



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – January 13, 2022

The January 13, 2022 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse, at 9:00 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Tamarah Caster, Stuart Adrian, Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer, Matt Walsh, Mike Linde, Paul Nettinga (call in), Julie Wheeler (call in), and Mike Baldwin.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted. For the purpose of continuity, these minutes are not necessarily in chronological order.

The meeting minutes from December 9, 2021 were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
 - Nothing to report.
- NRCS Representative: Report attached.
 - A NRCS representative was unable to attend but Justine provided a monthly report. Mike reviewed the report with the Board.
 - Additional notes: the batching date for the Resilient Forest CIS project will need to be extended. We are still waiting for the NRCS public notice to be sent out. Once it does, the batching date will be set to 30 days after the notice date.
- NWTF Forester:
 - Faryn was unable to attend and did not have anything to report.
- SD DANR Forester: Matt Walsh –
 - The agency forester responsible for the Northern Hills has left the position, leaving only Matt and Faryn until a replacement can be found.
 - Custer CCD thinning grant:
 - Two new applications have been received: one by Carroll Schnurr for 20 acres and one by Penny and Paul Svenkeson for 20 acres. If funded, Matt expects Schnurr's work will be completed by the end of March. Matt asked the Board if they would be willing to allow the Svenkesons to treat more acreage due to their contractor's low costs. For the same amount of money that a "normal" contractor would charge for 20 acres, the Svenkesons would be able to treat 36.8 acres of forest.
 - Motion by Oonagh to approve the Schnurr application for 20 acres and the Svenkeson application for 36.8 acres, seconded by Greg, motion carried.
 - Matt was asked about any forest thinning interest by Matt Piper's neighbors. Matt stated that those neighbors are going with the SD

Wildland Fire cost-share grant because of its higher cost-share and higher maximum payment.

- Forest Service general:
 - Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
 - Currently working on a Forest Monitoring Report which should come out in May. Also preparing for spring meetings to discuss grazing allotments. Still monitoring the current drought.
 - USFS is filling vacancies, hiring is a priority nationally. Working on local hires as well, including seasonals.
 - USFS still operating under a Continuing Resolution.
 - COVID has delayed the back to work plan.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$8,931.93,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$37,103.92.
- Bills to pay/approve:
 - SDACD dues – payment of \$550.00.
- Mike checked with the bank on whether it was necessary to maintain a minimum balance in the Grant account. For this account, no minimum balance is required. Our other accounts do have minimum balances otherwise fees are charged.
- Motion by Greg, second by Oonagh to approve financial report as presented and approve payment of bills, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Received an invitation from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to be a cooperating agency. BLM is preparing an environmental impact statement for amending management plans for Greater Sage-Grouse and sagebrush habitat on public lands. Since Sage-Grouse are not known to occur in Custer County, the Board decided to take no action.
- Coffee with a Ranger (@ Pine Room, 1/14, 9:30-10:30): Anyone interested in meeting the new Jewel Cave NM park superintendent, Kevin Tillman, and the new chief of interpretation, Aimee Murillo, can meet them on Friday at the library.
- Powertech: the State Water Management Board updated the CCCD's address and contact information for correspondence pertaining to the Powertech water permit application and ground water discharge plan.
- Supervisor module training: Alex Roeber, SD DANR, shared a training module for all supervisors. The module can be completed anytime. Mike will share the link with the Board.

Old Business:

- CIS Updates:
 - Resilient Forest Landscapes:
 - No update since an NRCS representative was unable to attend.
 - Rangeland and Riparian Health:
 - No update.

- Outreach: Mike will work with NRCS to create and distribute a postcard for producers in the project area.
- 2021-22 State thinning grant:
 - Landowner applications: discussed above in Matt’s report.
 - IRS forms:
 - CCCD is required to distribute relevant tax documents to recipients of our State thinning grant in 2021. Forms that must be prepared included 1099-G and 1096 for any grant payments over \$600. Forms are due by January 31. Oonagh offered to work with Mike to complete this task.

New Business:

- Election of Officers:
 - Nomination made by Greg that officers remain the same from last year, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried. Chair is Dave, Vice-Chair is Paul, and Treasurer is Oonagh.
- Black Hills National Forest
 - Forest Plan Revision:
 - Dave updated the Board on the upcoming Forest Plan Revision. Dave worked with the County Commission to formally request that Custer County participate with the US Forest Service as a cooperating agency during this process. The Commission approved the request letter at their December 22 meeting and it was signed by the Chairman.
 - Linde expressed some of the County’s concerns including law enforcement (e.g., OHV issues) and payments in lieu of taxes (PILT).
 - The Forest Supervisor and the Hell Canyon District Ranger were scheduled to speak more on this topic at today’s meeting, but had to reschedule.
 - Upcoming meeting of the Black Hills Resilient Forest Working Group:
 - Dave and Mike plan on attending this meeting on January 20 in Rapid City. The group works to address post-mountain pine beetle issues and to create more resilient forests for the long-term. The Board will be updated at our next meeting.
- Tree order update:
 - Our order of Black Hills spruce cannot be filled due to a shortage. Josh Larson, SD DANR, provided a list of hardwoods to consider as an alternative. Board discussed this option but decided to double our previous order of ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper – from 25 seedlings each to 50 seedlings each.
 - Greg spoke with the Hermosa School Board last Monday about their interest in CCCD purchasing two trees for the school grounds and students planting the trees on Arbor Day. There was interest but requires follow up to determine if and where the trees are needed. Greg shared contact information with Mike for a person that can answer those questions. Mike will contact him and report to the Board.
 - Board discussed the amount of trees budgeted for this year (2 larger trees and 100 seedlings) and whether it should increase the budget to allow for a third larger tree. If so, two trees would be purchased for Hermosa and one tree purchased for

Custer. Oonagh made a motion to increase the tree budget to \$700 to accommodate a third larger tree, Tamarah seconded, motion carried.

- CIS: NRCS request for new project preproposals:
 - NRCS has announced that they are accepting preproposals for new CIS projects. Deadline is March 4. In a previous conversation, Justine advised against another forestry-related project at this time since our current project just started. She suggested considering an irrigation project. Board asked Mike to pursue/explore project ideas and setup a meeting with Justine to develop a preproposal.
- 2022 Annual Work Plan and updates to Long-Range Plan:
 - Dave asked the Board to consider any conservation issues that are not currently addressed or opportunities to partner with other groups (e.g., garden club). Stuart suggested being proactive concerning the emerald ash borer – for example creating a tree replacement program within communities. Noxious weeds were also discussed. The current annual and long-range plans include a statement about partnering with the County Weed and Pest Department. Board discussed being more active in this regard, but will leave this responsibility to the Weed and Pest Board.
 - Julie discussed the Federal Infrastructure Bill, which includes money earmarked for invasive species detection, prevention, and eradication. USDA is expected to receive \$100 million. Grants for eradication of invasive species can be used on federal and non-federal land.
- Field trip to CIS project areas in eastern Custer County.
 - Board discussed the trip and has tentatively planned for it to occur on February 10, leaving Custer around 8:30 and spending a half-day in the area. Mike mentioned this date to Justine prior to today's meeting, but has not heard if she is available. Julie should be able to attend.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - Scholarship – No scholarship applications have been received to date. Mike confirmed with the school counselor that students were notified prior to Christmas break. A second notice was going out to students this week.
 - Mike virtually attended SDACDE Technical Training last week. The topic was the history of Conservation Districts, NRCS, and the Department of Agriculture and how they all work together.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 10. Board is tentatively planning a field trip on this date. Details will be shared with the Board as the date approaches.

Adjournment: 10:48 AM



January 13, 2022

NRCS Field Office Report to the Custer County Conservation District

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2018 – 2021: 10 Active Contracts
 - Includes CIS contracts
- 2022
 - Batching Deadline: 12/3/21
 - Ranking Deadline: 2/18/22
 - Obligation Deadline: 6/3/22
 - CIS FY 2022 Deadlines

	Resilient Forest Landscapes (CIS 2020)	Jasper Fire (CIS 2021)	Rangeland Health (CIS 2021)
Outreach	12/1/21	N/A	2/1/22
Batching	2/1/22	12/1/21	4/1/22
Ranking	4/1/22	2/1/22	7/1/22
Obligation	7/1/22	4/1/22	8/1/22

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2017 - 2022: 16 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
 - Calendar Year (CY) 2022 payments by 2/28/22
- 2022 Classic
 - Batching Deadline: 12/3/21, **extended to 1/20/22**
 - Ranking Deadline: 3/18/22
 - Obligation Deadline: 4/29/22

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) [joint NRCS/FSA program]

- Finishing up designs on approved projects

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Other

- COVID-19: 25% staffing, guidance very fluid right now
- Still working to hire State Conservationist
- CIS Proposal Process changed: call for Pre-Proposals 3/4/22, selection by 4/1/22, full proposals due 7/1/22

/S/

Justine Reid
District Conservationist