



## Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – April 14, 2022

The April 14, 2022 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse, at 9:03 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Stuart Adrian, Justin Boerboom, Samantha Ziph, Julie Wheeler, Patricia Weyrich, Faryn Klebe (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.

Today's agenda was approved with a motion by Paul and seconded by Oonagh. The meeting minutes from March 10, 2022 were approved after a motion by Oonagh and a second by Greg, both motions carried.

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

- NRCS Representatives: Samantha Ziph and Justin Boerboom
  - See attached report.
  - Additional notes: NRCS is advertising for a forester position in Rapid City.
- NWTF Forester: Faryn Klebe –
  - A quarterly report was shared with the Board prior to today's meeting.
  - NWTF is interested in hosting a riparian restoration workshop in the Custer area as part of the Waterways for Wildlife program. NWTF is considering hosting a workshop for landowners and another for professionals. The NWTF District Biologist and Faryn's boss will be in Rapid next Wednesday and are interested in meeting Board members over lunch to discuss. Mike may be able to attend but Supervisors were not available. Dave will share advice with Faryn from the Fairburn riparian meeting hosted by the District 2-3 years ago.
- Forest Service, Buffalo Gap National Grassland: Julie Wheeler –
  - Still working with permittees and monitoring the drought.
  - Currently no COVID staffing restrictions.
  - Wall District Ranger position is vacant, but has an acting Ranger until a replacement is found.
  - Field trip to CIS Rangeland area will be postponed to the fall to avoid road issues and allow for Year 1 CIS signup by producers.
- SD-DANR Forester: Patricia Weyrich –
  - Patricia discussed standard operating procedure for thinning grant applications. Prior to a State Forester writing a forest prescription on a property, the Board should review and approve the thinning application. Otherwise, the forester may

waste time by writing a prescription for a property that does not get approved by the Board.

- Contractors are now offering to do both commercial and pre-commercial thinning work, a benefit to landowners. Also, contractors are letting landowners know about our cost-share grants (Custer and other Hills Area districts).
- Currently, there are 17 landowners in the Southern Hills waiting for a Forest Stewardship Plan. Staffing and workload issues have created a backlog of work. Matt's position is currently advertised so hope to have someone soon. The Northern Hills Forester position was just filled, which will help. Will be hosting a workshop next Friday to try and attract retired foresters to help with the backlog.
- The Board and Justin suggested talking to Blaine Brakke, SDACD, about getting video of the recent fire west of Custer. Blaine and Mike were initially discussing shooting a video of our thinning program this spring; however, this was postponed due to Matt's departure. Mike will contact Blaine about including the fire in the video and if possible to get footage in the near future. Patricia offered to help with the video if needed. Justin stated that Pennington CCD has a drone. We could contact PCCD about flying the area if videographer is not able to visit the area soon.

#### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$16,891.11,
  - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
  - Savings = \$37,104.84.
- Bills to approve:
  - Pennington County Conservation District – trees for Arbor Day (\$170.40)
  - Quicken – annual license fee (\$54.33)
- Motion by Paul, second by Oonagh to approve financial report as presented and approve payment of bills, motion carried.

#### **Correspondence:**

- State Legislature – SB 170 has passed and will provide \$100,000 in one-time funding for costs related to forest resiliency and growth. Details on applying for these funds are still forthcoming. Dave crafted two thank you letters to Representative Rehfeldt and Senator Johnson for sponsoring the bill. Letters were signed by the Board Supervisors.
- Hills Area meeting has been scheduled on June 14 at 2:00 PM at the Walt Taylor 4-H Building, Central States Fairgrounds, in Rapid City. Mike and Paul plan on attending. Justin stated that the new State Conservationist may be there as well as other new NRCS staff.
- NACD 2022 Soil & Water Stewardship Week “Healthy Soils, Healthy Life” is set during the week of April 24–May 1. Motion was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah to submit ad to Custer Chronicle. Board suggested looking for a ready-made press release on NACD website. Mike can contact Paul if need assistance on press release.
- SD Wildlife Federation Youth Conservation Camp is scheduled for June 5–11.



### **Old Business:**

- State thinning grant:
  - Application for 2021-23 State thinning grant:
    - Board reviewed application submitted by Rita Clarke. Motion was made by Oonagh to approve application at a cost up to \$3,315 (max 10.2 acres), seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.
  - Fall Grant – State Conservation Commission:
    - Application deadline for fall grant has not been advertised. Board will discuss at future meeting after deadline is released. Expectation is that we will have more information about applying for the \$100,000 in one-time resilient forest funding by the fall.
- Outreach supplies:
  - Discussion was had on the need for outreach supplies and attendance at the County Fair. No action taken at this time. Greg stated that booths are not required to be staffed at all times. Some vendors will setup a table, but will not staff it. Will put County Fair attendance and outreach supplies on next month's agenda. If supplies are purchased, may consider other options than available through the grant (e.g., magnetic chip-clip, pens, etc.).

### **New Business:**

- CIS project updates:
  - Resilient Forest Landscapes:
    - Justin stated that only \$16,000 is available for distribution in Year 2 due to the extra funding received in Year 1. Consequently, only two applications will be funded this year. No applications were submitted from the Elk Mountain priority area. All were located in either the Argyle or Carroll Creek priority areas. The District will probably not need to advertise for the Year 3 funds due to the number of applications received.
  - Rangeland and Riparian Health:
    - Application deadline recently passed (April 1). NRCS will review and prioritize applications that were received. The scheduled ranking deadline is July 1. Year 1 funds are scheduled to be obligated by August 1.
  - Preproposal for new project:
    - NRCS has reviewed the preproposal submitted for an irrigation improvement project and has asked for a full proposal. Deadline for full proposal is July 1. Board asked Mike to proceed with writing full proposal. Justin offered to provide assistance if needed and also suggested the District host a meeting with producers prior to deadline to engage them about their needs/interests.
- Arbor Day activities:
  - Custer Elementary School – Scheduled on the afternoon of Monday, May 9. Will hand out bare-root seedlings to first grade students and plant one larger tree.
  - Hermosa Elementary School – Scheduled on Wednesday, May 11, likely in the afternoon. Will hand out seedlings and plant two larger trees. Josh Larson is

scheduled to attend. Still looking for recommendations on species to plant. The school does not want a “messy” tree.

- Tree wrapping date – Date for wrapping tree seedlings was scheduled on Wednesday, May 4 at 9:00 AM. Mike will send email reminder to the Board.
- Pollinator initiative:
  - Board considered whether to create a pollinator initiative within Custer County. Initiative would be modeled after a partnership between Georgia Department of Transportation and Georgia’s Conservation Districts. Initiative would encourage planting of pollinator seed mixes along right of ways where the area was recently disturbed. Board decided to postpone additional discussion until next January.
- Noxious weed biocontrol:
  - Paul and Mike reviewed some of the discussion from the Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership (BHIPP) meeting on biocontrol use on leafy spurge and Canada thistle.

#### **Other Business:**

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - Media policy:
    - Mike met with a representative from Safety Benefits Inc. who is working with SDPAA to perform a loss control surveys for Conservation Districts. The only suggestion that he made was to establish a media policy and designate either a board member or the States Attorney as the media contact person. The Board asked Mike to inquire about example policies.
  - NRCS Unfunded Cooperative Agreement (UCA):
    - A UCA was requested by NRCS for our District. Mike drafted a new agreement using the verbiage from last year’s agreement.
  - SDACD Locally Led Video project:
    - Due to Matt’s departure, the video project has been delayed to late summer or fall. Discussion on the recent fire near Custer was included above.
  - Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership meeting (BHIPP) meeting:
    - Mike and Paul attended the meeting in Rapid City. This was discussed earlier under the noxious weed biocontrol topic.
  - BHNF Forest Plan revision
    - A meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 18 in Rapid City. Jeff Tomac has invited 1-2 County Commissioners from the seven counties that encompass the Black Hills National Forest. Commissioners Bies and Linde have committed to attending. Mike will inquire whether he is welcome to attend.
  - RAC grant:
    - Nick Collard has taken a new position away from BHNF, but expect to have a replacement within a couple months. Mike spoke with Todd

Hoover about outreach to adjacent landowners to the project. Tentatively planning on sending a joint letter with a map and description of work. Besides the 60 acres funded through RAC, USFS is also planning on thinning four other units in the area. Sporadic work may start this summer, but Todd will consult with USFS Silverculturalist and Dr. John Ball about pine engraver beetle concerns. Thinning/fuels work will ramp up in late fall or early winter.

- Petitions for Supervisor elections:
  - A reminder was given to the Board about upcoming elections and the two supervisor positions that are up for reelection.
- Newsletter:
  - A draft of the spring/summer newsletter is close to completion. Will wait for Arbor Day activities for inclusion in the newsletter.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, May 12 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner’s Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 11:17 AM.





**April 14, 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 were sent in February
- 2022
  - Obligation Deadline: 6/3/2022
  - CIS FY 2022 Deadlines
    - Ranking questions?

	Resilient Forest Landscapes (CIS 2020)	Jasper Fire (CIS 2021)	Rangeland Health (CIS 2021)
Outreach	12/1/2021	N/A	2/1/2022
Batching	3/1/2022	12/1/2021	4/1/2022
Ranking	5/1/2022	2/1/2022	7/1/2022
Obligation	7/1/2022	4/1/2022	8/1/2022

Forest CIS:

- Mapped the applications and were able to create a cost estimate. We were able to narrow it down to 2 applicants that we will prioritize high and have talked with faryn on getting prescriptions on those two.

Rangeland Health:

- Batching date wrapped up at the beginning of April, currently there are 4 applications that we will proceed with consultations, and work towards prioritizing them.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2018-2022: 12 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
  - Planning for field season activities
  - Annual practice reminder letters were sent in February
- 2022 Classic
  - Ranking Deadline: 3/18/2022
    - As of 4/7 No Applications were funded
  - Obligation Deadline: 4/29/2022
- 2023 Renewal
  - Application Deadline: 4/15/2022
  - Letters went out to eligible participants

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Grassland CRP Signup 204: 4/4/2022 – 5/13/2022

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

- Finishing up designs on approved projects



Meetings/Trainings/Correspondence/Other

- COVID-19:
  - 75% staffing, starting phasing back process this spring ( Hot Springs and Rapid City FO's do not have mask requirements right now
  - Cases/hospitalizations will continue to be monitored weekly to determine if any changes need to be made
- State Conservationist, Tony Sunseri (from California) has transitioned to SD
- District Conservationist: Joel Milos, Start Date: 6/6/2022; He has been working for WY NRCS; Acting District Conservationist here till 6/3/2022
- Hot Springs FO
  - Brad Humbracht is on detail with the Forest Service until June
  - Acting DC (Melissa Greenwalt) started in late March
- CIS Proposal Process changed: call for Pre-Proposals 3/4/2022, selection by 4/1/2022, full proposals due 7/1/2022
  - 1 of the requests for full approval is the Custer County Irrigation Project that the office will be working on

/S/

Samantha Ziph

Acting District Conservationist