



## Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – April 9, 2021

The April 9, 2021 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order at 9:02 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Stuart Adrian, Matt Walsh, Julie Wheeler, Faryn Klebe, Cassie Bell, Karl Jensen (call in), and Mike Baldwin.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted.

The meeting minutes from March 12, 2021 and this meeting's agenda were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Tamarah.

### **Partnership/Guest Reports:**

- Karl Jensen, President of SDACD Board of Directors –
  - Karl was invited to speak on the possibility/process for requesting additional funding through the state Conservation Commission to be dedicated to forestry issues (forestry health and resiliency) in the Black Hills. Request would be for \$100,000 of new funds dedicated to this issue, not a redistribution of existing Commission grant funds.
  - Karl suggested to write resolution with the backing of Hills Area CDs and also work with legislators. Circulate draft to area CDs and also to Greg Josten, State Forester, and Anglea Ehlers, SDACD Executive Director, for their input. Introduce resolution at Hills Area meeting in June. If approved, resolution would advance to state annual meeting in September.
- NRCS Representative: Cassie Bell –
  - Reviewed Justine's report – see attached
- NWTF Forester: Faryn Klebe –
  - Working on one preapproved EQIP project for forest stand improvement and brush management. Also busy working on Stewardship Plans, but none for Custer County.
- SDDA Forester: Matt Walsh – Report attached
  - Additional notes:
    - Provided the Board a draft of his Fall River CIS proposal. Asked the Board for letter of support for the proposal. Paul made a motion to approve letter of support, Tamarah seconded, motion carried.
    - RCF is hosting another workshop in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June. It will cover cost-share grants that are available to landowners.
    - Wildland Fire grant (80-20 cost-share for 10 acres around home) hoped to be approved.

- Dave asked about updating information sheet on cost-share grants for landowners. It would be helpful to have by the 4/30 workshop. Matt will update this.
- Forest Service general:
  - Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
    - COVID: now consistent guidelines across USDA – matches NRCS. However, doors are still closed to the public.
    - Will have a letter of support for CCCD CIS proposal and another proposal for pipeline work in southern Fall River County.

### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$14,183.82,
  - Grant Checking = \$1,458.41,
  - Savings = \$41,101.07.
- Bills to pay:
  - None at this time. Will have bills for financial review and expenses for landowner workshop.
- Financial review:
  - Oonagh and Mike met with Laurie Arthur. Currently waiting on her report. Laurie offered to speak to the board at our next meeting to review the report.
- Motion by Paul, second by Tamarah to approve treasury report as presented, motion carried.
- NTWF grant obligation:
  - Faryn will let us know about when our contribution of \$4,000 is due.

### **Correspondence:**

- USDA Black Hills National Forest, Hell Canyon District seeking public comment:
  - New vegetation treatment project titled “Pine and Aspen Restoration Project”. Project is located in northwest Pennington County.
  - Mike will forward information to Pennington County Conservation District. Board will not address project.
  - CCCD supports projects that enhance diversity and move towards species composition reflective of natural ecological communities.
- Mark Kieffer Memorial Scholarship notice:
  - Mike will post information to CCCD webpage.

### **Old Business:**

- CCCD Scholarship:
  - No applications were received. Julie has observed a decline of interest in natural resources. Oonagh will check with school. Check with Guidance Counselor.
  - Board discussed need to modify application requirements (e.g., 4H, outdoor activities, hunting, fishing, gardening, Scouts, FFA, archery, recycling).
  - Original scholarship deadline was set for April 1, will be extended to May 1.
  - Oonagh will draft document with revised requirements and send to the Board.

- Resource Conservation Speech Contest:
  - Remington was the only candidate so automatically advanced to the Hills Area contest where he finished second and qualified for State. Contest will be held 4/24 in Pierre.
- Arbor Day:
  - No entries were received for the essay and poster contests. Paul will work with grade school principal on how to increase participation.
- Board Supervisor vacancy:
  - Colton Jones was unable to attend today's meeting. Dave will contact him to see if he is available for the next Board meeting. A selection will then be made in June.

### **New Business:**

- Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) -
  - Custer Highlands/Elk Mountain:
    - Landowner meeting:
      - Mike created a postcard and is mailing them to landowners in the area. Postcards are at the printer and should be completed today.
      - Oonagh ordered 40 lunch boxes from Heart of the Hills Catering. Will also have coffee and snacks. Estimated cost for workshop is ~\$500, \$250 of which will be covered by SD Family Forests Association.
      - Agenda is mostly complete, Dave will email it to the Board.
      - Stuart suggested giving a gift card/check to the contractor for coming to the workshop and giving a thinning demonstration to participants. Paul made a motion to give a \$150 check, Oonagh seconded, motion carried.
      - Oonagh motioned that the Board donate \$75 to the school for use of its facility, Tamarah seconded, motion carried.
  - Eastern Custer County – Rangeland Health Improvement:
    - Mike updated the Board on the status of the proposal. A draft was completed with input from NRCS, USFS, and the Board. The draft was sent to Jeff Vander Wilt, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, for a courtesy review prior to final submission. Mike is working to address Jeff's two main comments.
    - Paul made motion to approve the proposal for submission, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
- RAC grant application –
  - An application was submitted for \$30,000 in funding to conduct fuel reduction/pre-commercial thinning of an estimated 60 acres of sapling-sized pines on NFS land adjacent to private lands that have or will be treated.
- Arbor Day –
  - Dave has been in contact with the school and has scheduled Monday, May 10 for Arbor Day activities including handing out bareroot tree seedlings.

**Other Business:**

- USFS Timber study:
  - Dave provided an overview of the USFS webinar “Science-Based Scenarios to Inform Forest Management on the Black Hills National Forest” and the recent report/study. Standing inventory within the Black Hills is approximately half of what it used to be. Study indicates need to reduce harvest rates, which were determined to be unsustainable.
  - CCCD may host a public meeting in the Pine Room to answer questions about USFS study.
- Cottonwood planting site:
  - Site visit was cancelled. To be rescheduled for a later date.

**Next meeting:** Friday May 14<sup>th</sup> 9:00-11:00 AM – Pine Room, Custer County Annex Building

**Adjournment:** 10:55 AM



*April 9, 2021*

*NRCS Field Office Report to the Custer County Conservation District*

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2012 – 2020: 9 Active Contracts
- 2021: 27 Applications
  - Planning review on March 10<sup>th</sup> (2 Forest, 2 High Tunnels)
  - Ranking deadline was pushed back to March 26<sup>th</sup>
    - Waiting on official list of preapproved applications to move forward
  - Obligation deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2015 - 2020: 23 Active Contracts
  - Preparing for 2021 field season by getting seed plans done, etc.
- 2021 Classic
  - Batching date was March 26<sup>th</sup> – 6 applications received
  - Prioritization deadline is May 14<sup>th</sup>
  - Ranking deadline is June 4<sup>th</sup>
  - Obligation deadline is July 9<sup>th</sup>
- 2022 Renewals
  - Batching date was pushed back to April 7<sup>th</sup> – letters went out to those that are eligible, includes those up for a 3<sup>rd</sup> contract
  - Further deadlines will be in late Fall/early Winter 2021

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Other

- COVID-19: update in status (2 people in office – 50% capacity); masks and social distancing required in offices; vacates possible if cases within the building; will be allowing visitors into the building starting April 12<sup>th</sup> with appointment, pre-screening, etc.
- CIS 2020 (Resilient Forest Landscapes)
  - Justin Boerboom will be at the landowner workshop with applications for folks to fill out
- CIS 2021 (Rangeland Health in Eastern Custer County) – Call for proposals, deadline of April 15, 2021 to submit proposal
- Tyler Tran, Soil Conservationist from Hayti, will be the acting DC and will be attending the CD meetings, etc.

/S/

Justine Reid  
District Conservationist



## SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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### RCF Report for Custer County Conservation District

April 9, 2021

The following is a summary of assistance provided to the Custer county conservation district and projects being worked on within the county.

- Thinning project updates:
  - All 5 projects are moving forward. Landowners are on schedule to complete work by June 1<sup>st</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup>
  - 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