



## Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – September 8, 2022

The September 8, 2022 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse, at 9:01 AM by Paul Nettinga.

In attendance were Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Stuart Adrian, Joel Milos, Ben Pucket, Dave Thom (call-in), Patricia Weyrich (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 July 14, 2022 and today's agenda were approved after a motion by Tamarah and a second by Oonagh, motion carried.

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

- NRCS Representatives: Joel Milos – Report attached
  - Additional notes:
    - NRCS has an inflatable soil health tunnel that could be used for various outreach events (e.g., County Fair). Board is interested in using this in the future.
    - Inflation Reduction Act – USDA funding for conservation programs (e.g., EQIP) could potentially see a 50 percent increase next year and 100% increase the following year.
- NWTF Forester:
  - Faryn Klebe was unable to attend, but shared her quarterly report in August.
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
  - Julie Wheeler was not able to attend, but provided an email update to Mike.
    - Water was an issue for many permittees this year on the National Grassland. Cattle are starting to come off the grassland. Most were able to make the full season.
    - The Forest Service is recruiting for 2023 seasonal employees beginning this month.
    - Permanent hiring continues to be slow. The Fall River Ranger district is outreaching two permanent positions: an engine captain and a customer service rep.
    - Nationally the planning level for fire has gone from 3 to 4, with 5 being the highest.
- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket

- Twelve projects have been funded in Custer County. Projects include water development, well drilling, pipeline, cross fencing, planting farmland back to grassland, and riparian work.
- GF&P has purchased water testers that measure sulfates and salinity – very helpful to landowners with concerns about their livestock.
- Currently trying to get funding for tree removal/thinning in the Black Hills
- Tom Miklos is the private land biologist for a small portion of Custer County, Ben covers the rest.
- Dave suggested that the Board include Ben on discussion/planning for future CIS projects.

### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$15,679.25,
  - Grant Checking = \$2,983.41,
  - Savings = \$35,621.82.
- Deposits:
  - \$1,350.00 in Grant account for reimbursement for completed thinning work.
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Last scholarship payment - \$500 to Chadron State College
  - Chamber of Commerce annual dues - \$85.00
  - Cost-share payment to Todd & Sheri Dickens - \$1,350.00
- Motion by Oonagh, second by Tamarah to approve financial report, motion carried.

### **Correspondence:**

- SD Attorney General – letter pertaining to Powertech water permit application and discharge plan application. “Fully executed Stipulation of Represented Parties Regarding a Shortened Administrative Record and the Certificate of Service.”
- SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) virtual conservation easement educational series –
  - DANR is planning one webinar per month from July through December. Future dates have not been announced, but September’s webinar is titled “Who is Northern Prairies Land Trust”.
- SD DANR recommendation on Simon Contractors of SD, Inc. for their large scale mining permit –
  - The District was notified of DANR’s decision of conditional approval.
- National Association of State Foresters - \$1 billion in new funding over the next 5 years for wildfire preparedness and fuels mitigation work in at-risk communities nationwide –
  - Dave stated that Steve Esser is moving forward with a Custer community wildfire protection plan.
- Legislative forum on conservation topics, September 14 at 2:00 PM Outdoor Campus West, Rapid City –
  - Stuart expressed interest in attending. Paul might also attend.
- SDACD Convention raffle tickets –



- Mike let the Board know that the raffle was for a gun and a set of lawn chairs.

### **Old Business:**

- Custer County Fair:
  - Board discussed poor attendance during the first couple days, likely a result of the high temperatures.
  - Mike reported the number of entries for the tree nursery gift certificate drawing. A total of 40 entries were received – 25 entries included an email address, the other 15 only provided a phone number.
  - Winner of the gift certificate was Rachel Embree of Long Valley, SD.
- Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership proposal:
  - Justin was not able to put a proposal together due to his schedule. Dave asked if Mike could speak to Justin about any opportunity to provide a late submission in October/November.

### **New Business:**

- SDACD Video project:
  - The project will highlight the District's thinning projects and is scheduled on 9/28. Participants who have agreed to participate include: Patricia Weyrich (SD DANR), Justin Boerboom (NRCS), Faryn Klebe (NWTF), Dave Thom (CCCD), and Penny Svenkeson (landowner).
  - The plan is to shoot landscape/project footage in the morning and record video interviews after.
- Dakota's Society of American Foresters 2022 Fall Conference, October 12-13 in Custer:
  - Dave and Mike will be assisting with a field trip to the USFS Tepee Work Center on 10/13. Opportunity to talk about our CIS and RAC projects and people working together to get conservation done.
- National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Riparian Workshop, October 13-14 in Rapid City at the SD GF&P Outdoor Campus West:
  - Mike will be presenting during the morning of October 14 and will highlight work of the District.
- Pine looper outbreak:
  - Mike discussed the insect outbreak and the landowner meeting held on September 2 at a private residence. Representative of SDSU, NRCS, USFS, local fire departments, Black Hills Electric Coop, Custer Chronicle, and Custer County were in attendance.
  - Information about the outbreak was included in Dr. John Ball's recent tree pest alerts. Mike will send the Board a link to these documents.
  - The outbreak is over for the season (caterpillars have pupated) and the hope is that we will not see a similar outbreak next year. SDSU will be monitoring population levels next year. An email distribution list was created to keep landowners

informed of new information. Anyone interested in being included should let Joel know.

- 2021-2023 CCCD Thinning Grant update and consideration of new landowner application:
  - The Dickens project is complete. Work was certified by Patricia and reimbursement was received from the State. The Dickens are only awaiting their payment of \$1,350.00.
  - A new application was submitted by Dave Reyelts. He is requesting cost-share assistance for 70 acres, but is aware that the District does not have the funding for all 70 acres. Mike stated that we have funding for 6.8 acres available.
  - Motion by Dave to approve 6.8 acres of the Reyelts application with the acreage to be approved by Patricia, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
  - Mike stated that another application is expected soon from a contact made at the pine looper meeting. Landowner is aware of the lack of funds, but will submit application in case additional funding becomes available.
- SD Conservation Commission Grants – Fall cycle:
  - Deadline for applications is October 3. Mike discussed the need for additional funding but expressed concern about staff shortage within SD DANR, which might limit their availability to support our work. The Board also discussed the need for funding, but that our funding request should not be affected by DANR staffing levels.
  - Motion was by Dave to request \$40,000 in new grant application, seconded by Oonagh. Board discussed whether \$40K was enough. Paul stated that we should probably ask for \$100K.
  - Dave amended his original motion to increase the request to \$100,000 in the grant application. Motion seconded by Oonagh, motion carried. Mike will put together application.
- SDACD State Conference, September 18-20, in Oacoma:
  - Mike will attend the conference.

#### **Other Business:**

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - BHNF Forest Plan Revision:
    - Comments on the draft Assessments were submitted to USFS. There continues to be inter-county meetings to discuss Forest Plan.
  - Contour Lines update:
    - Contour Lines is a brief update on the annual activities from each Conservation District in South Dakota. Mike provided an update for the document.
  - CIS Irrigation Proposal status:
    - No word yet, but expect to hear something soon.

**Next meeting:** Our regularly scheduled date for the next meeting (Thursday, October 13) conflicts with the SAF conference (10/12-13) and the NWTF Riparian Workshop (10/13-14). Board agreed to move the meeting up to Thursday, October 6 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner’s Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse. Also, the November meeting location was changed to the Courthouse basement meeting room due to the Commissioner’s meeting being rescheduled from 11/9 to 11/10.

**Critique:**

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.





**September 8th, 2022**

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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2018-2021: 6 Active Contracts
- 2022:
  - **Forestry CIS: Funded two contracts for \$17,089 treating 25.1 acres total. Included Forest Stand Improvements and Woody Residue Treatment.**
  - **Range/Riparian CIS: Funded one contract for \$123,457 treating 3,395 acres. Included cross fencing, livestock shelter structure, shallow well/pump, livestock pipeline and stock tanks, prescribed grazing, and a stream crossing, streambank/shoreline protection, and exclusion fences along Battle Creek.**

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2018-2022: 12 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
  - 4 Contracts are in final year – no renewals.
  - **Working towards certifying enhancements/practices for FY22 – due by September 30th.**
- **FY23 CSP-GCI: Letter's have been mailed to those who may be eligible. Deadline to apply is October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Grassland CRP Signup 204: 4/4/2022 – 5/13/2022
- **None selected for Custer County that RC FO is managing.**

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

- Finishing up designs on approved projects & completing initial field visits for new applicants.

Meetings/Trainings/Correspondence/Other

- **Custer County Fair & Central States Fair**
- **Pine Looper Pest Alert in Custer County**
- **Youth & Family Services' 5th Annual Harvest Festival is September 10th from 10am-2pm in Box Elder. NRCS will be bringing our "root boxes", inflatable soil health tunnel, and an information table**
- **SDACD Convention in Oacoma**
- **Inflation Reduction Act, ~\$20 Billion for USDA Conservation Programs**
- **Notice for approved FY23 CIS proposals expected in coming weeks**

/S/

Joel Milos  
District Conservationist