Commissioner, expressed his appreciation of the collaborative efforts of the 11 counties that entered into the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement regarding the Gunnison Sage-grouse. He announced that the Governor of the State of Utah has signed the Conservation Agreement. San Juan County thanked all the participating Colorado counties for forming the coalition among the counties with Gunnison Sage-grouse populations. Adams then briefly narrated that San Juan County is the largest county in the United States territorially. The occupied and unoccupied habitat is estimated at 35% of its public property and 95% of the habitat is on private property. Adams explained it is a difficult process of explaining to the citizens of San Juan County to give up their private property rights in an effort to conserve the bird. Some landowners have enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and have conservation agreements in place. Satellite populations exist in Monticello and Dove Creek. In 1996, a local group was developed to begin conservation efforts for the bird. An issue San Juan County faces is the lack of water and drought conditions. Predator control is also an issue San Juan County is facing. Adams expressed that a listing would be devastating to farmers and ranchers with a loss of economic feasibility and income. Adams concluded that he appreciated the opportunity to share these comments with Director Ashe and would commit to keeping an open dialogue with the FWS and other government agencies.

Phil Lyman, San Juan County, Utah, asked when the economic impact analysis will be done. Director Ashe replied the law requires the FWS to look at status of species and regulatory impact initially; an economic analysis is not done at the listing stage and will be conducted when determining the critical habitat.

Greg Peterson concluded his comments that the agricultural community's biggest fear is certainty. There is more certainty with private land. He added the agricultural community is concerned

about the potential impact to grazing permits. Director Ashe acknowledged this is a good point, as a producer, there are no assurances on grazing allotments. Director Ashe said the CCAA with the BLM does provide some certainty. What could change is a consultation with FWS. There are some assurances at that level.

Kathy Griffin, CPW Statewide Grouse Coordinator, asked if conservation measures continue, will the FWS determine if the work is actually done. Director Ashe responded that the BLM provisions are certain, local zoning ordinances are certain, and they have record of practices and accomplishments under CCAA.

Unidentified female speaker asked what information Director Ashe would use to determine these measures are working for the bird. Director Ashe responded population numbers.

Chairperson Stahlnecker thanked everyone for coming with a special thank you to Director Dan Ashe and Commissioner John Salazar.

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Chairperson Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The July 16, 2013 work session of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 1:35 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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Brenda Wiseman

GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION

LUNCHEON WITH USFWS DIRECTOR DAN ASHE

DATE: July 16, 2013
PLACE: Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center, Van Tuyl Room

1.	**12:00pm**	•	**Introductions**
2.	**12:10**	•	**Luncheon**
3.	**12:45**	•	**Remarks by Director Ashe**
4.	**1:00**	•	**Remarks by Colorado Department of Agriculture Commissioner John Salazar**
5.	**1:15**	•	**Committee Member Comments**
6.	**1:30**	•	**Adjourn**

NOTE: This agenda is subject to change, including the addition of items up to 24 hours in advance or the deletion of items at any time. All times are approximate. Regular Meetings, Public Hearings, and Special Meetings are recorded and ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON ANY ITEM**. Work Sessions are not recorded and formal action cannot be taken. Two or more Gunnison County Commissioners may attend this meeting. For further information, contact the County Administration at 641-0248. If special accommodations are necessary per ADA, contact 641-0248 or TTY 641-3061 prior to the meeting.**