Colorado First Conservation District
970-329-3145
145 Commerce Street Craig, CO 81625

Moffat County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Program Committee

May 12, 2026 · Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM. Roll call was performed with the following members of the Moffat County GrSG Working Group and grant applicants in attendance:

Kacey Green, CFCD GrSG Administrator
Mark Lowrey, CFCD GrSG Project Manager
Cassie Lamb - CFCD GrSG Monitor
Nick Charchallis - CFCD GrSG Member
Stephen Hinkemeyer - CFCD GrSG Member
Seth Schwolert - CPW District Wildlife Manager
Colton Murry - CFCD GrSG Member
Rebecca Burton - GrSG Member
Doug Davis – CFCD GrSG Member
Kristin Ross - CPW Biologist
Dennis Balleck - Applicant

Adoption of the Agenda/Review and Approval of Minutes

Steve asked that Cassie record how much the committee is approving for each project. He then asked for clarification of the financial review portion that Kacey provides.

Nick made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Grant Compliance and Financial Review - Kacey Green

Project	Status	Acres	$ Approved	Match	Notes
ZC Livestock 20250313_GSG_001	complete	724	$74,900.00	$14,000.00	pd
Gerber	in process	water	$50,026.00		
Nottingham - 010	complete	236	$29,300.00	$7,000.00	pd
Raftopoulos - 016	complete	1,500	$89,750.00	$10,000.00	pd
RV Angus - 006	in process	500	$154,000.00	$308.00	
Visintainer - 014	complete	4,200	$106,191.00	$34,108.32	pd
Brosious - 017	complete	1,633	$42,121.00	$83,968.00	*Chemical $83,968 pd with BIL*
~~12~~	~~Rescinded~~	-	-		

3 Springs - 007	in process	83	$26,912.00		
McFarland - 009	in process	water	$37,244.00		*invoice rcvd - need approval*
Charchalis South - 018	in process	2653	$186,187.00		
~~K. Kaweak - 024~~	~~approved~~	~~-~~	~~-~~		*Redacted - reapplied, see 039*
Bellio - 019	in process	104	$13,166.00		
Pankey - 020	in process	320	$87,190.00	$79,090.00	*partially pd*
Cole - 015	complete	water - PALS	$7,964.56	$484.84	pd
Tallent - 022	in process	water	$19,864.00		*invoice rcvd - need match*
Olson - 027	complete	32	$5,226.90	$5,226.90	pd
RAD Counts - 005	in process	574	$23,273.00		*partially pd*
Camilletti - 026	complete	fence removal	$13,711.00	$13,711.00	pd
Chesna - 029	in process	39	$10,421.60		
Terry - 028	in process	58	$14,776.00		
Taylor - 030	in process	800	$66,600.00		
J Kawchack -031	in process	734	$61,106.00		
RD Kawchack -032	in process	57	$2,736.00		
B. VanMatre - 033	in process	384	$29,261.00		
J. Cook - 034	approved	40	$1,920.00		
Duzik - 035	in process	fence removal	$27,036.00		
G. Williams - 036	in process	72	$3,456.00		
Ocker - 037	*approved*	-	-	***approved thru BIL funding***	
	TOTALS:	**14,943**	**$1,216,865.84**		

Total Acres Impacted: **14,943 acres** (*Acres Projected in Grant Language: 12,000)*
-Total Allocated to Habitat Restoration: $1,216,865.84
-Total Remaining for Habitat Restoration: $1,663,039.27
-Total Remaining for Conifer Removal: $175,000.00

Kacey brought up an invoice discrepancy on the McFarland project. A price increase in fencing materials resulted in an additional $3,344 being added to the final invoice. As a result, Mark, Kacey, and Cassie discussed whether future landowner agreements should include language allowing CFCD to approve project cost increases of up to 10% above the originally approved amount. The intent would be to prevent landowners from having to return to the committee for approval of relatively minor cost increases.

Steve was not in favor of including a 10% cost fluctuation provision, noting that it is not addressed in the grant language. Kacey clarified that this provision would apply only to the agreement between CFCD and the landowner and would not be shared with contractors. Contractors would still only see the originally approved project amount.

Steve suggested that any increase in project costs should be brought back to the committee for approval. Nick agreed that it is reasonable for CFCD to cover legitimate cost increases when funding is available, but felt landowners should return to the committee to request additional funding. Kacey suggested requiring contractors to include expiration dates on their quotes to help ensure quoted rates are honored. She also noted that multi year projects present a challenge because future costs are difficult to predict.

Steve recommended building a contingency percentage into project proposals and requiring landowners to return to the committee if costs exceed that contingency amount. Kacey asked whether a contingency should be included in every project or considered on a case by case basis. Nick recommended evaluating increased financial requests individually, given the variability among projects.

Nick made a motion to take project price increases on a project by project case, requiring the landowner to return to the committee with their price increase requests. Doug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Kasey asked the committee if they would approve an additional $3,344 to the McFarland project due to additional fencing (+184 feet) and materials (+$0.25/foot). Doug believed it was a good project and the landowner had a good match.

Doug made a motion to approve the additional increase of $3,344 to the McFarland project. Rebecca seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Kacey updated the committee on role changes for Cassie and Mark following their first year with CFCD. Updated position descriptions and project workflow documents were included in each committee member’s packet for review.

<u>Project Updates</u>

Cassie compiled an up to date handout showing the status of each project, shown below:

<u>Completed</u>: Z/C Livestock, MC/Nottingham, Raftopoulos, Visintainer, McFarland, Cole’s Ranch, Brosious, and Camilletti.

<u>Approved/In Process:</u> RV Angus, Swartzell, Three Springs Ranch, Gerber, Charchalis South, Kawcak_K, Pankey, Bellio, Olson, Tallent Ranch, RAD Counts, Terry, Grandbouche (6 landowners).

For Review: Bobcat Ranch (for review), Balleck (for review), Kawcak_K_gsg (for review), Kawcak_FR, Vermillion.

Upcoming:

Parrott: The Parrott project includes spraying for Scotch thistle, anticipated for spring 2026. Following this treatment, the applicant will use a no-till drill to interseed a native grass mix and a sage grouse preferred forb mix into old agricultural fields to restore them to native range.

Camilletti - Seeding old agricultural fields into more native vegetation.

Tallent - Two more tank/drain installations. CFCD will fund the drain. Mark recommended he apply for an invasive annual treatment as well.

Projects to Review

Balleck

This project is proposed to aerial spray invasive annual grasses, primarily bulbous bluegrass, on 457 acres on non-irrigated rangeland and alfalfa/grass field.

REQUESTED:
Project Total Estimate: $31,574.13
Landowner contribution: $7,449.10 (23.6%)
GSG Requested Amount: $24,125.03

Nick asked Dennis whether there was a sufficient native plant community present to prevent erosion following treatment of invasive annual grasses. Dennis believed there were enough desirable grasses present to reestablish after the cheatgrass and bulbous bluegrass were controlled. He explained that Blaine had sprayed one field approximately three years ago, which successfully reduced bulbous bluegrass, but the infestation has since returned. Dennis noted that encroachment from neighboring pastures has reinfested areas where control had previously been achieved and expressed concern that much of his acreage could become severely infested over time.

Committee members advised against harrowing or otherwise disturbing the soil, noting that bulbous bluegrass tends to thrive in disturbed areas.

Steve asked whether RangeView imagery had been ordered for the project. Cassie responded that it had not and asked whether the committee would like to establish a minimum acreage threshold for utilizing RangeView. Mark suggested that any project exceeding 1,000 acres should include RangeView, as it would be valuable for monitoring purposes. Nick agreed, noting that the imagery could help identify dense infestation areas and guide transect placement. Doug supported the idea and expressed interest in comparing imagery collected before treatment and two to three years afterward to evaluate project outcomes.

Doug also noted that because CFCD is facilitating numerous projects utilizing Rejuvra and Panoramic, Envu may be willing to provide complimentary RangeView imagery on selected projects. He stated that he has observed treated areas where bulbous bluegrass returned within two to three years despite Rejuvra's expected effectiveness of four to five years. He felt RangeView would be a useful tool for evaluating herbicide performance in those situations.

Kacey noted that monitoring funds remain available through BIL funding and could potentially be used for RangeView. She explained the rebate process associated with the program and stated that rebate funds generated from previous projects may be available to support future RangeView analyses. She added that she has not yet reviewed the rebate funds returned from past projects. Doug suggested that Envu should consider waiving the rebate process as a courtesy.

The committee concluded by again encouraging Dennis not to harrow treated areas, as doing so could redistribute bulbous bluegrass bulbs throughout the soil and contribute to future infestations.

Doug made a motion to approve this project for $24,125.03. Nick seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVED:
Project Total Estimate: $31,574.13
Landowner contribution: $7,449.10 (23.6%)
GSG Requested Amount: **$24,125.03**

Kawcak_K

This project is proposed to aerial spray invasive annual grasses, primarily bulbous bluegrass, on 681 acres on non-irrigated rangeland.

REQUESTED:
Project Total Estimate: $46,845.99
Landowner contribution: $8,052.28 (17%)
GSG Requested Amount: $35,949.99

Mark reminded the committee that CFCD approved a similar project in this area last year to treat pussytoes that were suppressing desirable native vegetation. That project was funded through both ATB and sage-grouse funding sources. Since then, Kenny elected to withdraw that project and subsequently reapplied with the proposal being discussed today, which focuses on controlling invasive annual grasses, primarily bulbous bluegrass, using Rejuvra and Panoramic.

Steve asked whether bulbous bluegrass was present throughout the entire 681 acre project area. Mark responded that infestations are scattered across the parcel. He noted that the committee and Adam Tucker have previously discussed whether treatment boundaries should be limited to heavily infested areas or applied more broadly. The agreed upon approach has been to treat entire pastures or management units fence to fence in order to reduce the risk of reinfestation from untreated areas.

Colton suggested combining the Kawcak and Balleck projects for RangeView imagery and analysis to establish pre treatment conditions and evaluate treatment effectiveness over time. He noted that a separate motion would be required to approve the imagery, but no specific dollar amount would need to be needed. Cassie added that the $3/acre RangeView option would provide the level of information needed for monitoring purposes.

Doug made a motion to approve this project for $35,949.99. Rebecca seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVED (after board meeting): *The board did not approve BIL funding to decrease the landowner contribution amount.*
Project Total Estimate: $46,845.99
Landowner contribution: $10,896.00 (23%)
GSG Requested Amount: **$35,949.99**

Doug moved to request RangeView imagery for the combined Kawcak and Balleck projects. Doug explained to Dennis how this will be beneficial to see infestation pre and post treatment. Kacey determined this combined analysis would have 1138 acres multiplied by $3/acre, and would result in $3,414 total in RangeView expense. Rebecca seconded. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Bobcat Ranch

This project is proposed to remove sprouted and new encroachment of Utah Juniper in a ~382 acres contiguous area. This area was mechanically treated and all juniper removed under a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Funding Agreement in 2011 & 2012. The proposal to the committee is for a follow up treatment. This project has been tabled on 8/12/25 and 1/13/2026.

Two contractors have placed bids on this project utilizing a mulching head on a tracked skid steer. The contractor would complete approximately 90.5% of the project acreage totaling 344.5 acres.
The landowner will contribute approximately 9.5% of project acreage totaling 38.3 acres. He and his hired personnel will complete juniper removal via hand treatment. Below are the bids from each contractor:

3 Ridges Over Excavation Inc.
Project Total Estimate: $43,608.00
Landowner contribution: $4,213.00
GSG Requested Amount: $39,395.00

Chase Rupp
Project Total Estimate: $41,086.00
Landowner contribution: $3,830.00
GSG Requested Amount:$37,256.00

Seth explained that he had difficulty finding contractors willing to complete this type of project. He stated that he did not have a preference between the contractors who submitted bids, noting that both would be relatively new to this type of work.

Steve asked Seth what time of year would be most appropriate to complete the project. Seth responded that conducting the work in mid summer could create a fire risk and suggested waiting until later in the fall, once moisture conditions improve, to reduce the potential for fire. Colton recommended scheduling the work for late October to early November to avoid conflicts with hunting seasons. The landowner is also willing to remove juniper in areas that may be difficult for a tracked skid steer to access.

Steve asked the committee whether they should approve funding based on the higher bid amount and then select the contractor later based on availability during the desired project window. Doug asked Seth if he had a preferred contractor, but both Seth and Colton stated that they preferred not to offer an opinion due to their relationships with both contractors. Doug and Colton agreed that Steve’s approach was reasonable.

Doug moved to approve up to $39,395.00 for the project, with the contractor to be selected at a later date based on availability during the late October to early November timeframe. Rebecca seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

<u>Closing Discussion</u>

Mark displayed photos of completed projects for the committee to review.

Steve asked whether Kacey, Mark, or Cassie had followed up with Desa regarding acceptable monitoring protocols and documentation requirements. Mark responded that he believes CFCD is completing the necessary follow up and monitoring activities for each project, but there is limited information to report at this time due to the recent completion of many projects or projects that are in process. Colton noted that this is one reason for the recent shift in responsibilities between Cassie and Mark, as Mark has more experience with BLM monitoring requirements.

Doug asked how much funding remains available in the larger transmission line habitat mitigation fund, beyond the amount currently allocated to CFCD's habitat budget. Kacey was unsure of the exact amount, while Colton estimated that approximately $20 million may still be available. Doug stated that if a substantial amount of funding remains, CFCD may need to be more proactive in requesting additional funds.

Doug shared that he has recently received emails from the US Forest Foundation and Headwaters of the Colorado regarding conservation related questions. He also received correspondence referencing NFWF and wondered whether awareness of the available funding is becoming more widespread. Colton agreed, noting that other organizations are likely becoming aware of the funding opportunities and may begin competing for those resources.

Kacey asked how the funding request process currently works and whether it would be appropriate for her or other committee members to seek information from county commissioners. Steve stated that the county commissioners have already requested updated funding information from the state but have not yet received a response. Doug suggested continuing to follow up until more information is provided. He emphasized that CFCD has been successful in securing funding and implementing on the ground conservation projects. Nick added that he believes CFCD should have priority over NGO's when it comes to receiving available habitat funding.

Kristin recalled that the NFWF funding allocation consists of approximately 80% for conservation easements and 20% for habitat improvement projects and wondered whether additional pressure for funding is coming from the conservation easement side. Kacey noted that several conservation easements are currently in progress.

Nick suggested that once CFCD compiles a comprehensive summary of the projects completed with this funding, it would be valuable to present the results to the public and partner organizations. He also felt that documenting the accomplishments would strengthen future requests for additional funding. Kacey added that discussing expanded promotional efforts and social media outreach is already included on the upcoming board meeting agenda.

The next meeting of the MCGSG group will be:
Tuesday, June 9, 2026, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm
In the NRCS office conference room.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Nick, Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:24 PM.