

Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group Meeting Notes  
August 6, 2007

Attendees: Jessica Young, Sandy Borthwick, Sue Navy, Brandon Diamond, John Scott, Mike Jackson, Leslie Spicer, Chris Parmeter, Ron Meyer, Jim Cochran, Art Hayes

1) Update on the Strategic Committee by Jim Cochran:

Antler Shed Season

The Strategic Committee will submit a proposal to the Wildlife Commission to establish an antler shed season and possibly a permit system. The proposal calls for a closed season for antler collecting from March 15 through June 15. The proposal would restrict collecting of antlers only on Public Land. This is to reduce disturbances on public lands during the lekking season and nesting season. The Wildlife Commission will address this at their Sept 13 meeting.

Gunnison Rising Project

A meeting with the proponents and the Strategic Committee is planned for Sept 12. Working Group members are encouraged to attend. The county will be making recommendations to the city on potential impacts to sage grouse and possible mitigation measures.

Incentives to Private Landowners

County staff has been working on an incentive process for landowners who want to subdivide their property into 35 acre parcels. This would facilitate landowners who are planning a subdivision to come to the Planning Commission to understand the impacts to sage grouse. The mechanism to do this is through the various permits the county issues for 35 acre subdivisions.

County Gunnison Sage-Grouse Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is stalled until the Strategic Committee can decide what format will best serve the County's needs. The Strategic Plan was first discussed as a way to help the county deal with sage grouse issues on private land but the discussion expanded to include all lands and agencies in the basin. While at one time the committee considered creating a Habitat Conservation Plan, they now recognize some of the challenges inherent in doing so and will likely focus on a plan that provides the County a strategy for their conservation actions.

Legislative Update

Jim received a notice from Salazar's office that the Farm Bill passed out of the House and is moving forward. Funding for two Legacy easements for Gunnison Sage-grouse preservation is in the bill.

2) Subcommittee Reports

Research Subcommittee

Brandon Diamond, Chair

The Research Subcommittee meeting is Sept 5 from 9-noon. The list of members is still under development. The subcommittee will begin development of a 1 and a 3 year action plan. A second goal is to work with the I&E committee to develop and disseminate a presentation for the public to explain the value and importance of research on Gunnison Sage-grouse.

### Habitat Improvement Subcommittee

Russ Japuntich, Chair; Sandy Borthwick filled in for Russ and gave a short report.

Dave Kinader is taking a job in Idaho so it was suggested supported by the working group as a whole that Nathan Seward become the Vice-Chair to replace Dave. Russ will contact Nathan and ascertain his willingness to serve in that capacity.

There was a Habitat Improvement Subcommittee meeting on July 15 with good participation. Projects planned for this year by the BLM, NRCS and CDOW were presented and discussed. While habitat monitoring is being conducted, there is a concern that the information about the results of habitat treatments is not getting out. The subcommittee will work on getting monitoring information out. There was discussion at the Habitat Subcommittee meeting on the 1 and 3 year action plan and a format to use. The next Habitat Subcommittee meeting is Sept 17.

### Information and Education Subcommittee

Allen Moores, Chair. Sue Navy, Vice-Chair.

There are currently 8 members with a couple invitations still pending. The next I&E meeting is scheduled for Sept 24. At that time, members will discuss the future focus of the I&E committee. I&E is planning on developing a website. Jessica offered to assist and there is money from Audubon to host a webpage at a private site. For a preview of a webpage, please visit <http://www.western.edu/bio/young/gunnsg/gsgwg.htm>

Jessica will get information from the committee chairs and send out updates of the member list for the subcommittees.

### 3) 1 and 3 Year Action Plan

Sandy B. presented a draft template for the 1 and 3 Year Action Plans that each Subcommittee will develop. It was recognized that the template will be very useful to focus and coordinate projects among the Subcommittees and identify barriers to project implementation which would be given to the Strategic Committee to resolve. There was good suggestions on how to improve the template and it was suggested that Sandy B. also provide Amy Seglund with an opportunity to review the template. Sandy will send the revised version in time for the sub-committee meetings in September.

It was recognized that the Subcommittees would “test drive” the format and provide feedback on how well the process met the needs of each Subcommittee. It was also suggested that these plans be posted and maintained on the webpage for the broader public to view after the plans were complete.

### 4) Lek Report

Brandon Diamond and Leslie Spicer discussed the 2007 lek counts. Weather may have had an impact on the counts, which were lower this year. The GIS lek layer update is complete – Good Job Leslie!!

### 5) Other Information/Discussion

Trapping and Transplanting.

Brandon Diamond indicated he is representative on a CDOW Gunnison Sage-grouse Trap and Transplant committee. They are developing a protocol for trapping and transplanting sage grouse. There have been several requests for Gunnison Basin grouse for other populations in

Colorado and Utah. The working group requested an opportunity to hear how the past few years of transplants have gone including information on success rates, mortalities, and changes in population status for areas in which birds have been moved. The group asked for Brandon to invite representatives from the Trap and Transplant committee to share data from the past and discuss plans for the future.

#### Grant Submittals

We should hear back from CDOW in September on the status of the grants for the habitat improvement projects and the hay purchase for ranchers to facilitate the habitat improvement projects.

#### Lawsuit

Jess indicated that Al Pfister had no updates on the Gunnison Sage-grouse lawsuit.

#### Gunnison prairie dog

Sandy B. mentioned the USFWS will release a final listing determination in Feb 08 regarding the Gunnison prairie dog.

The potential to re-locate prairie dogs from private land to public land is being explored, a meeting is planned.

#### Game birds

Jim Cochran told the group the County LUR has a provision through the various permits the county issues to address the importation of non-native game birds into the county. This provision allows the County to communicate with new landowners about the potential impacts to Gunnison Sage-grouse from introduced game birds. There is a requirement for a disease free status certificate. The group discussed that the game bird issue is an example of a policy issue that is best handled by the Strategic Committee. They did concur that a conservative approach was appropriate given the low genetic diversity and possible sensitivity to disease. Brandon indicated the local CDOW office will look into the game bird issue and provide the Working Group an update at one of the next two meetings.

#### Grants and money transfers

Jim Cochran suggested that the Working Group find a way to be able to receive grant monies when for grants. Siskadee, a non-profit group was suggested as a possible recipient for Working Group money. Jessica will follow-up on this issue.

#### Pellet Plant

The proposed pellet plant at the landfill was brought up. Suggested was that the Working Group stay apprised of this project as it may have impacts to sage grouse that they could provide suggestions for mitigation. One issue brought up was that there needed to be resolution on whether the proposed plan was consistent with the BLM's conveyance of public land to the county at the site. A second issue was the need to have a detailed proposal prior to the Working Group being able to thoughtfully comment on possible impacts and provide their technical expertise to suggest mitigation measures, if any are needed. Jim Cochran suggested the Working Group participate at the County Planning Commission meeting to get more detail on the project.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50.