



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2022

The December 8, 2022 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:02 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, Oonagh Wood, Stuart Adrian, Joel Milos, Dave Mertz, Jessica Brown, Sidney Brown, Blaine Cook, Mitch Paulsen, Gavyn Priest (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.

Two requests were made to add items to the agenda. The first was by Dave to add Appreciation Award under Other Business, Office Manager Report. The second request was by Mike to add Patricia under New Business to discuss a new thinning grant opportunity. The revised agenda was approved after a motion by Paul and a second by Oonagh, motion carried.

The meeting minutes from November 17, 2022 were approved after a motion by Paul and a second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS Representatives: Joel Milos – Report attached
 - Additional notes:
 - NRCS formed a committee to discuss prioritization of Inflation Reduction Act dollars. They will meet in January. The Board is welcome to provide input to either Joel or Justin, that input will be relayed to the committee.
- Guest speakers – “A perspective on the Black Hills NF Timber Program and the implications for Custer County”
 - Dave Mertz, retired USFS natural resource staff officer, and Jessica Brown, private landowner, spoke on the need for sustainable forestry in the Black Hills, the recent USFS General Technical Report (GTR), the revision of the Black Hills Forest Plan, and current timber harvest rates and practices. Additional comments were provided by Blaine Cook, retired USFS silviculturist.
 - Mertz emphasized the importance of timber companies in managing the Forest; however, the message from the speakers was that priorities should shift to increased noncommercial thinning and a reduction in saw timber harvest rates. Also, that USFS lacks an entity supporting its efforts.
 - Thom – in view of wildfires and bugs, additional FIA data were collected by USFS. The Rocky Mountain Research Station performed a data analysis with public input. A Data Quality Act review confirmed the GTR conclusions with a

few clarifications. CCCD could work with other local Conservation Districts, to perhaps initiate a State-level resolution or at the national level via NACD.

- SD DANR Forester: Patricia Weyrich –
 - New grant is available through the DANR RCF Forest Health Program. Total of \$100,000 available in FY23. Funds may be used to enhance existing programs and do not require matching funds. No application deadline and applications are reviewed as they come in. Additional funding will be available over the next few years.
 - Board discussed whether to apply and offer a 75-25 or 80-20 cost-share to existing/new grant participants or increase the number of acres and stay at 50-50 cost-share. Also discussed was whether to prioritize the 6 CIS project areas, but the Board felt it was best to not limit the coverage area.
 - Motion by Oonagh to apply for \$100,000 grant and offer a 80-20 split to improve cost-share, seconded by Paul, motion carried. Additional funding beyond amount necessary to increase cost-share from 50% to 80% will be used to cover new acreage.
 - Patricia stated that RCF is willing to work with other foresters that are not DANR employees if that is what the landowners prefer.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$14,713.70,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$35,657.36.
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
 - Fall River Conservation District – \$100 for 50 trees (25 thornless honeylocust, 25 hybrid male cottonwood) for Arbor Day
 - Newsletter – Vector Design Print and Tech – \$438.39
 - 2022 Supervisor meeting/mileage vouchers through November: mileage = \$1,333.50, meeting = \$2,220.00, other = \$244.00. December meeting amounts will be added to these totals.
- A motion by Paul to approve financial report as presented, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station webinar on geo-fencing for livestock – Dec. 7-8, 9:00-2:00 PM MST each day
- NWTF Waterways for Wildlife Initiative (W4W) Request for Proposals. Due by February 10
- SD Wildland Fire – meeting to discuss changes to burn permit requirements – Dec. 9, 1:00 PM, Rapid City
- Webinar: Reducing woody encroachment to conserve rangeland production in the Great Plains – Dec. 8, 1:00 PM
- USFS Pocket planners & Arbor Day poster contest calendars

Old Business:

- Landowner meeting in 2023:
 - Board discussed preliminary date and location of meeting. Based on locations of recent meetings, this meeting will likely be held in the eastern part of the county and occur in May.
 - Patricia stated there is already a planned landowner meeting near the Pennington/Custer border in March. Also there will likely be another recommended shutdown of certain thinning activities in April due to Ips beetles.
 - Board was leaning towards a May meeting, but may push it back to the fall due to these factors.
 - Mike will work with partners on planning either a spring or fall meeting.

New Business:

- 2023 budget planning:
 - Mike and Oonagh prepared a draft budget, a copy was shared with the Board. Topic was tabled due to lack of time. Board will review budget spreadsheets and will discuss at the January meeting.
- Thinning grant applications for consideration:
 - CCCD's new conservation grant of \$90,000 allows for approximately 275 acres of thinning and slash disposal. Mike reviewed applications received to date.
 - Gavyn will be visiting properties with applications until there is a new hire in the Hot Springs office or Patricia returns.
 - Board acknowledged receipt of the applications; however, chose not to act at this time. Motion by Greg, second by Tamarah, to table discussion until the January meeting, motion carried. Board prefers to wait until January in case additional funding is received from the new thinning grant.
- 2023 Annual Work Plan:
 - Topic was tabled due to lack of time. Rescheduled to January meeting. Copy of plan was shared with the Board.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - CIS:
 - Fall River:
 - Red Canyon Wildlife Habitat Project: a CIS proposal in Fall River by Brad & Matt (NRCS). Proposal was not funded in 2022. Brad is revising and resubmitting in 2023. Revision includes adding a portion of the Argyle area into the project area.
 - Resilient Forest Project: a currently funded CIS project in Fall River. Brad is exploring expanding into Custer County due to lack of landowner interest in Fall River.
 - Custer's Irrigation proposal:

- Proposal was not funded in 2022. Mike would like the Board to consider whether to modify project area and/or specific aspects of the proposal and then resubmit in 2023?
- Tree order placed with Fall River CD – 25 thornless honeylocust and 25 male, hybrid cottonwood.
- Letters were sent to State Legislators, Thune, and mining company as discussed during the November meeting.
- Newsletter was mailed
- Forest Plan revision:
 - MOU between USFS and Custer County to establish the county as a cooperating agency was approved by the County Commission.
 - Governors' letter from Noem (SD) and Gordon (WY) was sent to Jeff Tomac. Letter requested a second review of the assessments. Mike will forward a copy of the letter to the Board.
- Appreciation award:
 - The Board presented Mike with an appreciation letter. Motion made by Greg and second by Tamarah to award Mike with a \$350 check, motion carried.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 12 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Critique:

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM.



December 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.
 - Range/Riparian CIS: Funded one contract for \$123,457 treating 3,395 acres.
- **2023: Application Batching Deadline for General EQIP is December 9th, 2022 (applications for general funding such as high tunnels, sage grouse initiative, organic production, Beginning Farmer/Ranch, etc – CIS program dates will be established separately).**

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2018-2022: 13 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
 - 4 Contracts are in final year – no renewals.
 - Working towards certifying and paying for enhancements/practices for FY22.
- FY23 CSP-GCI: Deadline to apply was October 14th, 2022 – none received through Rapid City Field Office.
- **2023: Application Batching Deadline for CSP is December 9th, 2022**

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

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

Meetings/Trainings/Correspondence/Other

- **Inflation Reduction Act: Tentative funding estimates for SD NRCS:**

	2023	2024	2025	2026
EQIP	\$23.75 million	\$61.25 million	\$92.5 million	\$103.75 million
CSP	\$18.05 million	\$24.3 million	\$36.8 million	\$49.3 million

- November 18-19th in Sturgis – Joel attended SD Local Food's Conference

/S/

Joel Milos
District Conservationist