



## Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2022

The February 10, 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, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Greg Neugebauer, Stuart Adrian, Mike Linde, Julie Wheeler, Justine Reid (call in), Faryn Klebe (call in), Rob Hoelscher, Jeff Tomac, Ben Pucket, Rose S., 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 January 13, 2022 were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Paul, motion carried.

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

- Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest:
  - Rob Hoelscher, Hell Canyon District Ranger:
    - Reviewed the status of the preparation work necessary for implementation of the RAC grant that CCCD received. Mike will touch base with USFS about the planned landowner meeting this spring to discuss access to the target area. Rob is taking over Tracy Anderson's responsibilities for the Black Hills Resource Advisory Committee.
    - Jasper Fire CIS project: working with permittees to improve water availability to livestock and wildlife in the area. Work includes, but not limited to, installing water pipelines and storage tanks. Also a need to protect springs in the area from overgrazing by elk and cattle.
  - Jeff Tomac, Forest Supervisor:
    - Working on the Forest Plan Revision including 15 assessments. Timber is only one facet of this review. The Black Hills are complex with many interests. USFS is currently performing an internal review of those assessments.
    - USFS hosted an informational webinar on Feb. 1 for County Commissioners from all seven counties (5 in SD, 2 in WY) that contain the Black Hills. Webinar discussed forest planning, an overview of the 15 assessments, cooperating agencies, and public engagement. Custer did not have a commissioner present during the meeting. Jeff noted that any new information related to forest plan should be publicly available on the USFS-BHNF website.
    - Around end of April, will release 15 assessments for public review. Will provide cooperating agencies chance for input prior to public release.

- Jeff would like 1-2 representatives of each County Commission to provide input to Jeff during upcoming meeting. Meeting planned within the next two weeks with commissioners – to be scheduled soon.
  - Phase II of plan revision is expected to start in the fall. Overall, plan revision will take approximately 3-4 years to complete.
  - Infrastructure funds –
    - There is a possibility that the Black Hills National Forest will be considered a priority landscape within Region 2. The Forest is probably the most intensely managed National Forest in the western United States.
    - Will have some funds in the Hills but things are still being sorted out. Stewardship projects will get some funds. Current Stewardship projects include Roosevelt and Freeland.
    - Dave stated that CCCD, if desired, can help emphasize the importance of the Black Hills.
- Forest Service, Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
  - Julie Wheeler, Fall River District Ranger:
    - Does not anticipate a lot of money from the Infrastructure Bill.
    - Beginning work on an EIS invasive species document. Will be reaching out soon to potential cooperating agencies.
    - Holding their annual meetings with permittees to discuss grazing allotments.
    - Still monitoring the current drought – adjustments to grazing allotments may be necessary if drought continues. 500 acre fire this week on the Grassland within Pennington County.
- SD Game, Fish and Parks:
  - Ben Pucket, Private Land Biologist:
    - New position to deal with habitat concerns on private land. Previously, one position covered western South Dakota. Now, three personnel cover the same area.
    - Push to increase habitat for grassland birds by providing incentives to landowners to improve/create habitat. Cost-share examples include cross-fencing, pipelines, wells, etc. They are promoting rotational grazing.
    - Ben will provide a handout on cost-shares available. In contrast to NRCS projects, they do not have a ranking system so may be beneficial for projects not funded by NRCS.
    - Other tasks/projects include rangeland consultation and riparian restoration.
- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Commission is still busy with first of year business. Otherwise, nothing to report. Dave expressed need to figure out the cooperating agency specifics for the Forest Revision Plan.
- NRCS Representative: Justine Reid – Report attached.
  - Additional notes: Justine has accepted a new position, starting at the end of March. An employee on detail will fill the position until a permanent replacement can be found.



- NWTF Forester: Faryn Klebe –
  - Has received nine applications for the Forest Resilient CIS. She has been working with all the landowners trying to figure out exactly how much and what they want to do. She is working on two plans. One is almost done and they were signed to be new tree farmers. The other plan is for someone applying for the CIS. It is due by March 1st so she is going to be working on that one intensely before leaving for NWTF Convention next week.

### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$8,131.93,
  - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
  - Savings = \$37,103.92.
- Bills to pay/approve:
  - SDACDE dues – \$50.00
  - Leadership Conference early registration for one person – \$125.00
  - Postcard printing: will be approximately \$100
- Request was made to County for the \$9,000 allocated for operating expenses.
- Motion by Oonagh, second by Paul to approve financial report as presented and approve payment of bills, motion carried.

### **Correspondence:**

- Legislative updates were reviewed. Of note, SB 170, which would provide an additional \$100,000 for forest resiliency and growth projects, has passed the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Appropriations for consideration.
- Big Sioux Nursery notified all Districts that they cannot deliver trees this year due to their trucking company backing out and they have been unable to find a replacement. Not sure if this will affect our tree order for Arbor Day.
- Received an invitation to participate in a public survey on outdoor recreation. Survey, from SDSU and SD GF&P, will be used to guide the South Dakota Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).
- Governor Noem proclaimed the week of February 13-19 as Soil Health Awareness Week.
- SD DANR/NRCS/SDFFA hosting a virtual workshop on the pine engraver beetle – Feb. 16, 12:00-1:00 PM MST. Additional information available on our webpage.
- Received notice that Jordan Turgeon, SD DANR, was recently hired to assist with work related to the State Conservation Commission.

### **Old Business:**

- CIS Updates:
  - Resilient Forest Landscapes:
    - Covered by Justine during her report. No additional information.
  - Rangeland and Riparian Health:

- Justine stated that a quote is needed for the upcoming NRCS press release. Brad Humbracht offered to provide a quote if the Board agreed. Board gave their approval.
  - Outreach: postcard is currently at the printers and will be sent to producers as soon as it is ready.
- 2021-22 State thinning grant:
  - Signed liability statements were received from Schnurr and Svenkeson.
  - IRS tax forms were submitted to last year's recipients.
- January meeting of the Black Hills Resilient Forest Working Partnership:
  - Dave provided a brief summary of the meeting.
- 2022 Annual Work Plan and updates to Long-Range Plan:
  - Dave proposed hosting a soil health workshop this year, potentially partnering with the Soil Health Coalition (SHC). Mike will speak to SHC and Justin Boerboom to gauge interest. Other additions include supporting Custer County Emergency Management's fire plan and participating on the Black Hills Forest Plan Revision. Mike and Dave will finalize changes and submit to State by the March 1 deadline.

#### **New Business:**

- Supervisor elections:
  - Mike informed the Board that Tamarah and Greg's terms will expire on December 31, 2022. Positions will be up for reelection this year. Petitions need to be submitted by July 1. A minimum of 15 registered voters is required for each petition, but more is encouraged.
- New CIS preproposal:
  - Mike, with guidance from Justine, is developing a preproposal that focuses on irrigation improvement needs in eastern Custer County. Mike spoke at the February Board meeting of the Angostura Irrigation District and received input on needs. A draft preproposal is near completion. Mike will ask Justine to review the document and will then send it to the Board for review.
- CCCD Scholarship:
  - Board reviewed scholarship application. Motion by Oonagh to approve current application and extend deadline to March 1 for other applicants, seconded by Paul, motion carried. If no other applications are received, Board will evaluate whether to increase award to approved recipient.

#### **Other Business:**

- Field trip to CIS project area:
  - Trip was delayed and has not been rescheduled. Mike and Julie will try to schedule a date that works for the group.
- Miscellaneous office manager updates:

- Annual reports of the Conservation District's 2021 activities and finances were provided to the SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Resource Conservation and Forestry.
- Trees for Hermosa on Arbor Day:
  - Spoke with Kevin Metzger about CCCD providing two larger trees to plant on the school grounds. Kevin spoke with the principle and superintendent, both were on board.
  - Tree species has not been determined, but they requested no messy trees (e.g., cherries). Trees will likely be planted on the playground so do not want a tree with messy fruit. Mike will touch base with Kevin as Arbor Day approaches.
- Mike will be out 3 ½ days next week for the State Weed and Pest Conference in Huron.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, March 10 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse

**Adjournment:** 11:20 AM





February 10, 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
  - Ranking Deadline: 3/4/22
  - 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	3/1/22	12/1/21	4/1/22
Ranking	5/1/22	2/1/22	7/1/22
Obligation	7/1/22	4/1/22	8/1/22

Currently have 10+ applications for Forest CIS and a couple for Rangeland CIS.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2018 - 2022: 14 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
  - Calendar Year (CY) 2022 payments by 2/28/22
- 2022 Classic
  - Ranking Deadline: 3/18/22
  - Obligation Deadline: 4/29/22
- 2023 Renewal
  - Application Batching Deadline: 4/15/22
    - Letters will be sent out to producers with contracts that expire 12/31/22

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

- Finishing up designs on approved projects

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Other

- COVID-19: 50% staffing, guidance very fluid right now
- State Conservationist – Tony Sunseri, EOD 2/13/22
- District Conservationist – Detail
- CIS Proposal Process (new): call for Pre-Proposals 3/4/22, selection by 4/1/22, full proposals due 7/1/22

/S/

Justine Reid  
District Conservationist

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