



Custer County Conservation District Meeting Minutes – October 12, 2023

The October 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.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Oonagh Wood, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian. Others in attendance were Justin Boerboom (NRCS), Kamira Miller (NRCS), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Ben Pucket (SD GFP), Mike Linde (County Commission), and Mike Baldwin (District Manager). Attendees by phone were Julie Wheeler (USFS) and Patricia Weyrich (SD DANR-RCF).

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 September 14, 2023 was made by Greg, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried. Dave asked to add burning beetle event to New Business.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
 - Nothing to report. Commented on USFS planned purchase of acreage by Hopkins Flats Road.
- NRCS Representatives:
 - Kamira Miller – Report attached
 - Justin Boerboom – additional information:
 - Rapid City field office losing staff – Cassey, Laura, and Joel
 - Would like help with outreach for IRA funds. Expecting ~132% increase in funds from FY2023, of which, ~\$1.4-\$1.5 million to be dedicated to the Hills Resource Unit.
 - November 3 is application deadline, but may have another batching period down the road – maybe in June.
 - IRA funding is independent of Farm Bill and FY2024 funding so should not be affected if there is a government shutdown next month.
 - Justin will provide Mike a brief message about the IRA funds. Mike will then send it to the paper and email to the newsletter distribution group.
- SD DANR RCF:
 - Michael Bordelon:
 - No new applicants at this time. In future, will provide a report similar to what Matt Walsh provided at past board meetings.
 - Patricia Weyrich:

- Addressed a question from the board about the number of landowners in the queue for thinning work. There are approximately 9 landowners for the Forest CIS project. For the Commission grant, landowners are holding off due to high contractor costs and low cost-share. Some might be pushed to NRCS cost-share.
 - Will provide the Board a map of thinning work completed over recent years.
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland: Julie Wheeler –
 - No update but interested in schedule for Grassland tour with Board. Mike had shared potential dates with the Board via email. Board selected Monday, November 6, as the date for the tour. Mike and Julie will work out details. Mike will share details with the Board.
- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket–
 - Considering hosting a beaver dam analog workshop and field tour if there is enough interest. Board said they are interested. Ben will work with The Nature Conservancy about potential dates.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
 - Main Checking = \$14,309.63,
 - Grant Checking = \$1,633.41,
 - Savings = \$35,800.97 (\$11.37 interest earned in September).
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
 - Credit card purchases:
 - SDACD Convention expenses:
 - Ramkota Best Western, Aberdeen – lodging (\$275.72)
 - Street Corner, Aberdeen – fuel (\$86.78)
 - DSAF – meeting registration for Mike (\$75.00)
 - Checks:
 - NACD – annual dues for 2024 (\$350)
- Deposits:
 - None
- Tamarah asked about Mike’s food expenses during the SDACD Convention. Mike forgot to include the expenses in the financial report. Some of the meals were included with the registration fee. Mike will provide meal costs at the next meeting.
- A motion by Paul to approve financial report as presented, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- NACD 2022 annual report received.

Old Business:

- NRCS field office organization – Custer County:
 - Letter from the Board was shared with Tate Lantz. Tate indicated that Custer CCD will stay with the Hills Resource Unit and the listed service center will be

- Rapid City. Tate also reiterated that producers are welcome to go to whichever field office they prefer
- Justin will talk with FSA office in Rapid City about landowner outreach.
 - DSAF Forest Planning Symposium
 - Postponed due to potential government shutdown. Has been rescheduled for November 29.
 - Discussion on purchasing a no-till drill:
 - Tamarah is looking into it. Will communicate with Yvette Kirkman about their no-till. Tamarah wanted to make sure that if the Board purchases a no-till that it would not take up more of Mike's time.
 - Paul commented on the recent Fall River Soil Health Workshop that he attended. At the workshop, he received a copy of Fall River's user agreement for their no-till drill. Paul also shared that there will be a Soil Health Coalition meeting next January in Rapid City.
 - Fall River might want to sell their old drill, but Justin warned that old drills are difficult to maintain. Drills are generally kept for 5 years before replacing. Justin thinks that Butte CCD replaces their drill every 5-8 years.
 - Tamarah will follow up and report to the Board.
 - NRCS Strategic Planning Session:
 - Oonagh and Mike attended the recent session in Rapid City – one of three scheduled across the state. Group of about 15 partners met with Toni Sunseri, State Conservationist. Partners shared what they like about NRCS and what they wish they would do differently/what they wish NRCS would do/etc. Feedback will be used in drafting the NRCS Strategic Plan.

New Business:

- Buffalo Gap National Grassland field tour:
 - Discussed under partner reports. Date scheduled on November 6.
- Conservation thinning grants:
 - 2021-23 grant update:
 - Clarke asked if it was possible to get another extension. Mike communicated that the deadline for extension requests had already passed. Clarke's contractor will try to complete the work by December.
 - No other updates.
 - 2022-24 grant landowner applications:
 - No updates.
 - Forest Health thinning grant:
 - Landowner asked to delay new application until fall of 2024 due to contractor backlog.
 - Forest Health thinning grant:
 - New information received from SD-DANR RCF indicates that thinning work will be restricted due to the listing of the long-eared bat. Work may be restricted to November 1 through April 15 – similar to Ips restrictions.

- Arbor Day trees for 2024:
 - Board agreed to purchase 50 Black Hills spruce, 25 thornless honeylocust, and 25 seedless cottonwood. This is the same order placed for the 2023 Arbor Day and the Board agreed that the kids liked this species selection.
- Bureau of Reclamation request for support staffing check stations:
 - Mike was contacted by Jacob Bradford (Regional Invasive Species Coordinator, Billings, MT) about hiring people next year to staff the check stations. They are still working with Pennington CD, but they are not able to provide enough staff. If the Board agrees to the request, Mike would supervise the seasonal staff. Funding would come from SD Game, Fish & Parks.
 - Also, if there is any interest from the Board, we could sample for invasive mussels in the county. Would sample in lakes not currently monitored for zebra mussels. Not paid, but all equipment/supplies would be provided. Use plankton tow nets from shore or boat.
 - Board considered their request but determined that they were not able to participate.
- Burning beetle event:
 - Dave stated that the beetle burning is scheduled on January 20. The committee is reinstituting an educational component to the event. On January 18, speakers will help to create a better understanding of the potential issues of living in a forest. Topics covered will be forest insects/diseases, fire, physical threats (floods, hail), and general management techniques.
 - Dave asked if the District would like to partner the event by providing coffee and cookies. Motion by Paul, second by Dave to approve partnering event, motion carried.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
 - 2024 State Docket – Conservation Commission Approved Practices Costs
 - Mike submitted request to increase cost-share for thinning and slash disposal. Suggestion was 50% of costs up to \$1,500/acre for thinning and \$300/acre for slash disposal. Maximum payment would be \$900/acre if both practices are completed. Commission will discuss requests at upcoming fall meeting, date TBD.
 - SDACD Convention:
 - Mike attended the Convention. He is expecting \$420 in cost-share to offset travel expenses.
 - Mike reminded the Board about the on-line training for Board Supervisors – first discussed last year. Training is intended for all district board supervisors to take to learn about their roles and responsibilities as well as general information about conservation districts. Mike will resend link to the Board.
 - Received a Christmas ornament for Jim Hughes
 - Northern Plains Leadership Conference (NACD), Nov. 1-3, Deadwood

- Mike is not sure whether it would a good use of time and expenses so asked for input. Board did not feel strongly either way.
- Forest Plan Revision:
 - The current acting Forest Supervisor is Ivan Green. A new permanent Supervisor is expected to start in early 2024.
 - Many new hires across the Forest, filling vacancies
 - Still waiting on release of final Assessments.
- Newsletter:
 - Soon Mike will begin working on the Fall/Winter newsletter and would like any ideas for articles/content.
- Goals/ideas for 2024:
 - Plan to discuss ideas in November/December for 2024 goals. Beaver dam analog workshop could be something to include. Also, consider no-till drills and soil health.

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

Critique:

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:39 AM.



October 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: Ranking deadline was March 3rd.
 - EQIP-CIS (Rapid Creek 1 & 2):
 - **RC1: Two Contracts are obligated.**
 - **RC2: One Contract Obligated. \$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.

Conservation Reserve Program – Grasslands (CRP-G)

- **2023:**
 - **Six offers from FSA totaling 9,254.7 acres. Two are obligated.**

Meetings / Trainings / Correspondence / Outreach / Other

- **October 16th : SD Society for Range Management Tour**

/S/

Kamira Miller

Acting District Conservationist