



## Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – March 9, 2023

The March 9, 2023 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:03 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer (call-in), Stuart Adrian (call-in), Julie Wheeler, Laura Schmitz (call-in), Patricia Weyrich (call-in), Gavyn Priest (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.

Motion to approve today's agenda was made by Oonagh, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 9, 2023 was made by Paul, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

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

- NRCS Representatives: Laura Schmitz – Report attached
  - Additional notes:
    - CIS applications received to date: 3 for Rangeland and 4 for Forest
    - June 2 is the contract obligations deadline – CIS applicants will know by this date if they were selected.
    - In reference to NRCS not sending postcards to producers as expected, Laura will ask NRCS State office in Huron if they will send out postcards next year. Custer CD may need to send out postcards instead – plan to send them out early (e.g., November).
- SD DANR RCF: Patricia Weyrich –
  - Patricia and Gavin have been working on site visits/prescriptions for landowners with applications for the Custer CD thinning grant.
  - The DANR Forester position in Hot Springs should be occupied in late May.
  - On April 5, DANR is hosting a "Mapping in Forestry" workshop at the Outdoor Campus in Rapid City.
  - On April 10, a "Whole Tree Utilization" workshop is planned in the Pringle area. Workshop to be hosted by SD Family Forests Association and will be open to the public.
    - Dave inquired why Custer CD was just now finding out about the workshop. In the past, the District was involved in the planning of similar workshops. Patricia stated that she had only become aware of the

workshop the day before and was not sure why Custer CD was not contacted before. Will look into including Custer CD.

- On May 10, DANR will host a virtual workshop on landowner project assistance funding for forestry projects.
- US Forest Service general: Julie Wheeler, Buffalo Gap National Grassland –
  - Increasing capacity for staffing. The new Rangeland Specialist started last week and will be working with grazing permittees. A new Wildlife Biologist will start at the end of March.
  - Drought is something they are watching, hoping that it will subside
  - Will have noxious weed agreements in place with Custer and Fall River Counties
  - Notice to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address undesirable plant management for the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands.
  - Julie will be presenting at the Black Hills Area Botany & Ecology Workshop in Rapid City tomorrow.
  - Dave inquired about the possibility of a tour on the eastern side of the county. Julie said yes, there is potential to do so.

### **Financial Report:**

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = \$18,365.26,
  - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
  - Savings = \$35,692.54 (\$10.95 interest earned).
- Deposits:
  - \$9,000.00 – County allocated funds
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - SD Secretary of State – certification of entity's incorporation and business filing for SAM account generation (\$89.00)
  - SHP Holdings, LLC – thinning grant advertisement in Custer Chronicle, 2 weeks (\$90.00)
- Request was made to the Hills Area Districts to support the Collegiate Soil Competition, Fall 2023 (Oct. 1-6) - \$100 request for meal sponsorship
- Request was made to all SD Conservation Districts to support SDSU Ag Day (April 12) - \$100 suggestion
- Financial review – Laurie Arthur agreed to conducting the review, but no date has been set
- A motion by Paul to approve financial report as presented and to approve requests to support the Soil Competition and SDSU Ag Day at \$100 each, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

### **Correspondence:**

- 2023 SD Rangeland and Soil Days, hosted by Codington CD, NRCS, and SDSU Extension, will be June 14-15 in Watertown.
- US Bureau of Reclamation – assistance locating seasonal help for inspecting watercraft at Pactola Lake for zebra mussels
- NRCS notification on CIS grants – no new proposals accepted at this time



- SD Grassland Coalition – 2023 Grazing Schools will be in Wall (6/20-22), Summit (7/25-27), and Chamberlain (9/12-14)
- SDACD legislative updates from Angela Ehlers

### **Old Business:**

### **New Business:**

- Soil health workshop:
  - Pennington CD agreed to co-host a joint soil health workshop with Custer CD. Date will likely be in late May due to tree planting season for Lindsay and spray season for Mike.
  - Potential locations considered were Fairburn, Hermosa, and Rapid City. Shawn Freeland agreed to host the outdoor portion of the workshop on his farm. Therefore, Fairburn was deemed too far and was dropped. The Walt Taylor building in Rapid is available at no cost to us and is closer to Freeland's place than Hermosa, so we are leaning towards hosting there.
  - The current plan is for a 1-day event, with an indoor portion in the morning, a lunch, and the afternoon Freeland's place.
  - Potential speakers/activities include:
    - From NRCS – Tanse Herrmann, Rachel Crowther, Katie Christianson, & Joel Milos
    - Lindsay/Mike (PCCD/CCCD)
    - Shawn Freeland (SD Soil Health Coalition)
    - Riley Kammerer (SD Grassland Coalition)
    - Rainfall simulator during lunch w/ Tanse
    - Field trip – potentially a no-till demonstration and cover crop planting
- Conservation thinning grants:
  - 2021-23 grant update:
    - Reyelts – was notified that the Board approved an increase in total acreage to 22.3 ac at the February meeting. He is not sure if he can complete the additional acres by June, but will try. A grant extension request may be necessary. See grant extension request discussion below.
    - Piper – site visit performed by DANR, and owner was not following the forest prescription. DANR will communicate with him about what is needed to complete the project.
    - Clarke – contractors are behind schedule and not expected to finish by June. Landowner is asking if we can grant an extension. See grant extension request discussion below.
  - 2022-24 grant landowner applications for consideration:
    - Mike advertised the grant in the Custer Chronicle for 2 weeks (Feb. 15 & Mar. 1 editions) and sent an email to the newsletter distribution list.
    - Applications with completed forest prescription and map were summarized and presented for review. These were:

- Sheri Webster – 37.7 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$12,252.50.
- Oonagh Wood – 31.8 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$10,335.00.
- Dave Reyelts – 47.7 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$15,502.50.
- If the Board approves all 3 applications, total acreage granted would be 117.2 acres and total funds needed to reserve is \$38,090.00. The remaining grant balance would be approximately 158 acres available. This amount is greater than the total requested acreage remaining (Note: using a 50 ac maximum per application) from the outstanding grant applications that are waiting on DANR site visits and completed forest prescriptions. Therefore, it is Mike's recommendation to approve these applications now so that landowners can begin lining up contractors.
- Motion made by Tamarah to approve 3 applications as presented, second by Paul, motion carried with Oonagh abstaining.
- Applications received but have not been visited by DANR Forester:
  - Mike reviewed outstanding applications and plans by DANR to visit properties. Properties with completed prescriptions and maps will be presented at the next Board meeting.
  - One applicant has stopped responding to DANR and Mike. May need to drop this application. Oonagh knows the applicant and will speak to the person to see if still interested.
- Forest Health grant:
  - Requirement for this new grant is a Unique Entity ID, which is generated by creating a SAM.gov account. The County has one, but the Conservation District does not. Mike filed paperwork and is waiting. Process can take weeks.
- Thinning grant extension request:
  - Couple of the 2021-23 grant projects are not expected to be complete by June. Therefore, we will either need to ask for an extension from the Conservation Commission or return the funding. If we ask for an extension, we can ask for either a 6-month or 12-month extension.
  - Motion by Paul to request a 6-month extension, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

### **Other Business:**

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - Scholarships:
    - One application received to date, student still needs to submit essay.
  - Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership meeting, 3/6
    - Neiman/Lawrence Co. LiDAR update – determined that data were not high enough resolution to provide desired data. Canopy closure only, no individual tree analysis

- BH LiDAR – Region 2 is funding a new flight, resolution has not been determined yet
- Forest Plan Revision
  - SB-21 passed the House and Senate and waiting on the Governor's signature
  - Final Assessments are expected to be released in late April/early May
  - Jeff Tomac is now on a job detail, which will likely delay the Plan Revision, but to what degree remains unknown
  - Next county meeting will be on Wed. 3/22 in Rapid City
- No entries for poster/writing/speech contests:
  - To date, no interested participants for various contests.
- State Weed and Pest Conference:
  - Mike attended the conference in Huron, Feb. 15-17.
- Black Hills Area Botany & Ecology Workshop – 3/9 in Rapid City. Mike plans on attending.
- Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership meeting 3/23 in Rapid City. Mike plans on attending.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, April 13 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

**Critique:**

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 10:46 AM.





**March 9th, 2023**

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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 2019-2022: 10 Active Contracts
- 2023:
  - General EQIP: Ranking deadline was March 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - EQIP-CIS (Forestry & Rangeland/Riparian):
    - Batching deadline for applications: March 10<sup>th</sup>
    - Eligibility deadline: April 14<sup>th</sup>
    - Ranking deadline: May 5<sup>th</sup>
  - EQIP-IRA (Funding for climate-smart activities):
    - Batching deadline for applications: March 17<sup>th</sup>
    - Current EQIP applications on file will be considered for IRA funding without needing to reapply.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2019-2022: 9 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
- 2023: Classic CSP, Eligibility/Ranking Deadline – March 17<sup>th</sup>. Working through assessments and ranking of applications, deadline pushed back from March 10th.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

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

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Outreach / Other

- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA):
  - May be less \$ for 2023 than anticipated.
  - IRA funds cannot be combined with other EQIP/CSP funds. All IRA funded activities must be a climate smart practice or supporting a climate smart practice.
- Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>: Joel attended SDSU Bringing the Farm to School: Producer Training. Spoke about NRCS assistance.
- March 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>: Joel visiting USDA Headquarters in Washington D.C to meet with agency leadership.
- March 14<sup>th</sup>: Laura attending Woman in Science event at SDSM&T to talk about NRCS careers.
- FO did not send outreach postcards/letters for the Rangeland/Riparian CIS. With the applications on hand, less IRA funds than expected, and inability to combine CIS & IRA dollars, made decision to hold off for 2023.
- April 29<sup>th</sup>: Assisting with Native Plant ID field day with Oglala Lakota College and SDSU.

/S/

Joel Milos  
District Conservationist

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