

**GUNNISON BASIN SAGE-GROUSE STRATEGIC COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
December 21, 2016**

The December 21, 2016 Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstocks Government Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO, 81230

**Committee Members Present:**

Voting Members:

Jonathan Houck, Chairperson, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)  
J. Wenum, Vice-Chairperson, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)  
Greg Peterson, Secretary, Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association (GCSA)  
Sue Navy, High Country Conservation Advocates  
John Murphy, U.S. Forest Service, Alternate  
Peter Caloger, Public At-Large

**Alternate Members Present:**

Nathan Seward, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Alternate

**Others in the Audience:**

Ken Davis, NRCS District Conservationist  
Jim Mendonca  
Jim Cochran, Wildlife Biologist  
Mike Pelletier, Gunnison County GIS  
David Baumgarten, County Attorney  
Kathy Broadhead, BLM  
Kevin Dougherty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Drew DeBerry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Pat Magee, WSCU

**Staff Members Present:**

Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

Others present as listed in text.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Houck called the December 21, 2016 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee to order at 10:05 A.M.

**DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:** Houck confirmed that a quorum was not present. They will treat today as a work session. Members will need to let the committee know if they are not able to make it to meetings.

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

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** Agenda approved with some additions. Talk about Habitat Prioritization Tool and Species Status Assessment.

**APPROVAL of November 16, 2016 MEETING MINUTES:** Houck stated that since they do not have a quorum they will approve the minutes at the next meeting.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ REPORTS**

Houck stated that they will need to make Kathy Broadhead the official BLM alternate at the next meeting.

Seward stated that they finally got the Gunnison Basin lek count out to everyone. They monitored 82 different leks throughout the Basin. The high male count was 928, a decrease of 46 from the 974 high male

count in 2015. The high female count was 235, an increase of 60 from the 175 in 2015, which is the highest since 1988. They are not too concerned about the decrease due to the adverse weather and that they couldn't do some of the counts and it made it harder to do the counts they did. Overall, their trend is continually increasing.

Cochran discussed the Habitat Prioritization Tool. It is used by the County for Land Use Change review and is the basis for the candidate conservation agreement on federal land in Gunnison Sage-grouse occupied habitat. They knew when they developed it that they were going to have to do some work on it. It is the product of the Strategic Committee's Technical Subcommittee. He requested that at the next committee meeting the committee discuss how they are going to approach it and decide what they would like to do. Further discussion followed on what they are hoping the Strategic Committee will do.

Seward reported that the CCAA program for private lands had their third property sold. It is a 1,570 acre ranch off Nine Mile Hill. The adjacent landowner was able to buy it and is willing to keep the property enrolled in the CCAA program that was agreed upon. It is the third property sold but all of the owners have decided to keep the property in the CCAA program.

Wenum reported that they captured deer and put radio collars on them for the annual survival monitoring. They will likely be flying their winter classification flights the first week or two of January. They keep an eye out for sage-grouse during the flights for numbers and locations.

Houck reported that he introduced himself to the new county commissioners in each of the Counties at the last meeting. They all understand that sag-grouse is an issue and important for their counties. Next meeting will be end of January.

DeBerry gave information on the Species Status Assessment (SSA). Explained that the SSA is a new approach that the Forrest Service started a few years ago. Whenever they needed to make some sort of decision they didn't want to have to reinvent the wheel. They also had a process where they weren't always as able to get information from all the parties that they wanted to in a timely basis and ended up with documents that weren't fully complete, took a lot of time, reduced their ability to respond to new information and they may not have gotten the complete picture. The SSA is a non-decisional exercise and determines what the species need, what the species have and what the species' future looks like. Further discussion followed and Houck requested that they make sure all of the Counties are included in update emails.

## **LITIGATION UPDATE**

Baumgarten gave the latest update on litigation. He gave information on the upcoming deadlines, which gives the judge the opportunity to hear the responsive arguments from each side.

## **WAUNITA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SITE**

Magee gave update that they have the schedule for 2017 and will be closing the site two days in a row per week. Magee reported there weren't any new things from 2016. Peterson wanted to know how they analyze whether the site stays open in the future based on what continues to happen to the lek count and believes that they should come up with some ideas on what to do if there are no birds on the site and what would happen if certain benchmarks are met and what the options will be to handle those problems. Houck wanted to know what tools are being used to evaluate what is best for the site and what is being done about the problems. Discussion followed on what they can possibly do and their evaluative process of the site.

## **GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE PHOTOGRAPHY APPLICATIONS**

Seward reported that he has only heard from one photographer that wants access to one of the leks. His name is Frank Conestar, a professional photographer in Durango. He gives a fair number of presentations but doesn't have a preservation project but is the only photographer this year who has applied. Seward wants to know that since he doesn't have a conservation specific project does that mean that they

committee doesn't want to give him access? Houck suggests that they get the recommendation from the sub-committee and at the next meeting they will decide if it is something they will approve.

Seward reported that they are still working on the poster. They have some pictures but they may want to include more. He has been working on the wording and it is on the backburner right now due to other projects he's working on. Will get it to the Committee for review before anything goes to print. Will probably take another five to six months to get done.

#### **BLM RMP**

Cochran reported that comments are due January 9, 2017. They continue to convene bi-weekly.

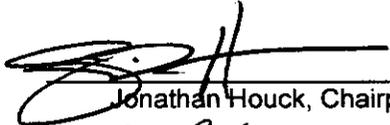
#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

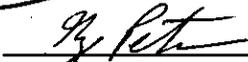
None.

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Building and location</b>
01-18-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
02-15-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
03-15-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
04-19-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
05-17-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
06-21-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
07-19-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
08-16-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
09-20-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
10-18-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
11-15-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room
12-20-17	10-12	Regular Meeting	Blackstock; 221 N. Wisconsin 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room

**ADJOURN:** The December 21, 2016 meeting of the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee adjourned at 11:50 A.M.

  
Jonathan Houck, Chairperson

  
Greg Peterson, Secretary

Minutes Prepared By: Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant

