

Custer County Conservation District

Meeting Notes

Pine Room, Custer County Annex, Custer, SD 57730
605-673-5680

The January 8, 2021 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order at 9:06 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Justine Reid, Justin Boreboom, Faryn Klebe, Mike Linde, Caley Buckert, and Mike Baldwin. In virtual attendance via Teams: Stuart Adrian.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted.

Dave introduced Stuart Adrian as an advisor beginning in January 2021.

December 11, 2020 meeting minutes and this meeting's agenda were approved after a motion by Tamarah with a second by Paul.

Partnership Reports:

- NRCS Representative: Justine Reid – Report attached
 - Other notes from Justine and Justin:
 - NRCS FY2021 funding up from FY2020. Incoming administration has indicated using USFS and NRCS in future climate change work – may lead to additional funding down the road.
 - State Conservationist has retired, an acting SC will be in place until a replacement is found.
 - Additional notes: Notes from the CIS project discussion that occurred during and immediately after Justine's report are located under 'Old Business' in these minutes.
- NWTF Forester: Faryn Klebe –
 - She is planning to finish prescriptions soon. Management plans to be completed by March.
- County Commission report: Mike Linde –
 - Nothing to report. Encouraged CCCD to brief the Commission 1-2 times per year. Board will give presentation to the Commission in April.
- Guest comments: In future meetings, invited guests will be asked to speak during this portion of the meeting. Their comments will be included in this section as well.

Financial Report:

- Account balances
 - Main Checking
 - \$5,997.86
 - Grant Checking
 - \$1,458.41
 - Savings
 - \$41,100.05

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- Grants:
 - Question was raised on whether the CCCD needs to disseminate a 1099G form for any grants made in 2020. No grants were paid except for \$4,000 to National Wild Turkey Federation for salary contribution. Oonagh will speak with the county auditor for clarification.
- 2021 budget:
 - The 2021 budget proposal was presented by Oonagh. Paul motioned to have proposal emailed to all board members for review, Tamarah seconded, motion carried.
- SDACDE membership:
 - Mike asked the board if they support a \$25 annual membership to the SD Assoc. of Conservation District Employees (SDACDE). Paul made motion to approve membership fee, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
- Account access for Mike:
 - Mike now has online access to CCCD bank accounts and has received his credit card.

Correspondence:

- Current supervisor elections:
 - Bailey Kaskie, SD Dept. of Agriculture, Div. of Resource Conservation & Forestry, asked all districts to provide their updated Supervisor election result sheet. Election results are below. Mike will verify these are accurate with the county auditor and then respond to Bailey.
 - Dave Thom - elected to 4 year term through 2024
 - Oonagh Wood - elected to 4 year term through 2024
 - Paul Nettinga - elected to 4 year term through 2024
 - Tamarah Caster - appointed to 2 year term through 2022
 - Vacant

Old Business:

- Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) -
 - Custer Highlands/Elk Mountain:
 - Board was presented with an updated draft of the postcard for the Custer Highlands / Elk Mountain project. The latest draft includes revisions completed by Caitlin Uthe and Blaine Brakke with SDACD. Mike will email the draft to the board for additional comments and then send any edits to Caitlin and Blaine for finalizing the postcard.
 - The mailing will go out to approximately 300 residents within the project area. If we are unable to generate enough public interest in the project, the Board will expand its focus to a 2nd priority area. Tamarah indicated that bulletin boards in the Custer Highlands will help spread the word.
 - Eastern Custer County
 - Mike has begun drafting a project proposal but would like assistance with ensuring the proposal meets the conservation needs of the focus area. Mike will plan to have a Teams virtual meeting with Justine, Justin, and Julie

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Wheeler to discuss project details. May ask Bob White for additional input as well.

- Justine discussed potential of bird watching group or similar group that could be included as a partner on the proposal.
 - Board may ask for project input from Travis Bies. District could potentially hold a town hall type meeting. Mike will work with USDA folks and make a recommendation to Board.
 - Justin and Justine: Funding for EQIP projects is phasing out, though current contracts are still valid. There will be no special forestry pool of funds starting next year. NRCS is moving funding distribution to CIS projects. Will be 100% CIS by FY2022.
- Thinning grant:
 - Signed liability letters for the cost-share thinning program have been received for 3 of the 5 landowners. Mike will attempt to contact the two landowners who have not responded. The deadline for response is January 15.

New Business:

- Supervisor vacancy:
 - Board discussed need to fill Stuart's old position. Justin suggested mailing residents asking for interested candidates. Focus is on finding someone from eastern portion of Custer County for better representation on the Board. Caley placed advertisement in the paper for last vacancy but did not have much response. Oonagh suggested advertising on web page. Paul asked for topic to be placed on agenda for next meeting. Dave will draft a letter to send out to residents of eastern Custer County. NRCS will assist in providing list of addresses.
- 2021 Budget:
 - Oonagh and Mike will work on the budget and email to board. Budget plan will be up for approval at the next board meeting.
- Long-range plan:
 - Board discussed whether revisions were needed to CCCD long-range plan. Dave suggested list of NRCS Resource Concerns is a useful tool to tailor plan and also the annual work plan. Paul agreed and suggested shortening plan from 3 pages to 1-2 pages. Justine and Justin suggested reviewing NRCS video for guidance. Justine will email the video link to the Board. Justin stated that soil health is highly important to NRCS. SD NRCS has long-range plan that Justin will send to the Board. Dave inquired whether SDACDE has a long-range plan. Mike will look into this. Linde did not have suggestions for the plan, but did state that landowners are independent and often do things their way.
 - Points to consider: reformat plan based on NRCS resource concerns, prioritize soil health, locally-grown agriculture, drought, grasslands. Mineral development not important in long-range plan, may remove this section.
- Annual work plan:
 - Oonagh suggested the Board reduce the frequency of newsletters from four to two or three. May combine spring newsletter with Weed & Pest Department's newsletter this year.

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- Paul suggested adding verbiage on CCCD assisting the Weed & Pest Department. Discussed need to boost importance of Arbor Day and boost our relationship with 4-H. Other additions to consider: CIS project, brochure, weed and pest, 4-H, scholarship, audit (not in 2021 plan but in future plan). Plan needs to be less wordy and should resemble a to-do list.
- Board discussed need to be cautious of priorities during Weed & Pest busy time.
- Dave and Mike will work on revisions to long-range and annual plans and send out drafts to the Board.

Other Business:

- The 75th NACD Annual Meeting will be online Feb. 1-10, 2021 via NACD's virtual hub (<https://events.bizzabo.com/NACD/home>). Attendance is free to the Week 1 Business Meetings. Week 2 meetings will cost you \$50 to attend.
- Newsletter:
 - Mike would like input on items to include in spring newsletter. Again, the Board discussed a combined Weed & Pest / CCCD newsletter in the spring, likely April. Mike will focus on Weed & Pest, then have a list of CCCD topics to include. CIS information should be added.

Next meeting: Friday February 12th 9:00-11:00 AM – Pine room

Critique:

- Audio for virtual attendees:
 - Stuart and Dave expressed difficulty in following/hearing everyone while attending board meetings virtually. It is also difficult for the rest of the board to hear those individuals speaking online. Board asked Mike to look into purchasing a microphone and external speaker. Motion made by Oonagh to authorize purchase at a reasonable amount (~\$100), Paul seconded, motion carried.
- NACD emails:
 - Paul no longer receives newsletters from NACD. Mike will look into this.
- There is a short-notice request by NRCS to create an unfunded cooperative agreement between our district and the NRCS, with a due date of January 31. This is now a requirement of all districts. Last year, only CD's that shared office space with NRCS were required to write this agreement; however, this is no longer the case. Mike will work with Justine to get this done.

Adjournment: 11:25 AM

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January 8, 2021

NRCS Field Office Report to the Custer County Conservation District

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2012 – 2020: 9 Active Contracts
- 2021: 27 Applications
 - Batching date was December 11th
 - Eligibility deadline is January 29 – certified letters sent out with deadline
 - Will be using a new Screening/Prioritization tool, funds cut for General EQIP due to CIS allocations
 - Rapid City FO 6 applications in Custer – 1 Forest, 5 General
 - *Hot Springs FO 12 applications in Custer – 3 High Tunnel, 4 Forest, 5 General*

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2015 - 2020: 23 Active Contracts
 - Working on payments, deadline of February 5th
- 2021 Renewals: 7 Applications
 - 1 was high priority and it has been extended in case more money comes in
- 2021 Classic
 - Batching date is March 26th
- 2022 Renewals
 - Batching date is March 26th – letters will go out to those that are eligible

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Other

- COVID-19: no change in status; masks and social distancing required in offices; vacates possible if cases within the building – had another one over Christmas-time
- CIS 2021 – Call for proposals, deadline of April 15, 2021; will include CSP style contracts

/S/

Justine Reid

District Conservationist