

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 19, 2025**

The March 19, 2025 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2nd floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO, 81230. The meeting was also available on Zoom.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Liz Smith, Vice-Chairperson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA)
Matthew Vasquez, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Pat Magee, Research and Education At-Large (Western Colorado University, WCU)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Angela Trnka, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Sarah Elzay, Gunnison County Cheatgrass Coordinator

Non-Voting Members

Brandon Diamond, CPW
Jon Hare, High Country Conservation Advocates
Nathan Darnall, USFWS
Steffanie Chain, Public at Large Alternate

Others in the Audience:

Miranda Middleton, CPW
John Scott, Private Consultant
Jared Dunn, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
Matt Holleran, BLM
Amanda Aulenbach, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD)
Ari Yamaguchi, UGRWCD
Aleshia Rummel, CPW

Staff Members Present:

Misty Castillo, Gunnison County Community and Economic Development Department
Ben Prior, Gunnison Conservation District
Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Griffin called the March 19, 2025, meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:03 AM.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM: Griffin confirmed that a quorum was present.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Moved: by Navy and seconded by Caloger to approve the March 19, 2025, agenda as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Smith and seconded by Navy to approve the February 19, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS / REPORTS

Magee, presented Gabby Zaldumbide with the 2023 Citizen Conservation Achievement award through the Central Mountain Plans Section of the Wildlife Society for her advocacy for public lands and contributions to wildlife conservation.

Griffin, raven abundance and density study being conducted in the Crawford Gunnison sage grouse (GUSG) population by a master's student from California State Polytechnic University. The student will be starting raven point counts at landfills across the GUSG populations. These raven counts will be conducted throughout the summer. Magee, another student starting a raven density project this coming fall for the Gunnison Basin.

Griffin, hosted meeting with Miranda Middleton and a District Wildlife Manger at the Crawford Community Center going over the new Crawford area BLM road closures for GUSG. All closed gates have new signage that explain the GUSG, wintering big game, and shed hunting closures in the Crawford area. Emily Latta, BLM Wildlife Biologist, has a done a great job getting the word out about the new Crawford area BLM closures. Gunnison County landfill has adjusted hours for late morning opening to reduce disturbance to leks.

Vasquez, the Flat Top closure will officially start on December 1st of this year. The closure will last from December 1st to July 15th annually. This closure is to all human activity.

Middleton, Aleisha Rummel hired on as the Gunnison Basin GUSG lek count coordinator. Counts will start next week. Has set up dates for two photographers for lek access.

Smith, Senator Jeff Hurd has introduced the "Productive Public Lands Act" bill which would roll back nine Resource Management Plans (RMPs). Smith proposes that the committee send a letter to Congressman Hurd highlighting the importance of these locally developed RMPs and their impact on GUSG conservation. Griffin, this bill would revert management plans back to the no action alternative (Alternative A). This means that all sage grouse regulations would fall to RMPs by field office. These field office plans are outdated and do not have GUSG as being federally listed. This bill would also roll back the BLM's big game migration plan. Griffin, state of Colorado is aware of this and is preparing for it. Griffin and Smith will help write the letter and send it to the committee for edits.

Letter to Jeff Hurd: motioned by Navy, seconded by Magee. Motion carried unanimously.

Navy, Jon Hare has been working on putting together several High County Conservation Advocates stewardship projects.

Vasquez, Gunnison Ranger District are having their spring permittee meetings. Making sure these meetings are following the Forest Plan's GUSG conservation measures.

Caloger, raised concern about the process for revocation of Conservation Benefits Agreements (CBAs). Darnall and Trnka clarify that the USFWS will work closely with landowners to avoid revoking CBA permits. CBAs are a new form of agreement and the USFWS is still refining the process in which these agreements are made.

Trnka, the Gunnison Recovery Implementation Strategy (RIS) meeting went well. Four RIS meetings have occurred in Gunnison, Crawford, Pinon Mesa, and Monticello. There are two RIS meetings remaining, Poncha Pass and San Miguel/Cerro Summit. Preset GIS layer. The US Geological Service (USGS) led for the PRESET GIS layer is leaving in March. USGS is still committed to completing the PRESET project. There will be expiration dates for CBAs. Once expired, CBAs will have an option for renewal. Duration will be on a case-by-case basis, typically these agreements will last 20 to 30 years.

Darnall, USFWS will be bringing back probationary employees. Some USFWS grants have been unfrozen for several organizations due to a lawsuit by the state of Colorado. The money for Gunnison County is still frozen.

Elzay, cheatgrass subcommittee meeting occurred on March 10. A cheatgrass workshop for landowners in the Gunnison Basin is on April 11th. Gunnison City pull day will likely be on May 31st. A ground truthing event for the Cheat Maps app is being planned or sometime in May. The cheatgrass subcommittee is working on developing a long-term strategic plan for addressing cheatgrass within the Gunnison Basin. The

next cheatgrass subcommittee meeting is April 14th. This subcommittee will continue to meet monthly. A shared Google Drive folder has been made for all materials related to this subcommittee.

Amanda, hiring two technicians for the field season. A community event to screen the second episode of the docuseries "Thinking Like Water" will occur on April 18th at 5:30pm.

HPT UPDATE

Two technical subcommittee meetings so far. Meetings have focused on layer updates such as annual layer updates for roads, lek statuses, lek polygons, new buildings, and driveways. A major focus for this subcommittee has been resizing lek buffer size from 0.6 mile to one mile. The subcommittee has decided to test the one mile lek buffer in the tool and see how much the mapping changes when compared to the 0.6 mile lek buffer. This test will occur in the next technical subcommittee.

Once the subcommittee has determined updates, Rummel will update the tool documentation to reflect these changes. Rummel will also have a documented comparison of the 2018 revisions and the new 2025 revisions. Rummel will also focus on making all tool documentation more explicit. Current tool documentation is vague in certain areas. Once Rummel has completed the updated documentation, she will present it to the committee to approve.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2nd floor meeting room and by Zoom online meetings, unless changed for a specific reason.

05-21-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
06-18-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
07-17-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
08-20-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
09-17-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
10-15-25	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: The March 19, 2025, meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:06 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Ben Prior, Gunnison Conservation District