



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2023

The June 8, 2023 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Basement Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:02 AM by Dave Thom.

In attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer (call-in), Stuart Adrian, Joel Milos, Patricia Weyrich, 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 and the meeting minutes from April 13, 2023 was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS Representatives: Joel Milos – Report attached
 - Additional notes:
 - Joel also provided a news release of the open application period for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).
- SD DANR RCF: Patricia Weyrich –
 - The person hired for the Hot Springs forester position was a no-show. They plan on re-flying the position. The Lead forester position is also vacant.
 - Interns began work last week of May.
 - Interviewing candidates for the Community Forester position in Pierre.
 - Patricia provided information on upcoming webinars and forestry workshop:
 - June 23 – The Economics and Forestry Practices of South Dakota Certified Tree Farms. Not open to the public
 - June 14 – webinar on “Riparian Buffer Initiative” from 12-1
 - June 14 – webinar on “Defoliators and Sap-sucking Insects” from 12-1

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$18,073.69,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$35,728.55 (interest earned: \$10.96 [April] & \$12.92 [May]).
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
 - Credit card purchases –
 - Family Dollar - paper towels for tree wrapping (\$11.18)
 - Lynn's Dakotamart – snacks for workshop & bags for tree wrapping (\$48.68)
 - JR's Rhodehouse BBQ Pit – catering deposit (\$260.00)

- Dakota Greens Greenhouse & Nursery – trees for Arbor Day (\$355.61)
 - Vector Design Print – newsletter (\$442.41)
- Laurie Arthur – 2021-2022 financial review \$215.66
- SD Family Forest Association – costs for upcoming workshop (Economics & Forestry Practices of SD Certified Tree Farms) \$100.00
- Southern Hills Publishing – workshop ad in Chronicle, 2 weeks (\$190.00)
- Deposits made:
 - From SDACD – webinar training sessions (\$150.00)
- Periodic financial review – 2021 and 2022:
 - Laurie Arthur reviewed financial documents for both years and had no issues of concern. Report shared with Oonagh to review.
 - Laurie is cutting back on clients/hours so we will need to find someone else by the time we need another financial review
- A motion by Oonagh to approve financial report as presented, seconded by Paul, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- 2022 NACD annual report released
- National Conservation Foundation (NCF) 2022 annual report released
- Thank you card from Elk Mountain School for Arbor Day trees presented by Tamarah
- 2023 Wildlife Habitat Award sponsored by Izaak Walton League of America. Nominations due by August 31.
- Tamarah let the Board know that former supervisor Jim Hughes passed away. His obituary was in this week's paper. Tamarah will get a card on behalf of the Board and will send it to his family.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- Soil health workshop:
 - Registration numbers are less than hoped. Mike placed an advertisement in the May 24th and 31st editions of the Custer Chronicle. Also advertised on CCCD website, Facebook, and newsletter. Postcards were sent to ~240 agricultural producers in eastern Custer county.
 - Lunch will be catered. Sponsors are Millborn Seeds and Hefty Seeds.
- Conservation thinning grants:
 - 2021-23 grant update:
 - Six-month grant extension request was approved at the April meeting of the Conservation Commission. Grant now runs through December 31.
 - Adrian project is complete, reimbursement request was submitted to the state.
 - Piper is withdrawing his project from the grant program. Work was done on the property, but not to specifications.
 - 2022-24 grant landowner applications:

- Landowner applications with completed forest prescriptions and maps were summarized and presented for the Board to review. These were:
 - Rita Stuen – 3 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$975.00.
 - Mark Weimer – 6.3 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$2,047.50.
 - Sheldon Rasmussen, Jacks Ranch – 50 acre prescription, grant funds needed = \$16,250.00.
 - If the Board approves all 3 applications, total acreage granted would be 59.3 acres and total funds needed to reserve is \$19,272.50. The remaining grant balance would be approximately 84 acres available. There is one other outstanding grant application that is waiting on a prescription before it can be reviewed by the Board. This application is for less than 10 acres. Therefore, it is Mike's recommendation to approve the three applications presented so that landowners can begin lining up contractors.
 - Motion made by Oonagh to approve applications by Stuen, Weimer, and Rasmussen as presented, second by Tamarah, motion carried.
- Forest Health thinning grant:
 - Our grant was approved and we were awarded \$25,000 in cost-share for new thinning projects in the county. Grant expires on June 30, 2024.
 - No landowner applications at this time. Because this grant and the 2022-2024 grant both expire in June 2024, and because getting an extension on the forest health grant is much easier than the 2022-24 grant, Mike recommends expending all 2022-24 grant funds prior to spending towards the Forest Health grant. Board agrees to prioritize expenditure of 2022-24 funds over Forest Health grant.
 - Patricia noted that the Tony Seidl will assume her role in matters related to the Forest Health grant (e.g., site visits, writing forest prescriptions, certification of work completed, etc.).
- SDACD Hills Area meeting:
 - Reminder that the meeting will be next Tuesday, June 13, at 2:00 PM in Rapid City at the Outdoor Campus. Mike would like at least one board member to attend. Dave and Paul said they will attend. Mike will also attend the Hills Area employee meeting that morning.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - Arbor Day activities:
 - Tree give-away and plantings:
 - Trees were provided to 1st graders at Custer and Hermosa Elementary Schools. A larger tree was also planted at each school with assistance from the students and the school grounds keepers.

Josh Larson, Community Forester with SD DANR, gave a presentation on Arbor Day at both events.

- Tamarah delivered trees to Elk Mountain School and spoke to the students about Arbor Day.
- Creative Writing Contest:
 - Millie Paulton was awarded honorable mention and received a \$20 cash prize and certificate. There were over 700 entries from students across the state. Mike presented Millie with her award at the school's end of year celebration at Elk Mountain School.
- Newsletter:
 - The spring/summer newsletter was completed and distributed by mail/email. Mike also posted a digital copy on the website.
- SDACD Video Project – Custer CCD thinning program:
 - The video is hosted on the USDA NRCS South Dakota YouTube channel. Links to the video have been posted on our website, Facebook page, and the SD Locally Led website (sdlocalconservation.org/news). Caitie Uthe, SDACD, sent a press release to a large audience. The press release was published in the May 17 edition of the Custer Chronicle.
 - Mike spoke to Blain Brakke, SDACD, about the potential to do short video. It might cost roughly \$1,000 to put it together since all the video shooting is complete. Would need to explore funding options. Patricia stated that SD Family Forests Association may have funding available.
- Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership meeting:
 - Upcoming meeting in Rapid City on June 14.
- Forest Plan Revision:
 - Next meeting with County and State representatives and USFS will be held on June 21 in Custer.
 - Release of final Assessments has been delayed so that they can undergo review in the Washington DC USFS office.
- Review of Invasive Grasses Public Meeting:
 - Focus of meeting was on Ventenata, but also covered Medusahead and Cheatgrass. Ventenata is a concern for our area. Surveys for Ventenata will occur this summer along the western counties of North and South Dakota this summer.

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

Critique:

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:31 AM.



June 8th, 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 3rd.
 - **One application pre-approved with late funding**
 - EQIP-CIS (Forestry & Rangeland/Riparian):
 - Batching deadline for applications: March 10th
 - 3 applications for Rangeland/Riparian CIS (out of R.C.)
 - 9 applications for Forestry CIS (out of R.C.)
 - Working with Hot Springs FO on prioritizing/ranking
 - EQIP-IRA:
 - **No pre-approvals currently**

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2019-2022: 9 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
- 2023: Classic CSP, Obligation Deadline – April 21st.
 - CSP-IRA:
 - **One application pre-approved with late funding**
 - CSP Renewal, Batching deadline April 28th
 - **3 applications received**

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- 2023:
 - World Wildlife Fund, Grazing Lands RCPP Sign-Up: May 1st - June 1st
 - RCPP Classic and AFA (Alternative Funding Arrangements) application period is not open for partners: Deadline August 18th

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Outreach / Other

- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA):
 - 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.
- April 29th: Assisted with Native Plant ID field day with Oglala Lakota College and SDSU.
- May 23rd: Rapid FO and other NRCS staff received training on rainfall simulator demonstration.
- June 13th-15th: Hills NRCS Staff have Forestry Training.
- June 16th: Custer/Pennington Soil Health Meeting
- June 17th: Justin B. presenting at National Bison Association, 777 Ranch Tour

/S/

Joel Milos

District Conservationist

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