

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2019**

The October 16, 2019 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

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large
Ann Timberman, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Tim Kugler, Recreation At-Large
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates
Matt Vasquez, United States Forest Service (USFS)
Erich Ferchau, Development Community At-large

Others in the Audience:

Jim Cochran
Pat Magee, WCU
Allison Vendramel
Nate Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate
Kathy Griffin, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Sam Liebl
Marcella Tarantino, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Jessica Frey, National Park Service (NPS), Alternate
Jackie Kragel, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Noreen Walsh, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Staff Members Present:

Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant
Aleshia Rummel, Gunnison Conservation District, Wildlife Biologist

Others present as listed in text.

CALL TO ORDER: Vice-Chairperson Wenum called the October 16, 2019 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:00 A.M.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE CONFIRMED: Wenum verified that proper legal public notice had occurred.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Navy and seconded by Kugler to accept the September 18, 2019 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/REPORTS

Navy reported that there was an article in the Denver Post regarding the sage-grouse project.

Vasquez reported that they are continuing to work on the Forest Plan and getting comments. It will be out for public comment in 2020.

Wenum reported that hunting season opened up last weekend, second is this weekend.

I & E SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Navy reported that they talked about giving the stewardship Award before the end of the year. They talked about the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District Board receiving the award because they have funded so many of the Wet Meadow Restoration projects. They are also willing to fund the contractor for the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District, Paul Jones.

The Strategic Committee agreed to give the award to the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District this year.

Navy reported that they are again looking at the mural project, where they want to have it and having a potential local art contest to see what they get.

There is an artist conservation group in Florida (Partners in Preservation) that has offered to fund the HCCA sage-grouse stewardship project next year. They are also selling pictures on their website to raise money. Discussion followed on purchasing some of the prints and whether they would send the group some to sell.

They talked about doing another summit in the Spring of 2021 after the recovery plan is complete to share research and management information. The summit could potentially be organized through Western's School for Environmental Sustainability as their annual symposium. They also discussed doing a Sage-Grouse Festival in spring 2020 as a community celebration, and Western may have student groups that could organize the event.

They talked about getting a film done on a biology of the sage-grouse. Magee reported that there is so much to the biology of the bird and it would be good to have something that goes through the life of the bird. They would have to figure out how to raise money for it and talked about doing a grouse stamp, like a waterfowl duck stamp. There would be an artist competition, winner decided by a committee.

Magee reported that they need to start raising money for the I&E fund. Discussion followed on possible fundraising options.

CHEATGRASS EFFORTS UPDATE

Liebl reported that they talked about getting grants for funding cheatgrass projects. They have a group working on it. The podcast series is all finished and he is in the process of getting it posted to iTunes and other places so it can be downloaded. He finished filming the cheatgrass documentary that will hopefully be out this spring.

Rummel reported that there was an interagency spray day in East Elk Creek. There were six agencies represented there. They had 271 mixed gallons sprayed out at East Elk Creek and 12 gallons at Dry Gulch. They were able to treat 20 acres.

Liebl stated that Ryan Kay (BLM Rangeland Management Specialist) is having Richard Lee out October 25, 2019 to go to different areas to look at Red Creek area and Dillon Pinnacles to look at the cheatgrass in those areas which will hopefully give some ideas on how to manage it. Navy wanted to know what everyone thought about the Zombie Cheatgrass Revegetation idea that was presented and whether it was worth proceeding with that type of treatment. Magee believes it is almost seemed too good to be true but would like to talk to him more about it. Discussion followed. Magee went over the agenda for when Richard Lee comes into town.

WAUNITA SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING UPDATE

Wenum gave a handout covering the issues, facts, figures and alternatives at the site. Below are the alternatives:

- *Preferred Alternative*:** 1. Site is open April 1 through April 30, except the second full week (Sunday through Saturday) of the month. (This alternative reduces total viewing days from 45 to 23, provides a period of no disturbance from the viewing site during the typical peak of breeding activity, allows for continued public viewing opportunity in a controlled manner). If approved the site would be open April 1 through 30 each year with the following closure periods by year: April 12-18, 2020, April 11-17, 2021, April 10-16, 2022, April 9-15, 2023, April 14-20, 2024. If approved it is preferred regulation change be effective June 1, 2020. This alternative decreases viewing opportunity to see a greater number of birds conducting their courtship display and battling for dominance behaviors, which are the memorable activities bird watchers want to see/photograph. Outside of this period, bird watchers are likely to only see a few individuals in strut. This also complicates management of the viewing site and ability to conduct enforcement. This does reduce pressure during the typical peak of breeding activity.
2. Status Quo. No change to CPW regulations. Site is open to public use April 1 through May 15 with existing special regulations.
 3. Close the site to all public viewing utilizing the Watchable Wildlife site/facilities. (County Road 887 is open to public travel, without County actions and enforcement to close the road way to parking in that stretch, viewing could still occur from the roadway or shoulder. An anticipated consequence is impact to other lek areas as people attempt to view the birds on their own.)
 4. Shorten viewing season to April 1 through April 30, with site open all days for public use. (Decreases season from 45 to 30 days, maintains simplicity and enforcement capability)
 5. Shorten viewing season to April 1 through April 30, with 2 days per week with the site being closed to all use. (Decreases season from 45 to 20 or fewer days depending upon year, increases regulatory complexity, increases potential for public confusion and unintentional violations, diverts wildlife managers from lek counts and other activities to enforcement)
 6. Change dates of open operation to April 1 through 14, and April 22 through May 5 each year. (decreases season from 45 days to 28 days, but adds complexity of one week with site closed, provides one week of no disturbance from viewing site during the peak of breeding activity, diverts wildlife managers from lek counts and other activities to enforcement).

Discussion followed on the options, site history and issues.

Moved: by Navy, seconded by Peterson to go with the preferred alternative, site is open April 1 through April 30, except the second full week (Sunday through Saturday) of the month. Motion passed, with Wenum opposing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vendramel reported that in June when they were here last they talked about the Recovery Plan. She informed the group know that they are looking at doing a workshop, where they would have site visits the first day and then a workshop the next day to look over habitats.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, Co. 81230, unless changed for a specific reason.

11-20-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
12-18-19	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
01-15-20	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
02-19-20	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room
03-18-20	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 nd floor meeting room

ADJOURN: The October 16, 2019 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant