



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

The March 10, 2022 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse, at 9:28 AM by Paul Nettinga.

In attendance were Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer, Paul Nettinga, Stuart Adrian, Matt Walsh, Justine Reid (call in), Faryn Klebe (call in), Blaine Brakke (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 February 10, 2022 were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Greg, motion carried. Today's agenda was approved by a motion by Greg and a second by Oonagh.

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

- Blaine Brakke, SDACD:
  - Blaine discussed the video projects SDACD is putting together over the next two years to highlight Locally Led success stories. They have an interest in including our forest thinning work as one of the video topics. Blaine would like to have various interviews with project partners (e.g., CD Board member, Matt, landowner(s), NRCS, other), and videos of treated forest, active thinning, and area(s) that need treatment. A videographer has been hired and has worked on the Amazing Grasslands videos released by the SD Grassland Coalition and NRCS.
  - Matt new of a couple landowners that would probably be onboard with the project. Getting video of active thinning work would be difficult as most have wrapped up for the season to avoid issues with the Ips pine engraver beetle. One landowner is also doing a commercial harvest so could possibly get video of that work. Also, Matt notified the Board that he has accepted a position out of state and his last day will be March 30.
  - Blaine and Mike will work together on this project if the Board approves.
  - Motion was made by Greg to move forward with video project, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
- NRCS Representative: Justine Reid – Report attached.
  - Additional notes: One correction to the report is Samantha Ziph's detail start date, which is actually March 21.
- NWTF Forester: Faryn Klebe –
  - Has finished two plans and is reaching out to the 15 landowners with CIS applications. Eleven have been contacted so far. Three of the eleven will not move forward due to lack of fit or landowner deciding to go with a different grant.

- SD-DANR Forester: Matt Walsh –
  - Matt is contacting all active thinning projects so that he can get certifications completed prior to his last day. He is also working on a list of projects/tasks for his eventual replacement to minimize down time. Matt will send a copy of Custer CD related projects/items to Mike.
  - Matt has been very busy with various projects (Custer CD & Pennington CD thinning grants, CIS projects, Governor's project) and the Northern Hills Forester position is still vacant. After Matt leaves, there will be only one State forester in the Hills. The hope is they can fill both positions soon.
- Forest Service, Buffalo Gap National Grassland: Julie Wheeler –
  - Julie was not present but provided an update. They are working to remind permittees of the CIS opportunity during their spring meetings, which have just started up. Julie will be out of the office until the 16<sup>th</sup>, but after that will reach out to Mike and Greg regarding the field trip.

### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$16,891.11,
  - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
  - Savings = \$37,104.52.
- Bills paid:
  - SDACDE – dues (\$50) and Leadership Conference (June 27-28) early registration (\$125)
  - Vector Design Print and Tech - \$65.82
- County allocated funds: Funds were received (\$9,000) and deposited into the main checking account
- Motion by Oonagh, second by Greg to approve financial report as presented and approve payment of bills, motion carried.

### **Correspondence:**

- Received notification of upcoming deadline for nominations for the 2022 Leopold Conservation Award, deadline was March 7.
- Received an informational brochure from SD-DANR with directions for Supervisors to file a petition for district supervisor elections.
- The South Dakota Ag Land Trust sent a news release of their first conservation easement, which is located in Lawrence County.
- Received notification of upcoming deadline for nominations for the South Dakota Soil Conservation Award, deadline is April 6.
- USFS is accepting public comment on the proposed Black Hills National Forest Westside Vegetation Management project. The project area is primarily in Pennington County, but a portion does extent into Custer County in an area impacted by the Jasper Fire.
- SD Office of Attorney General: a notice of procedural motion was received regarding Powertech and its water permit applications and groundwater discharge plan.



- State Legislature – SB 170: The bill, which would provide \$100,000 in one-time funding for costs related to forest resiliency and growth, has passed the House and Senate and is at the Governor’s desk awaiting her signature.

### **Old Business:**

- CIS Updates:
  - Resilient Forest Landscapes:
    - Covered by Justine during her report. No additional information.
  - Rangeland and Riparian Health:
    - Covered by Justine during her report. Also, postcards were sent to producers notifying them of the upcoming application deadline.
- CIS preproposal:
  - Last week, Mike submitted a preproposal for an irrigation improvement project. We should know around the end of March whether NRCS would like a full proposal.
- BHNF Forest Plan revision:
  - As discussed in previous meeting, USFS has initiated a revision of the Black Hills NF Forest Plan. Mike was asked to assist the County Commissioners to stay informed during the revision process. The goal is to ensure that Custer County has a representative during USFS meetings with cooperating agencies so that local concerns are considered.

### **New Business:**

- Renewal of Joint Powers Agreement with Pennington County Conservation District:
  - Board discussed request by Pennington Conservation District to renew Joint Powers Agreement. Motion was made by Oonagh to renew agreement, seconded by Greg, motion carried.
- CCCD Scholarship:
  - Two additional scholarship applications were received and shared with the Board prior to today’s meeting. Board discussed whether to award one or both applicants. Motion was made by Oonagh to award both applications at \$500 each, seconded by Paul, Greg recused himself from the vote, motion carried.
  - Mike will send award letters to recipients and look into creating certificates.
  - A couple of the recipients made comments that they did not feel qualified for the scholarship and hesitated applying. Matt suggested providing a small list of conservation examples in next year’s application since some students have more experience in conservation than they realize.
- New landowner application for 2021-23 State thinning grant:
  - Consideration of this application will be delayed until the April meeting per Matt’s request.
- Spring Grant application:
  - Board discussed upcoming deadline for applying for Conservation Commission funding during the Spring Grant round. Matt’s recommendation was to wait until the Fall before applying for more thinning funds due to current workload and that

not all funding has been committed from the 2021-23 grant. Board agreed to wait until the fall.

- Board also discussed other approved practices that can be funded by the grant. Irrigation projects are possible, but will wait to see if the CIS proposal for irrigation improvements is funded.
- Outreach:
  - Board discussed whether there was a need to purchase additional outreach items. Another Conservation District in the state received a grant that helps districts purchase outreach supplies. The grant is a ‘buy one, get one free’ program.
  - Board discussed participation in the County Fair and low public participation at past booths. Discussion was tabled and Mike was asked to put on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **Other Business:**

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - RAC grant:
    - Mike has been in communication with Nick Collard of USFS about meeting with landowners adjacent to the project area. USFS has expressed a desire to schedule a meeting in the spring with a tentative date planned in mid-April. Mike is waiting on specifics from USFS.
  - Meetings and training that Mike participated in during the past month include the State Weed & Pest Conference (2/16-2/18), SDACD/NRCS contribution agreements training (3/2), and NRCS training on Common Grazing Land Practices (3/3).
  - Upcoming meetings that Mike plans to attend are the Black Hills Botany and Ecology Workshop (3/17 & 3/18) and the Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership meeting (3/31).
- The Board asked Mike to include a ‘Public input/comment’ section on future meeting agendas.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, April 14 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner’s Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse

**Adjournment:** Motion by Oonagh, second by Greg to adjourn, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:59 AM.



March 10, 2022

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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2018 – 2021: 8 Active Contracts
  - Includes CIS contracts
  - Planning for field season activities
  - Annual practice reminder letters sent out in February
- 2022
  - 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 15 applications for Forest CIS and a couple for Rangeland CIS.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2018 - 2022: 12 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
  - Planning for field season activities
  - Annual practice reminder letters sent out in February
- 2022 Classic
  - Ranking Deadline: 3/18/22
  - Obligation Deadline: 4/29/22
- 2023 Renewal
  - Application Batching Deadline: 4/15/22
    - Letters were 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
  - Hot Springs and Rapid City FO's do not have mask requirement right now
  - Effective 3/14/22, service centers that do not require masks will have front doors unlocked and appointments are not required for producer visits – back to normal feel!
  - Cases/hospitalizations will continue to be monitored weekly to determine if any changes need to be made
- State Conservationist – Tony Sunseri, will be physically in SD next week

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Rapid City Field Office  
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An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender

- District Conservationist –
  - Detail starts 3/14/22, Samantha Ziph
  - Justine's last day in the office will be 3/25/22
  - Permanent position is currently advertised on usajobs.gov
- Hot Springs FO
  - Brad Humbracht is on detail with Forest Service until June
  - Acting DC will start in late March
- CIS Proposal Process:
  - 41 pre-proposals submitted
  - selection by 4/1/22, full proposals due 7/1/22

/S/

Justine Reid

District Conservationist