GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 22, 2013

The August 22, 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)
Sue Navy, High Country Citizens' Alliance (HCCA)
Russell Japuntich, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alternate
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Alternate
David Wiens, At-large Recreation Community
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
John Murphy, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Nathan Seward, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Alternate
Chris Bove, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Patty Gelatt, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) conference call
Linda Joseph, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners (Saguache BOCC) conference call

Non-voting:
Polly Oberosler, At-large Recreation Community Alternate
Charlie Sharp, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Alternate

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

IN THE AUDIENCE:
- Jenny Nehring, Saguache County (on conference call)
- Russ Forrest, Gunnison County Community Development Director
- Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Stahlnecker called the August 22, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:01 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. Cochran informed the committee that the minutes from last month's meeting are not ready for review. Amend agenda to reflect that the July 17, 2013 meeting minutes are not available for review.

JULY 16, 2013 LUNCHEON NOTES: The Committee discussed the luncheon notes from the 7/16 meeting need to be amended. Navy informed that page 5, there was a discussion about the CCA, not the CCAA. The Committee agreed that the correction is accurate.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS:

USFS; FLAT TOP RESTORATION PROJECT: Murphy thanked everyone on the Committee, and High Country Citizens' Alliance, for the work they performed on the Flat Top Restoration Project.

BLM; INTRODUCTION OF ACTING FIELD MANAGER: Japuntich introduced Dave Kauffman. Kauffman is the Associate Field Manager in the Uncompahgre National Forest Field Office in Montrose, and is going to be the Acting Field Manager in Brian St. George's absence while he is in Washington, DC. Kauffman will be here until mid-October. Kauffman introduced himself and informed he does have a tie to the Gunnison Sage-grouse during previous jobs in Montrose.

BLM; SIGNED CONFERENCE OPINION: Japuntich informed the Committee that BLM has a signed Conference Opinion on the Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) back from the USFWS, as of 7/30, and the BLM is in process of implementing the CCA and keeping reports on the work they are performing. He informed the Committee that he will provide everyone a copy. There was a discussion if BLM is considering CCAs in other populations. Japuntich informed that the other populations are looking into creating a CCA in their areas that will fit their population.

COUNTY LAND USE REGULATIONS (LUR): Cochran informed the committee that Gunnison County is in the process of amending their Gunnison Sage-grouse land use regulations. He informed that they BOCC has directed staff to work on the LUR amendment process. He provided maps depicting tiered habitat on a local ranch. He reported that these maps will be provided to landowners when requested if the proposed regulation amendments are adopted, and they do not release lek locations. Cochran opined the Habitat Prioritization Tool (HPT) is very accurate. There was discussion that the mapping for the HPT is subject to on the ground inspection.

USFWS; CCA: Gelatt informed the Committee the USFWS has signed the CCA. She informed they were anticipating the notice of availability for the draft Economic Analysis to go to the register on Tuesday, but it was delayed which may affect the public hearing. She reported that the public hearing is still tentatively scheduled for 9/4 at the Aspinall Wilson Center. She reported that FWS presentations and Q&A will be from 4 pm -5 pm and the formal public hearing will be from 5 pm -6 pm.

CPW; CCAA: Seward informed the Committee CPW is working with a landowner for possible enrollment in the CCAA. He reported that this landowner has 20,000 acres, and just over 12,000 is in the occupied range in the San Miguel Basin. He reported that they are having the discussion about how interested the landowners are and if they would like to get enrolled. Seward reported that the 182 acre property CPW was reviewing previously now has a finalized Certificate of Inclusion (CI).

YELLOW BILLED CUCKOO: Gelatt reported to the Committee the Yellow Billed Cuckoo is going to the Federal Register on 9/17.

SAGUACHE COUNTY; BUCKLE WILDLIFE REFUGE TOUR: Joseph informed the Committee that next Tuesday there will be a Buckle Wildlife Refuge tour and working lunch to discuss the Wildlife and Habitat Strategic Committee Saguache County is forming. She reported the working group meeting on 9/6 will be at 1 pm at the Saguache County Road and Bridge meeting room. Joseph also reported the grouse transplant has been approved, yet the CPW transplant to Poncha Pass is just proposed, it is not confirmed at this time. She requested that the Gunnison CPW attend the meeting.

WILDFIRES IN SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT: Cochran informed that some of the conclusions that the research paper distributed previously came to regarding the wildfires in Sage-grouse habitat may be incorrect. Prescribed burns in the Gunnison Basin have been an effective habitat management tool. Japuntich clarified that there is a difference in wildfire and prescribed burns and pre and post monitoring. The Committee discussed placing this discussion on a future agenda, and also ask Vasquez for his data on prescribed burns.

ROAD CLOSURES PROCEDURES: Japuntich informed that BLM now has an internal document that explains the procedures for road closures.

SAGE GROUSE FESTIVAL: Wiens informed the Committee that Roger (Haga) is considering taking year off from creating the newspaper inserts for the Sage-grouse Festival. Wiens opined that there is a big educational piece to festival, but it does require a lot of work. He informed April is the busiest month for Western State Colorado University (WSCU), which is a good opportunity for students. There was discussion that the educational piece can occur at other events held in the Gunnison area instead of holding a festival every year. There was discussion that there may not be enough time for a Summit in 2014, and it may need to occur the next year. The Committee agreed that there doesn't need to be a full blown festival and race, but there needs to be something more than just a regular meeting.

Cochran informed that there is $7,000 in the I&E fund that could be available for the Committee to create a moving display. Wiens informed the Committee Gunnison Trails will continue to communicate the message to users and customers. Cochran suggested the newspaper insert should be kept updated to keep the public informed with timely and accurate information. The Committee discussed the possibility of having a range-wide insert with a topic specific to each region. The Committee agreed that there will not be a standalone festival this next spring. Cochran informed the Committee that there is a County Coalition meeting on 9/12 and he will discuss with them if they are interested in the newspaper insert. Chairperson Stahlnecker entertained a motion, and the Committee agreed to not have a festival the spring of 2014.

COUNTY COALITION REPORT AND DISCUSSION: Cochran informed the committee that nine counties, the State of Colorado and the Governor of Utah have signed the County Coalition Conservation Agreement He reported that the Coalition is moving forward to begin implementing the agreement. At the last meeting they agreed to export the HPT to the other populations to research if it is an appropriate model for other populations. The Crawford population was elected to export the HPT to. There is radio collar and GPS data that will assist with analyzing if the tool

is modeling appropriately. He reported that he is working with CPW on non-disclosure agreements to share lek information with Delta and Montrose counties. He informed that he is working with Lars Santana in the Montrose NRCS office, regarding the soils information for the HPT. He reported that Seward will be the Conservation Biologist working on this project. Cochran confirmed that decisions can be made at these County Coalition meetings because there are commissioners attending. Gunnison Ranchland Legacy has analyzed all the conservation easements in occupied and proposed critical habitat across the range of the grouse. Cochran informed the Committee that the County Coalition meets monthly and the educational piece has not been discussed, but it will be discussed at the next meeting.

Navy informed the committee about a potential gas lease in Utah, coming up in February, in which a large area is in sage-grouse critical habitat. Cochran informed that BLM deferred all of the nominated lease parcels in mapped or proposed critical habitat.

RAVEN SURVEY: Gunnison County GIS Director Mike Pelletier and Deputy County Manager Marlene Crosby were present for the discussion. The Committee reviewed the preliminary raven survey report provided by Pat Magee. Cochran informed the Committee that the USFWS would like to meet with the Committee concerning the County depredation permit. Seward informed that he is in the process of creating a personal services contract for Dr. Magee. Cochran and Crosby confirmed that $4,000 was approved by the Landfill Mitigation Committee for this raven study. Crosby reported that the raven count is not only a concern for the sage-grouse, but is also a concern with the FAA regarding flights in and out of Gunnison due to the high numbers of ravens. She reported the FAA may have wildlife money if there is any need for mitigation but it might be five years from now. Seward informed that there are researchers in Ft. Collins that have expressed interest in researching eggs with poisoned bait (DRC-1339).

HABITAT PRIORITIZATION TOOL UPDATE PROCESS REPORT: Gunnison County GIS Director Mike Pelletier presented this discussion. Pelletier informed the Committee he went over the issues that were brought to his attention. He informed the Committee that from now on the versions will be dated so that it is clear which version we are working with. He informed the committee that having extra layers is not helpful, we need to be clearer about how areas are going to be deleted from the tool. He informed the Committee that Blue Mesa Reservoir has been deleted. He suggested removing large areas from the HPT that are clearly not habitat, like the landfill. He informed that the soils under the landfill may show as habitat, but it is clearly not habitat, and by removing these large areas of non-habitat it will increase the HPT speed.

One of the biggest problems with the tool is missing soils information which can affect the overall analysis. He reported that the Taylor Park Soil Survey is in some stage of completion and the data needs to be processed. He reported that the parcel information and house location information are the small items that need to be fixed. The large items that need updating are the overall boundary and soil information. Murphy will look into any data/information he may have and will bring it to a future meeting.

There was discussion that the changes need to be tracked from year to year and how the changes need to be documented. Pelletier will research how to go about tracking and documenting changes.

Cochran proposed that the Committee make a formal motion at a future meeting regarding formally updating the HPT. He informed that the HPT is tied to the Rangewide Plan as a habitat mapping tool. Pelletier mentioned that the Tool is a little outdated and a new version needs to be released with updated information. The Rangewide Plan will also be updated, which will take considerable time.

Cochran opined that he is not interested in making the Tool better, instead we should determine how to use it because the HPT is good as it is now and we have not reached the point where there is a reason to improve the Tool, because no one has said the Tool needs to be better. He reported that there isn't a vegetation layer in the HPT, which may be considered to be included if recommended by the Technical Subcommittee. Mike will discuss with the Subcommittee how to archive the historical information when changes are made.

Japuntich discussed habitat "accounting" required by the CCA and how it relates to the HPT and HPT updates.

GUSG ESA LISTING FAQ SHEET DEVELOPMENT REPORT: Gelatt informed the Committee FWS has a draft and is reviewing it prior to distribution to the Committee.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

Date	*Time*	*Notes*
September 18, 2013	10 am -2 pm	Regular Meeting
October 16, 2013	10 am – 2 pm	Regular Meeting

ADJOURN: **MOVED** by Stahlnecker to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The August 22, 2013 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:30 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