



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

Moffat County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Program Committee
March 10, 2026 · Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM. Roll call was performed with the following members of the Moffat County GrSG Working Group and grant applicants in attendance:

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| Kacey Green, CFCD GrSG Administrator | Desa Ausmus – BLM Wildlife Specialist |
| Mark Lowrey, CFCD GrSG Project Manager | Colton Murry - CFCD GrSG Member |
| Cassie Lamb - CFCD GrSG Monitor | Brian Holmes - CPW Biologist |
| Nick Charchallis - CFCD GrSG Member | Kristin Ross - CPW Biologist |
| Stephen Hinkemeyer - CFCD GrSG Member | Cory Terry - Applicant/Landowner |
| Doug Davis – Landowner Representative | Ian Duzik - Applicant/Landowner |
| Brett Grandbouche - Landowner Representative | James Kawchack - Applicant/Landowner |
| Rick, Joshua, Sara Kawchack - Applicant/Landowner | Junior Kawcak - Frontier Station |
| Troy Taylor - Applicant/Landowner | |

Adoption of the Agenda/Review and Approval of Minutes

Steve made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous and the meeting and the agenda, Doug 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	approved	water	\$30,026.00		
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		<i>Chemical \$83,968 pd with BIL</i>

Swartzell -012	in process	440	\$140,580.00		
3 Springs - 007	in process	83	\$26,912.00		
McFarland - 009	in process	water	\$33,900.00		
Charchalis South - 018	in process	2653	\$186,187.00		
K. Kawcak - 024	in process	200	\$24,125.00		
Bellio - 019	in process	104	\$13,166.00		
Pankey - 020	approved	320	\$87,190.00		
Cole - 015	in process	water - PALS	\$7,964.56		
Tallent	in process	water	\$19,864.00		
Olson	in process	32	\$5,226.90		
RAD Counts	approved	574	\$23,273.00		
Camilletti	approved	fence removal	\$13,711.00	\$1,301.00	
Chesna	approved	39	\$10,421.60		
Terry	approved	58	\$14,776.00		
	TOTALS:	12,856	\$1,013,005.06	\$151,170.16	

Total Acres Impacted: **12,856 acres** (*Acres Projected in Grant Language: 12,000*)

-Total Allocated to Habitat Restoration: \$1,013,005.06

-Total Remaining for Habitat Restoration: \$866,900.05

-Total Remaining for Conifer Removal: \$175,000.00

Project Updates

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

Completed: Z/C Livestock, MC/Nottingham, Raftopoulos, Visintainer, McFarland, Cole's Ranch, Brosious, and Camilletti.

Approved/In Process: RV Angus, Swartzell, Three Springs Ranch, Gerber, Charchalis South, Kawcak_K, Pankey, Bellio, Olson, Tallent Ranch, RAD Counts, Camilletti.

For Review: Terry, Grandbouche (6 landowners), Wygant, Kawcak_FR, Vermillion.

Upcoming: Parrott, Ocker.

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.

Ocker: Spray Rejuvra on approximately 223 acres for bulbous bluegrass, primarily.

Projects to Review

Terry

Cory Terry's project was approved during the February meeting. Following approval, the landowner raised concerns regarding the 1.5 year rest period on the north field, which is currently an established alfalfa stand. He requested the ability to complete one cutting prior to the end of the rest period, stating it would not negatively impact the success of the interseeding.

Junior (Frontier Station) agreed that a single cutting would likely have little to no effect on seed establishment, noting that soil conditions following drilling should be firm enough by the time of harvest to avoid impacts to newly seeded species. Nick added that the primary purpose of the rest period is to prevent grazing pressure and indicated that cutting should be acceptable. He recommended leaving a slightly higher stubble height to provide shade and protection for emerging seedlings. Colton agreed with this approach.

Mark recommended conducting site monitoring prior to any cutting. The committee reached consensus that one cutting would be acceptable, provided site conditions are evaluated beforehand and monitoring occurs prior to cutting.

Brian made a motion to approve this project with the discussed conditions. Doug seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve asked the committee for their thoughts on projects that do not incorporate a greater diversity of forbs and sagebrush into seed mixes. Colton expressed that he would like to see a stronger wildlife component included in these projects. Brian noted that alfalfa fields can still provide significant benefits for greater sage-grouse. Desa added that, in cases such as the Terry and Chesna projects, both relatively small fields (approximately 40–60 acres) existing surrounding sagebrush habitat already contribute to wildlife use. However, she suggested that for larger agricultural field conversions, incorporating islands of sagebrush within the project area would be beneficial.

Duzik

This project proposes the removal of approximately 5 miles (26,400 feet) of non-functional woven and barbed wire fencing. Abandoned wire fencing poses a significant collision and mortality risk for wildlife and obstructs habitat connectivity. Portions of the fence are located on or border BLM land, and the agency is aware of and supportive of the removal. Ian Duzik noted that there is old wire bundled up, as well as cross fences with conifer posts that predatory birds use for perching. He emphasized that the primary goal is to clean up the area for wildlife benefit.

The financial analysis rates are consistent with EQUIP standards. Brian expressed full support for the fence removal, noting he has driven past the area and would like to see it cleared. Doug inquired about the cost per foot for equipment and labor, and Cassie responded that equipment costs are \$0.62/foot and labor costs are \$0.48/foot. Additionally, the financials include a one time mobilization expense of \$1,000. Steve asked about

disposal of the old materials; Ian stated that he plans to take the wire to Axis Steel and burn the old cedar posts.

Doug suggested the possibility of hiring a contractor for the project. Ian responded that he prefers to complete as much of the work as possible on his property himself or with hired hands, if he has the capacity.

Doug made the motion to approve this project as presented. Nick seconded. No further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Grandbouche

Mark began the discussion by displaying a large GIS map illustrating connectivity between the Grandbouche projects (six landowners) and other projects funded through sage-grouse allocations. These projects collectively form a large contiguous block of habitat improvement, primarily consisting of treatments for invasive annual grasses and the conversion of agricultural fields to native rangeland. He overlaid core habitat areas to demonstrate how these efforts expand existing habitat, along with priority and general sage-grouse habitat layers. Bryan noted that the entire area in question would be considered priority habitat, even where the map layer may classify portions as general habitat.

Mark proposed a tiered financial structure, included in each committee member's packet, designed to make landowner contributions more feasible. The table outlines total project costs in relation to varying landowner contribution percentages.

Colton stated that the proposed seed mix appears appropriate but expressed concern that, over time, wheatgrasses may outcompete other desirable species. Brett disagreed, suggesting that alfalfa will eventually phase out and allow other grasses to establish. Brett explained that he plans to no-till drill seed into existing wheat stubble to ensure proper seed-to-soil contact for grasses, while sagebrush seed would be better established through broadcast seeding on the soil surface. Colton recommended broadcasting sagebrush seed on ridgetops or north facing slopes.

Mark asked for committee input on appropriate sagebrush seeding rates and acreage. Nick suggested targeting 1–2% of the total field area and focusing on locations with higher establishment potential. Desa noted that if sagebrush is already present adjacent to the fields, it may naturally move in, but recommended seeding central portions of larger fields to create a seed source. Colton agreed, noting this approach aligns with CPW practices. Doug asked whether CFCD should coordinate with CPW to source sagebrush seed.

Brett asked whether broadcast seeding sagebrush prior to herbicide application (likely glyphosate) would impact germination. Junior responded that there is potential for reduced germination depending on moisture conditions. Brett added that dry conditions could limit both herbicide effectiveness and seed establishment. He recommended completing herbicide application and grass/forb drilling in the spring, followed by broadcasting sagebrush seed in late fall (November) to improve establishment success. Bryan supported this approach.

Nick asked about the cost of sagebrush seed, and Mark reported approximately \$70 per pound based on a quote from Snyder & Counts. Bryan emphasized the importance of sourcing seed from regions with similar elevation and moisture conditions. Kacey suggested contracting Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to collect sagebrush seed as a potentially more cost-effective option.

Steve suggested seeding sagebrush on approximately 5% of the total acreage across the three larger projects (VanMetre, Taylor, and Kawchack_J), totaling roughly 96 acres. Kacey noted that the committee could approve a maximum funding amount for sagebrush seeding to avoid getting into overly detailed acreage calculations.

Troy Taylor stated that his property already has significant sagebrush along field edges and supported the concept of planting sagebrush in "islands." Rick asked why additional sagebrush was necessary if some is already encroaching, and Colton responded that additional distribution benefits wildlife habitat.

Nick made a motion to implement sagebrush seeding on 5% of these projects and future projects. Doug seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Colton then shifted the discussion to whether the committee should approve the six projects as presented or consider the tiered financial proposal. He referenced the Z/C Livestock project, where sage-grouse funding covered seed costs. Desa asked where the assumption originated that sage-grouse funding should only cover seed while landowners cover labor. In the Grandbouche project, Brett would serve as the contractor, as he does not own the land.

Extensive discussion followed regarding what constitutes a fair landowner contribution, particularly in cases where landowners are not providing labor or equipment. Steve expressed concern that CFCD is being asked to cover costs for land that would likely be taken out of production regardless, and that rehabilitating retired agricultural fields should remain the landowner's responsibility. Desa countered that these projects align with the intent of the funding, particularly given the habitat impacts associated with the transmission line.

Brett noted that spray projects are typically funded at approximately 80% by sage-grouse funding and 20% by landowners (primarily application costs), and that the landowners in this case are contributing less than that benchmark. Nick emphasized that the committee's decision will set a precedent for similar future projects.

Troy explained that Brett has historically farmed his fields and that he trusts his judgment. He noted that converting fields from production to native habitat represents a significant financial loss due to foregone crop income. He stated that while he is interested in improving habitat for long term family and wildlife benefits, the current cost share expectations are not financially feasible, and he would need to continue farming the land without additional assistance.

Rick expressed similar concerns, stating that he had anticipated a contribution closer to 10% rather than the proposed amount.

Junior emphasized that establishing a functional native system is critical to maintaining any long term value from these lands, as opposed to allowing them to go fallow. Colton acknowledged that landowners are ultimately responsible for their land but noted that CFCD should establish clear boundaries on funding contributions. James stated that he would not be willing to proceed with sage-grouse funding if his contribution exceeded 10% of total project costs. Brett reiterated that the quoted application costs are accurate and could not reasonably be reduced further.

Kacey reminded the group that this funding program is not intended to function like CRP or NRCS programs, but rather to support habitat improvement to offset impacts associated with the transmission line.

Nick made a motion to approve the tiered financial proposal. Desa seconded. Steve had a question regarding the tired proposal, and realized he was looking at the wrong one. All committee members except Steve were in favor of the motion. Steve opposed the motion. The motion passed.

Brett thought another 3,500 acres worth of land could sign up to receive this funding, however he cannot speak for the landowners.

Closing Discussion

Brian shared that he and Trevor have been in communication regarding coordination efforts in lieu of an active local sage-grouse working group. He noted that there is currently no formal working group in the area and asked whether Trevor could attend the next committee meeting. Nick acknowledged that while this committee may be short lived, it is important to maintain collaboration and continuity moving forward.

Brian also raised the broader question of reestablishing a sage-grouse working group, noting that many individuals currently involved in this committee would likely participate. He mentioned that he has been working with other groups and that T. Wright and Jeff have been involved in past efforts. Brian asked whether there is a statewide sage-grouse working group that could be engaged. The committee expressed support for exploring this option.

Nick noted that there is currently no interest in utilizing the Swartzell seed mix. He had previously asked BLM whether they would use it for a fire scar project, but they declined. He suggested the possibility of incorporating the seed mix into other projects, such as Grandbouche.

Doug shared that he has had better success controlling bulbous bluegrass using Camby. He noted that many of his plantings have focused on managing bulbous species and suggested either substituting Sandberg bluegrass with Camby or adding Camby to the mix.

The next meeting of the MCGSG group will be:
Tuesday, April 14, 2026, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm
In the NRCS office conference room.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Steve, Doug seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:55 PM.