



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – January 12, 2023

The January 12, 2023 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:04 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, Oonagh Wood, Stuart Adrian, Joel Milos, Mike Linde, Tony Seidl, Terri Kester, Stever Esser, Julie Wheeler (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 December 8, 2022 and today's agenda were approved after a motion by Paul and a second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission report: Mike Linde –
 - Nothing to report.
- NRCS Representatives: Joel Milos – Report attached
- SD DANR RCF: Tony Seidl, Forest Health Program Coordinator –
 - Tony discussed the Forest Health Team's newly available cost-share dollars for forest health related projects. There will be \$100,000 available per year for five years. The Black Hills is considered a priority area. Funds to be distributed according to acreage of forest in each county. Custer County contains approximately 25 percent of the Black Hills; therefore, the Conservation District will have \$25,000 available in 2023 for projects. Funds are to be used as cost-share for thinning and brush management. Funding cannot be used to increase cost-share rates, and can only be used to increase the acreage treated at 50-50 cost-share.
- US Forest Service general: Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland –
 - USFS is undergoing a large-scale hiring effort. Within the Fall River District of BGNG, they will be hiring a wildlife biologist, a range specialist, and a customer service representative. They just finished hiring seasonal employees; however, candidate pools were smaller than past years.
 - BGNG will be holding permittee meetings over the next couple months. Will also cover some permittee expenses for pipeline, spring box, and cross fencing.
 - Preparing a draft EIS for endangered species management on BGNG. Expect to see posting on Federal Register in next couple months.

- Custer County Planning: Terri Kester –
 - Mike invited Terri to today’s meeting to discuss the current revision of County Ordinance #2, which focuses on subdivisions and land use. In past meetings, the Board has expressed an interest in encouraging/requiring developers to perform non-commercial thinning and fuels treatment prior to subdividing and development. If this were to occur, Ordinance 2 would be the means to do so. No input has been sought from the County Commission or Planning Commission, so it is unknown if such a measure would be supported.
 - Esser spoke about the fire dangers associated with some of the housing developments in the county and the need for fire mitigation prior to construction.
 - Linde questioned who would pay for enforcement and who would do the enforcement. Linde also provided input from the point of view as a Commissioner and a landowner. As a landowner, he would be against the measure. As a Commissioner, he can see the benefits in the wildfire protections, but the measure would be close to a zoning regulation and county residents, in general, have been opposed to zoning in the past.
 - Another issue is the timeliness of getting fire mitigation work completed. Currently, many contractors are booked months in advance. There is also concern about fuels work during the active period of Ips beetles. Kester agreed that timing would be a concern – would not want to hold up a sale. Also, concerned about monitoring compliance.
 - Dave stated it should be up to the developer to hire a contractor.
 - Esser indicated that SD Wildland Fire will assess fire safety at no cost. Also believes that Lawrence County requires developers to perform fuels mitigation prior to construction. Steve will try to get confirmation on this.
 - The revised Ordinance 2 will be presented to the Planning Commission on February 7. Kester stated that if the Board wanted to propose new language for the ordinance, they would not have to meet this deadline. The ordinance could be revised again at a later date.
 - As an alternative, the Board spoke about working with Planning Dept. to create a brochure for builders/realtors/landowners with information on wildfire concerns and steps to mitigate wildfire risks. Kester agreed to work with the Board on this.
 - No action taken on revising Ordinance #2 in terms of developers and fuels mitigation.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$10,090.26,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$35,669.08.
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
 - None
- Deposits:
 - \$335.00 – for Mike’s attendance at the 2022 State Convention
- A motion by Oonagh to approve financial report as presented, seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Custer County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update - Stakeholders Meeting, Dec. 20:
 - Dave and Mike attended meeting and shared information on the District's thinning program with Kailey Snyder, Black Hills Council of Local Governments.
- Soil Awards Nominations, due Dec. 31:
 - No nominations this year.
- SD DANR webinar - Effects of Winter Temperatures on Trees and Pests, Jan. 18, 12:00-1:00.
- Urban and Community grant funding opportunity – shared by Angela Ehlers:
 - Mike emailed the announcement to the Board. Application deadline is Mar. 13.

Old Business:

- 2023 budget plan:
 - Board reviewed budget and made adjustments.
 - Motion by Paul to offer two \$1,000 scholarships in 2023, second by Oonagh, motion carried.
 - Other adjustments made on Excel spreadsheet. No funds were reserved for camps and contests; however, can advertise for them, and if needed, use funds from the development account.
 - Motion by Paul, second by Tamarah, to approve revised budget plan, motion carried.
- CCCD thinning grant:
 - Grant ending June 2023:
 - The Sevenkeson and Schnurr projects are complete. Mike is finalizing paperwork so that they can be reimbursed. The Schnurr project final costs were less than budgeted. The grant now has surplus funds to cost-share an additional 7.7 acres. Stuart notified the Board that his costs will also be less – \$550 per acre instead of \$650. Stuart's savings equal an additional 2.5 acres of thinning and brush management funding available. Together there is funding to support 10.2 acres of work. Motion was made by Oonagh to apply surplus acreage from the Schnurr and Adrian projects to Dave Reyelts, second by Greg, motion carried.
 - Grant ending June 2024:
 - Mike notified the Board that DANR has been unsuccessful in contacting Suzann Stoner about her application. Board decided to table Stoner's application until a forester has had a chance to visit the property.
 - Board chose to table discussion of further applications until all properties have been visited and endorsed by a forester. Board will review applications in February. Board requested maps and a chart with acres and costs for each applicant.
- 2023 Annual Work Plan:

- The annual plan was reviewed by the Board. Minor revisions were made. Motion made by Greg to approve plan with revisions, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.
- Landowner meeting in 2023:
 - Board discussed whether meeting will have a farming/ranching focus or a forestry focus. At this time, the Board remains undecided on what the focus and topic should be.
 - Could do a farming workshop since meeting is planned for eastern side of county. Example topic could be no-till farming. Joel stated that NRCS has hired a soil scientist/agronomist that might be able to help with the workshop.
 - If forestry focus, Wildland Fire, DANR-RCF, NRCS, SD Family Forests Association (SDFFA) have all said they would participate. As far as timing is concerned, Wildland Fire prefers spring. Joel said fall works better for him, but if in spring, someone else from NRCS would step in.
 - A SDFFA workshop is planned for March near Hermosa. It is a landowner workshop with a machinery demonstration; however, it is open to only SDFFA members and invitees, not the general public. If CCCD hosts a forestry workshop, it might be best to host in the fall due to the aforementioned workshop and because of Ips beetle restrictions in the spring (i.e., not recommended to have a machinery demonstration in late April or May).
 - Dave and Mike will discuss in more detail at a later time and will speak with Soil Health folks for their thoughts.

New Business:

- Election of 2023 officers:
 - Motion by Tamarah to keep the 2022 officers in the same positions in 2023 (i.e., Dave – Chair, Paul – Vice-Chair, Oonagh – Treasurer), seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - Newsletter:
 - Our recent newsletter was mentioned in the December 15th and 22nd issues of Buffalo Bytes, the Custer Chamber of Commerce email newsletter.
 - Exploration mining permit:
 - Mike was contacted for advice on seed mix to include on a mining exploration permit. Mike consulted with Cheryl Mayer (USFS) and provided a recommended native seed mix.
 - Black Hills NF Forest Plan revision update:
 - Mike sat in on a State-led meeting on December 29 that discussed their involvement in the revision process.
 - Mike did not have time to go over meeting details with the Board due to today's meeting running long.

- Custer County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan:
 - Mike provided Kailey Snyder, Black Hills Council of Local Governments, with a summary of the District's cost-shared thinning acreages by our pre-defined priority areas. Information is to be included in the mitigation plan.
- Commission report:
 - Mike reminded the Board that we need to provide a report to the County Commissioners soon.
- State Weed and Pest Conference:
 - Mike is attending the conference and is looking for a second person to attend. The second person is a requirement to qualify for State weed and pest grants. Dates needed are February 16 and morning of the 17th. Unable to get a volunteer from the Weed & Pest Board so asking this Board – no takers.

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

Critique:

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:16 AM.



January 12th, 2023

NRCS Field Office Report to the Custer County Conservation District

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2019-2022: 10 Active Contracts
- 2023:
 - General EQIP, Eligibility Deadline – February 3rd, 2023. 16 Applications received by batching date.
 - EQIP-CIS Application Timeline (Batching, Eligibility, Ranking, Obligation) – TBD pending NRCS Public Affairs Announcement. Will share with Mike/CD when announced for Forestry CIS and Range/Riparian CIS.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2019-2022: 9 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
- 2023: Classic CSP, Eligibility/Ranking Deadline – March 10th, 2023. 6 Applications received by batching date.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

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

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Outreach / 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

- December 17th – Joel and Laura Bosworth attended Winter Festival @ Bear Butte Gardens.
- December 21st – Contacted Custer Schools about outreach/career fair opportunities.
- January 5th-6th – Joel and Justin Boerboom represented Hills Resource Unit at Process Improvement Effort meeting.
- Joel accepted into NRCS Leadership Development Program.
- NRCS will send out outreach postcards on Custer CIS' to gather more applications.

/S/

Joel Milos
District Conservationist

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