
Moffat County Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Program Committee

April 8, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Colton Murray, CFCD GSG subcommittee Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

Roll Call was performed with the following members of the MC GSG WG and grant applicants in attendance:

Colton Murray, CFCD GSG chair
Stephen Hinkemeyer, CFCD GSG member
Kacey Green, CFCD GSG Administrator
Mark Lowrey, CFCD GSG Project Manager
Adam Tucker – Mountain Spray
Aric Gerber – Landowner, grant applicant
Alan Hopkins - Envue

Nick Charchalis, CFCD GSG member
Desa Ausmus – BLM Wildlife Specialist
Doug Davis – Landowner Representative
Jeff Comstock – Moffat County
Stacey Gray – Landowner, grant applicant
Randan Vincent – Landowner, grant appl.

Future emails for this committee will come from cfcdsagegrouse@gmail.com

Review and Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes were reviewed and discussed. A motion was made to approve the minutes as written by Nick Charchalis, seconded by Doug Davis. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Grant Compliance and Financial Review – Kacey Green

There has been \$76,000 allocated for projects thus far, leaving \$1,956,000 remaining for projects in the grant. Future financial reports to this committee will include somewhat summarized administrative costs.

Project Planning and Approval Process

At the March meeting Mark had introduced the concept of a test project with different land treatments. He approached 3 different landowners about this request and at this point none of them have lands that are not in a grazing rotation during the time frame discussed. The window for doing something this spring is rapidly coming to a close. We will continue to look for a project from the applications that are coming in for habitat improvement. July or August may be the next window for this type of project.

Committee Action Items: Projects

Paul Anderson Greater Sage-grouse Watering Project

This project is proposed to complete installation of two wildlife guzzlers on two separate parcels. The two guzzlers have been already purchased. Barbed wire fencing was discussed with the applicant as the water area needs to be fenced off from livestock. Desa suggested that birds will use this type of guzzlers, but the way it is fenced. There are water guzzlers very close to this project maintained by CPW. Is this design good for the birds? Desa thought it was not being used as much because the area fenced off is too small.

There is another one near there that has a lot of birds, just not Greater Sage Grouse.

There is a large core habitat area near the project. It is mapped in a large continuous block of GSG Priority Habitat with a mapped core area within one mile of the northern parcel. This parcel is mapped as “growth opportunity area with 0 to 1 threat” (annual invasive grasses).

The Anticipated Start Date would be early to mid-May of 2025 with an anticipated completion date by early June 2025 if approved in this grant cycle.

The total project estimate for this project is \$8,000 with matching contribution of \$ 3,000 in kind contribution 37% with a requested amount of \$5,000.

This project is in a gray area for grant funding and would be better fit the grant criteria if it had a wet meadow feature. This project needs a water source attached to it that cannot be accomplished by hauling water. If something permanent cannot be improved on the ground it likely does not meet the language in the grant.

Steve made a motion to reject the grant, with Doug seconding. The committee voted unanimously to reject the grant. The committee asked the grant team to get back with the applicant and let him know the reasoning on why his request was turned down, and if possible see if they could work with him on a version of this grant that may better fit the grant guidelines.

RV Angus Tall Sage Removal Project

Randan Vincent was present at the meeting and gave the committee a presentation on his project. This project is proposed to remove decadent sagebrush in mosaic pattern for habitat improvement, including spot weed treatments in treated areas.

This project is mapped in a large continuous block of GSG Priority Habitat. The projects goals would be to reduce this heavy bush to increase and enhance the sagebrush habitat for the Greater Sage-grouse and other wildlife, reduce livestock pressure on grazing areas by allowing for more coverage of the acreage, and to lower wildfire risk.

This project would lower bush height and open the cover to allow for more beneficial sage grouse habitat allowing them to increase. The brush would be reduced in a mosaic pattern which would allow for a mix of old and new bush habitat. Treat existing weeds and improve overall habitat (not necessarily GrSG). This project would mitigate high pressure areas where livestock is putting a lot of stress on existing habitat.

This project will also add to the benefit of a water project that was started in 2022 and will be completed in 2025 with the goal to help reduce high traffic areas used by wildlife and livestock on the range.

With the main project objective calling for the removal of decadent sagebrush for habitat improvement and revitalization, Desa suggested getting baseline data on old growth sagebrush areas before any decision is made on how much area would be appropriate. Ben informed the committee if it is done in the fall, it may eliminate any spraying costs (weeds) or drastically reduce the need. Understory of the habitat is good, but likely will need reseeding of some areas.

This project encompasses approximately 500 acres of improvement on 883 acres of total acres for project. To replace 500 acres within a 883 acre project area is too big of a replacement block. It would be better to stage this project in smaller blocks

The total project estimate for this project is \$175,000 with matching contribution of \$ 22,250 in kind contribution 12.7% with a requested amount of \$152,750.

There has not been a site visit to this project area yet. Until the project team can visit the site and provide a baseline report, it is suggested that this project be tabled until that visit can be done. A motion was made by Steve and seconded by Doug to table this grant request until the site can be accomplished. Several members of the committee are nervous about knocking down big sagebrush habitat versus how much will be left behind for the benefit of the birds. It may be beneficial to break this project up over multiple years to get a more age diverse sagebrush stand.

SBRJWM (Aric Gerber) Water Pipeline and Sage Grouse Watering Project

Aric Gerber and Stacy Gray (applicants) described the project, how it is laid out, what benefit it would be for GrSG habitat and why they want to accomplish these improvements. This project uses an existing well and new pipelines to assist in distributing the water to separate locations to spread out livestock and create some water seeps to benefit GrSG. This project combines a water project (brood rearing habitat, livestock distribution) and a fence conversion from woven to 4-strand wildlife friendly. Fence would be rewired with high tensile or barbed with flaggery. This part of the project should be fundable. The Project also includes 1/4-to-1/2-mile fence conversion across Lay Creek riparian area from woven wire to wildlife friendly barb wire.

This project is mapped in a large continuous block of GrSG Priority Habitat. This parcel is mapped as “core habitat area with 0 to 2 threats” (annual invasive annual grasses/human activity). This specific area has been burned over in the 2018 Divide & 2023 Iron Wildfires.

Other funds for this project may be sourced, however, NRCS will not participate in this project because it is dependent upon an existing well, not built to their specifications. Maybe applicants can find some funds with HPP, at least with fence mitigation.

Mark has seen this type of water tank seep project work well in other locations, but there is a requirement for steady water to supply the seeps and create wet areas to be utilized by GrSG and other sage dependent birds.

There will be four tanks and water systems developed with this project. The water storage tank is underestimated at only 3,500 gallons which is probably undersized for the scope of this project.

There are a lot of livestock improvement costs to this project and little for sage-grouse benefit. The tanks and the pipeline will be most of the cost, which is mostly for livestock grazing. The area is recovering very well since the last fire, and reseeded is probably not required.

The total project estimate for this project is \$102,860, with 5% matching of \$5,143 and \$97,717 being requested.

Steve made a motion to table this project until the project team can do the site inventory and have had a chance to adjust the grant for what may fit the GrSG grant funding program. Nick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Open Discussion and Stakeholder Concerns

Mark asked the committee about the application forms that are being submitted to the committee. There is more information that would be nice to have, specifically how they relate to the outcomes and activities to the grant so we don't have to spend so much time at the meeting trying to resolve how the project may fit.

We should attach the grant applications to the minutes.

The question was asked about uncoupling the GrSG grant meeting and the CFCD Board meeting. The thought was to not spend a lot of time at the CFCD Board meeting. Maybe Mark could put together a summary of the grant that can be presented at the board meeting later in the day.

Steve Raftopoulos, landowner representative, has had to resign from the GrSG committee due to health reasons. If there are any suggestions for Steve's replacement please get them to Kacey.

There was a discussion concerning the larger scale demonstration project that Mark talked about earlier. The consensus was the committee would still like to do a demo plot of some type, but may need to rethink how big, or have it on multiple sites.

The next meeting of the MCGSG meeting will be [Tuesday, May 13, 2025, from 2:00 TO 4:00 pm](#) at the NRCS office conference room.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Steve and seconded by Doug. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.