

# **Custer County Weed and Pest Board**

## **Meeting Minutes – March 28, 2023**

The March 28, 2023 meeting of the Custer County Weed and Pest Board was called to order at 1:02 PM by Smith.

In attendance were Bob Smith, Marci O'Connell, June Johnston, Tom Patterson (call-in), and Mike Baldwin.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted.

### **Approve Minutes/Agenda:**

- Today's agenda and the meeting minutes from the January 10 meeting were approved with a motion from O'Connell and a second by Johnston.

### **Old Business:**

### **New Business:**

- Enforcement updates:
  - Weed enforcement on Lila Streff property:
    - A letter was sent to Streff on February 24, which requested that she develop a plan to treat the weeds on her property and share that plan with the Board by April 15. She has until May 31 to act upon that plan. Baldwin spoke with Streff by phone on March 27 and confirmed that she had received the letter. At this time, she is not sure what her plan will be.
    - Baldwin spoke with the State for guidance on how to best address the potential scenario where the landowner does not take action or takes inadequate action. The Board will have to continue with the current plan and readdress the issue if/when the landowner fails to meet her obligations. At which time Baldwin will confer with the State for guidance.
  - Prairie dog enforcement update on Patricia Gregerson property:
    - Baldwin has performed two prairie dog counts since the property was treated. The treatment appeared to be effective with a significant reduction in prairie dogs. Baldwin spoke with the neighbor and asked to keep him informed if he sees continuing issues with prairie dogs. No more complaints have been received. Will continue to monitor the situation.
- Spring Newsletter:
  - The past two years, the newsletter was sent to every residence in the county. However, the cost has increased 55% from 2021 to 2023 and the current estimate is more than was budgeted. Baldwin checked with the Weed and Pest Supervisors from the other Black Hills counties to see if they mail a newsletter, and if so, to whom is it sent. Only Fall River sends a newsletter, but it is only sent to landowners that own at least 2 acres and it excludes city residents.

- Baldwin requested feedback from the Board on how to proceed. Options discussed were to continue as is, piggyback on tax notices sent from the Courthouse, piggyback on the Conservation District newsletter (too small of an audience), or reduce the number of newsletters sent.
- Motion made by O'Connell to print newsletter and only send to landowners with at least 2 acres and to exclude city residents, seconded by Johnston, motion carried.
- SD DANR RCF grant:
  - Funding is available to support noxious weed control on private land adjacent to US Forest Service land (National Forest or National Grassland). In 2022, Baldwin received \$5,000 to help support our chemical cost-share program. Funds were directed towards property owners adjacent the National Forest. Baldwin would like apply for this funding again. Board agreed, Baldwin will request \$5,000 to support the chemical cost-share program.
  - A second grant is available from DANR to support weed control on private land adjacent to USFS lands. Baldwin is exploring possible uses for these dollars. The county does not spray on private land, so potential uses of these funds are limited. Board agreed that Baldwin should explore other possibilities.
- US Forest Service agreements for approval:
  - Baldwin presented an agreement between the County and the Black Hills National Forest for noxious weed control. Funds will be directed towards controlling weeds on the Forest adjacent to private property. Agreement will be for \$7,000.
  - Also discussed was an agreement between the County and the Buffalo Gap National Grassland for noxious weed control. The agreement will be the same as the previous two years for \$3,000. Baldwin is waiting on the final paperwork for signature.
  - Motion by Johnston to approve both USFS agreements and forward them to the County Commission for final approval, seconded by O'Connell, motion carried.

### **Other Business:**

- Review of State Conference, February 15-17 in Huron
  - Applicator licenses:
    - There will be a change in expiration dates for applicator licenses from February 28 to March 31. This applies to both private and commercial licenses.
    - The State plans on combining categories 1A (herbicides), 1B (insecticides), 1C (fungicides) into one category.
  - Herbicide newly available for leafy spurge control. The product, Venue (Pyraflufen-ethyl) by Nichino America, may be a useful alternative to traditional herbicides used on leafy spurge. The chemical is not new, it is primarily used for tree, nut, and vine crops. It can be used in pasture, rangeland, and right-of-ways. According to the company, control requires three years of application.
  - Discussion on Ventenata and likelihood that it will become established in the state. Early discussions were had about conducting a survey along the western portion of counties that border Wyoming and Montana.



- Presentation on vendor display of drones used for weed spraying. A booming business, primarily for row-crop agriculture but also useful for noxious weed spraying.
  - Our locally noxious weed renewals were approved by the Weed and Pest Commission (St Johnswort, Spotted Knapweed, White Horehound).
  - Did not have a second person attend the conference so the county will only receive half of the state grant. Dollar amount to be determined.
- Association of County Weed & Pest Boards dues notice:
  - In the past, the Board decided not to pay the dues because of questionable value for the county. The Board agreed this is still the case now and decided to not pay the \$200 annual dues.
- Invasive Grasses Public Meeting:
  - Public meeting to be held on April 27 12:30-3:30, in Belle Fourche. Meeting will be hosted by BLM and will focus primarily on Ventenata, but will also discuss Medusahead. Baldwin will plan on attending.
- Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for undesirable plant management on the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands in Nebraska and South Dakota:
  - The area to be covered by this EIS includes the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Baldwin submitted comments to USFS. The comments encouraged USFS to be less restrictive for noxious weed control techniques (e.g., allow use of drones).
- Prairie dogs in county right-of-way:
  - A complaint was received from the county highway department about prairie dog burrows in the right-of-way along a portion of Pilger Mountain Rd. This portion of the road is open pasture with active cattle grazing. Baldwin worked with the landowner to try and treat the burrows with Rozol; however, the cattle were present up to March 15, the last day Rozol can be applied. Rozol cannot be used in areas with active livestock grazing. Therefore, Baldwin will treat the burrows with aluminum phosphide tablets once the ground thaws.
- Seasonal help:
  - Currently advertising on county website, in Custer Chronicle, and on Indeed.com. Brie plans on returning for her fourth season.
- Black Hills Forest Plan Revision:
  - County/USFS/SD-DANR meeting held in Rapid City on March 22 to discuss status of Forest Plan.
  - SB-21 passed the House and Senate and was signed by the Governor. Bill provides \$500,000 to the Black Hills counties for cost-share – for activities related to the Forest Plan Revision. The Bill also provides \$450,000 to DANR so that a full time forester can be hired for four years. This will allow the State Forester to focus solely on the Forest Plan during that time.
  - USFS expects the Final Assessments to be released in May. Supervisor Jeff Tomac is on a Job Detail. Bryan Karchut is currently serving as acting Forest Supervisor. His detail is expected to end in June.
- Public Notice of Responsibility to Control Noxious Weeds:
  - Baldwin submitted the legal notice to the Custer Chronicle. It will be published in the March 29 and April 5 editions of the newspaper.

- Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership (BHIPP) meeting:
  - Significant discussion on Ventenata. It is viewed as a serious threat to the Hills area. The grass has high silica content and has low palatability for livestock. The USFS District Ranger from the Custer-Gallatin National Forest brought plant samples and photos from the Ventenata discovered in Harding County last summer. More discussion on planning a July trip to conduct survey for Ventenata in the western portion of SD counties, including Custer County.
  - TruRange is a new product for leafy spurge by Envu (formerly Bayer) that is waiting on EPA approval for use in the USA. It is already in use in Canada. The herbicide is similar to Method, but will have a grazing label if approved.
  - Spotted knapweed biocontrol request was made to Jeremiah Phelps, SD DANR, for an area east of Custer. If biocontrol is available, it will be transferred to the county at no cost.
  - Applicator training to be held in Rapid City on May 24 & 25. One day will be dedicated to ATV training.
- Certificates of Recognition:
  - Certificates were received from the Association of South Dakota County Weed and Pest Boards honoring Johnston, Lintz, Patterson, and Rittberger for 10 years of service on the County Weed and Pest Board. Their service is greatly appreciated.

**Next meeting:**

- Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9, 2023 at 1:00 PM. Will call a special meeting in April if necessary, dependent on property owner under weed enforcement.

**Adjournment:**

- Motion by O'Connell, seconded by Johnston to adjourn meeting at 2:14 PM.