



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – February 12, 2021

The February 12, 2021 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order at 9:07 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Justine Reid, Matt Walsh, Julie Wheeler, and Mike Baldwin.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted.

The meeting minutes from January 8, 2021 and this meeting's agenda were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Paul.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS Representative: Justine Reid – Report attached (page 5)
 - Additional notes:
 - Justine provided an annual review of Civil Rights compliance topics. All board members present signed the NRCS – USDA Acknowledgement of Section 1619 Compliance.
- SDDA Forester: Matt Walsh – Report attached (page 6)
 - Additional notes:
 - RCF created an urban tree planting guide which will be available soon.
 - Windbreak cost share inquiry by 2 residents – Justine stated EQIP funding is unlikely since funding moving to support CIS. Possibly from FSA? State grant is available, but deadline is too soon. Will wait until fall request for proposals and reassess. It may not be necessary to have a tree program in the county – instead work with neighboring county.
- Guest comments:
 - Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
 - Drought is a significant concern for the Grassland this year. They will be monitoring the situation as the year progresses.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking
 - \$5,877.86 – outstanding: \$25.00 to SDACDE (2021 dues), \$94.04 for wireless speakerphone.
 - Grant Checking
 - \$1,458.41

- Savings
 - \$41,100.38
- Motion by Paul, second by Dave to approve Treasurer's report, motion carried.
- 2021 County allocated funds:
 - Funds have not been received. Mike will check with the county auditor. May need to submit a formal request for the funds to be transferred.
- Financial review:
 - Oonagh inquired about the need to complete a financial review – last review was two years ago. Motion by Paul, second by Oonagh for Mike and Oonagh to meet with an auditor to complete a new financial review, motion carried.
- U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Finance Survey:
 - Oonagh completed and submitted the survey to the Census Bureau.
- Bills to pay:
 - SDACD 2021 dues:
 - Request from SDACD was \$975.00. A similar request was made in 2020, but board agreed to contribute \$500 that year. Motion made by Oonagh, second by Paul to contribute \$500 in 2021, motion carried.
 - Quicken license renewal:
 - Board agreed to renew Quicken license for one year at \$51.99.
 - Motion by Paul, second by Dave to approve bills as presented, motion carried.
- 2021 budget proposal:
 - Request by Dave to change location of landowner meeting from Fairburn Fire Hall to Custer Highlands Fire Hall. No other changes requested. Motion by Paul to approve budget proposal, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Freeland Project:
 - Black Hills National Forest is seeking public input on proposed vegetation management within the Freeland project area. This project is similar to the Summit-Blacktail Project, which the Board provided comments for in February, 2020. Dave will draft a comment letter and present to the Board at the March board meeting. A meeting invitation will be sent to Wendy Schuyler or Traci Anderson.
- SDACD locally led survey:
 - Mike inquired about whether board members received a survey request from SDACD. Board had not, Mike will send survey link to board members.
- SDACDE Leadership:
 - The 2021 conference has been postponed to June 28-30 in Pierre. More details are forthcoming.
- Resource Conservation Speech Contest:
 - SDDA-RCF is seeking high school students to participate in this contest. Deadline for local contests is March 27. Mike sent information to pertinent area teachers.
- Arbor Day:
 - SDDA-RCF is seeking 5th & 6th graders to participate in the state-wide Essay Contest, and 5th graders to participate in the state-wide Poster Contest. Deadline

for the essay contest is April 5, poster deadline is March 26. Mike forwarded information to pertinent area teachers.

- Volunteer opportunities:
 - County resident inquired about volunteer opportunities. Mike will invite person to attend next board meeting.
- Inquiry made for renting no-till drill:
 - CCCD does not have equipment for rent. Justine said Pennington CD has two no-till drills, one of which they allow residents of Custer County to use.

Old Business:

- SDDA Supervisors Election Report:
 - Mike verified with Bailey Kaskie (SDDA-RCF) on the term limit for Tamarah, which runs through 2022.
- Supervisor vacancy letter:
 - Dave drafted a letter to seek public interest in the vacancy. The intent is to find a board representative from eastern Custer County. Letter will be sent to agricultural producers in the region.
- Revision/approval of 2021 Annual Work Plan and Long-range Plan.
 - Dave and Mike made revisions to both plans. Updated plans were presented to the board. Additional changes were suggested by board members to improve the plans. Oonagh motioned for both plans to be approved with suggested changes, second by Paul, motion carried.
- Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) -
 - Custer Highlands/Elk Mountain:
 - Postcard was completed and sent out to 300 residents in the area. The board expresses their appreciation for the support provided by Caitlin Uthe and Blaine Brakke of SDACD.
 - Justine has already received inquiries from about six residents. NRCS will do a media release approximately one month prior to batching date of June 15. Dave suggested including a board member's name/comments in the release to the Chronicle so that it will increase likelihood of picking up the article.
 - Landowner meeting still planned for May 7 in Custer Highlands / Elk Mountain fire hall or school.
 - Eastern Custer County:
 - Mike reviewed some of the details from the February 1 meeting with Justine Reid (NRCS), Justin Boerboom (NRCS), Julie Wheeler (USFS), Bradley Humbracht (NRCS), Clinton Phillips (USFS), and Klint Rittberger (CCWP Board Vice-Chair).
 - The geographic scope of the project – it was decided that broader is better. The project area was determined to be east of Highway 79 to the Cheyenne River. A priority ranking system will likely be employed based on distance to certain features, conservation practices used, etc.
 - If awarded, funds could be used on Buffalo Gap National Grassland if the lessee of an active grazing allotment contract applies for these funds.

- A public meeting will be held to gather input on needs/concerns from agricultural producers.

New Business:

- Officer elections for 2021:
 - Motion made by Oonagh and seconded by Paul for Dave to continue as Chair and Paul to be the new Vice-Chair, motion carried.
- CCCD Scholarship:
 - Oonagh and Mike recreated the scholarship application and shared it with the board. The board approved its release. Oonagh and Mike will work on an announcement.

Other Business:

- CCCD Webpages:
 - Mike is seeking comments/suggestions from the board for the state (SDACD) (<https://www.sdconservation.org/custercd>) and County (<https://www.custercountysd.com/conservation-district/>) webpages.
- CCCD Facebook page:
 - Board asked Mike to begin updating Facebook page – approximately one post per month. Oonagh will get the administrator login information for Mike.
- Unfunded cooperative agreement:
 - Mike and Justine developed an agreement between the CCCD and NRCS. The document is under review with the NRCS grant administrator. A finalized agreement should be sent to the board soon for their approval.

Next meeting: Friday March 12th 9:00-11:00 AM – Pine Room, Custer County Annex Building

Critique:

- The City of Custer is seeking a state forestry grant. Dave offered to include CCCD as a partner. CCCD is pleased to be a partner with the City of Custer.
- Urban forestry grants – CCCD was asked if it would be willing to sponsor.
- Dave made request to add USFS General to Partnership Reports on meeting agendas. Mike will add item to future agendas.

Adjournment: 11:25 AM

February 12, 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
 - Ranking deadline is March 19th
 - Obligation deadline is April 30th

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2015 - 2020: 23 Active Contracts
 - Finished payments
 - Preparing for 2021 field season
- 2021 Classic
 - Batching date is March 26th
- 2022 Renewals
 - Batching date is March 26th – letters will go out to those that are eligible (have not gone out yet due to delay by our NHQ)

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Other

- COVID-19: no change in status; masks and social distancing required in offices; vacates possible if cases within the building
- CIS 2020 (Resilient Forest Landscapes) – gotten about 6 calls/emails of interest; application batching deadline is June 15th; will have press release about 1 month prior
- CIS 2021 (Rangeland Health in Eastern Custer County) – Call for proposals, deadline of April 15, 2021 to submit proposal

/S/

Justine Reid
District Conservationist

RCF Report for Custer County Conservation District

February 12, 2020

The following is a summary of assistance provided to the Custer county conservation district and projects being worked on within the county from 11/13/2020-12/8/2020.

- Thinning project updates:
 - All 5 projects are moving forward. Landowners are on schedule to complete work by June 1st deadline
- Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) updates for Custer County:
 - I have requests for 3 FSP's from landowners in Custer county
- EQIP Projects:
 - Wrapping up final projects for the 2020 funding round
- Women and Wildland Fire Home Defense Workshop
 - Workshop will take place March 20th
 - Next week going out to capture drone footage of Wildland fire Custer Highlands project area
- Windbreak assistance requests
 - I have received two requests for cost share assistance for windbreak plantings in Custer county.
 - Not many options for assistance available: No county grant, EQIP funding change makes it unavailable, and they do not qualify for the GFP grant.
 - Would the board have interest in applying for a grant to assist these two landowners with a windbreak planting?

Matt Walsh

Service Forester