



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – September 14, 2023

The September 14, 2023 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:00 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Oonagh Wood, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer (call-in), and Adrian Stuart. Others in attendance were Julie Wheeler (USFS), Ben Pucket (SD GFP), Brad Humbracht (NRCS), Matt Odden (NRCS), Kamira Miller (NRCS), Michael Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Patricia Weyrich (SD DANR-RCF), Victoria Geithman (student/NRCS volunteer), and Mike Baldwin (District Manager).

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 revised meeting minutes from July 13, 2023 was made by Tamarah, seconded by Paul, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS Representatives:
 - Brad Humbracht – Report attached
 - Kamira Miller – Report attached
- SD DANR RCF: Patricia Weyrich –
 - Introduced Michael Bordelon as the new forester in the Hot Springs office.
 - SD Family Forests Association is hosting a landowner appreciation event this Saturday near Rapid City.
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland: Julie Wheeler –
 - Focused on end of fiscal year work. Seasonal staff finishing up, on their way out.
- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket–
 - They have approval to start signing people up for the new habitat programs. A few people from Custer County have already reached out for more information. Funding is cost-share with a maximum of \$15K payment per landowner. Also have money for beaver dam analogs (BDA) for a pilot trial.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$14,469.63,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$35,789.60 (\$12.15 interest earned in both July and August).
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
 - Hills Area – annual dues for 2023 (\$75.00)

- Custer Chamber of Commerce – annual membership for 2024 (\$85.00)
- Deposits:
 - SDACDE cost-share reimbursement for Mike's travel/attendance to Leadership Conference (\$280.00) – Business checking
- A motion by Paul to approve financial report as presented, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Invitation to National Watershed Coalition meeting, Oct. 1-4, Salt Lake City, UT
- Notice of Intent to Continue Operation from Tom Loomis DBA Dakota Matrix Minerals
 - This is an extension of the completion date to 8/1/2028. Board asked Mike to send response letter with comments.
- SD Office of Attorney General – letter concerning Powertech Water Permit application
 - Motion by counsel A. F. M. Bailey allowing for her withdrawal from this matter. Concerning Powertech water permit applications and groundwater discharge plan application.
- SD GF&P Private Lands – program updates to habitat practices, discussed previously.
- Water Workshop, Oct. 5, 10:00-2:00, Lemmon, SD
 - Hosted by Perkins CCD, SD Grassland Coalition, DU, and SDSU Extension.
- DSAF Forest Planning Symposium: a Primer for the Black Hills National Forest Plan Revision, Oct. 3, Rapid City.
 - Mike will send flyer to the Board. Motion made by Oonagh to allow anyone from the District to attend the symposium. Second by Tamarah, motion carried.
- Soil Health Workshop, Oct. 6, 9:00-3:00, Hot Springs
 - Hosted by Fall River CCD, NRCS, and SD Soil Health Coalition
- Northern Plains Soil Conservation District Employee Leadership Conference, Nov. 1-3, Deadwood
 - Mike will let the Board know if he is interested in attending.
- SD Conservation Commission Fall Grant Round – application deadline is Oct. 2
 - Paul enquired about a grant for biocontrol of noxious weeds. If pursue this type of grant, should meet with Weed and Pest Board first.

Old Business:

- NRCS field office organization – Custer County:
 - Dave summarized the comments included in the letter he drafted to Tate Lantz, NRCS. Board feels that this is a NRCS decision and it does not have a strong preference towards either Rapid City or Hot Springs field office. However, given the current circumstances, the preference is to remain with Rapid City.
 - After more discussion with NRCS staff present about some of the issues, Board will reconsider its recommendation and present at upcoming meeting.

New Business:

- Discussion on purchasing a no-till drill:

- Tamarah noted that it is difficult to rent a drill from Hot Springs and Rapid City. They are usually rented out and there is a wait list. Drill is useful for re-seeding pastures and food plots.
- There may be grants available to offset the purchase of a no-till drill. Brad noted that Fall River Conservation District is looking into buying a second drill. He suggested that Custer CD might be able to team up with Fall River CD to purchase a drill. New drills can run for \$40-50K.
- Tamarah will look into options and report to the Board.
- NRCS Strategic Planning Session:
 - SD NRCS is developing its next strategic plan and part of that is having listening sessions across South Dakota. The Rapid City area listening session will be September 26th at the Hilton Garden Inn. The plan is to have NRCS staff come in the morning and partners in the afternoon.
- Conservation thinning grants:
 - 2021-23 grant update:
 - Patricia stated that Reyelts is trying to get another contractor after losing previous contractor. No other updates.
 - 2022-24 grant landowner applications:
 - Approximately 28 acres of funding still available.
 - Forest Health thinning grant:
 - A new application with large acreage was submitted, but prescription work has been delayed due to long-eared bat requirements.
 - Currently have about 75 acres of funding available.
- SDACD Annual Meeting:
 - Mike will attend the meeting in Aberdeen, September 17-19. No Board members are able to attend.
- Update on pine loopers near Pringle:
 - According to Dr. Ball, SDSU, the looper population has collapsed and there are significantly fewer pupae than previous year. Mature larvae are dying at a “remarkably high rate”, likely due to natural enemies (e.g., pathogens & insects).
 - The possibility of the outbreak continuing into a third year is not likely; however, there are a few new small pockets within 4-5 miles of outbreak area. Those areas may continue to have issues next year.
 - Tree mortality is expected. Rough estimate is that around 1/3 of trees in affected area will die.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - Forest Plan Revision:
 - Still waiting on release of final Assessments – waiting on release from USFS Washington DC office. New group within USFS (Mountain Planning Service Group) will begin leading revision process. Goal is to begin Notice of Intent in October.

- BH Resilient Forest Partnership:
 - Group has started meeting monthly. Updates from participants. Focus on Forest Plan.
- Weed season:
 - Most of Mike's summer has been dedicated to weed control. He only had one seasonal employee this season.

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

Critique:

- Dave would like Board to think about goals/ideas for 2024. Topics could include pollinators, beaver dam analogs, riparian areas, soil health, grants, workshops. Plan to discuss ideas in November/December.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:44 AM.



***District Conservationist Report
Fall River Conservation District***

September 13, 2023

Current Contract Work:

Custer County currently has 27 active contracts-4 in Rapid City and 23 in Hot Springs. Plus 1 yet to be obligated in Rapid City and 2 to be obligated in Hot Springs.

Fall River County currently has 27 active contracts. Plus 1 yet to be obligated.

General Contract and Program Info

CSP:

Collecting documentation and making any modifications before end of fiscal year.

EQIP:

Applications taken at all times. Field work is continuing as weather allows. Many practice certifications occurring.

CIS for Hot Springs:

561 acres of thinning and pine removal from meadows funded for the Hot Springs Wildfire and Pest Management CIS off of Argyle Road in Custer County.

Phase 2 funded for Jasper Area Fire livestock water project on USFS land.

One contract funded for Hot Springs near Buffalo Gap in the Rangeland and Riparian Health CIS.

Other:

Working with State Office on ACEP-ALE applications for potential funding yet for 2023-1 entirely in Custer County and 1 in Fall River County. Nothing 100% on if it will be funded, but a possibility if all pieces line up.

Office is conducting contract management to get contracts back on schedule.

Fiscal Year ends September 30.

Timelines and Deadlines:

None at this time.

/s/ Bradley Humbracht, District Conservationist

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September 14th, 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.
 - EQIP-CIS (Rapid Creek 1 & 2):
 - **RC1: Two Contracts are approved. Will use all available funding in CIS.**
 - **RC2: One Contract Approved. \$98,807 for two irrigation pivot systems and Irrigation Water Management.**
 - **Planning Streamwork Designs for WDWDD.**
 - EQIP-CIS (Cheyenne River – Wasta Area):
 - **Prioritizing with Wall FO.**

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- 2019 - 2022: 10 Active Contracts, additional 2 CSP-GCI
- **2023:**
 - Classic CSP. Obligation deadline April 21st
 - **CSP-IRA:**
 - **One Contract Obligated - \$200,000. Including Prescribed Grazing, Nutrient Management, and Pollinator Plot Planting activities.**
 - CSP Renewal, Batching deadline April 28th
 - 3 applications received.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- **2023:**
 - RCPP Classic and AFA (Alternative Funding Arrangements) application period is now open for partners: Deadline August 18th

Conservation Reserve Program – Grasslands (CRP-G)

- **2023:**
 - **Six offers from FSA totaling 9,254.7 acres. Inventories completed - FO working on Conservation Plans. Have two approved.**

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Outreach / Other

- **September 16th: Informational Booth and Inflatable Soil Health Tunnel @ 6th Annual Box Elder Harvest Festival.**

/S/

Kamira Miller

Acting District Conservationist

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