Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2024

The January 11, 2024 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:12 AM by Dave Thom. Meeting started late due to the inclement weather.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian. Others in attendance were Brian Albers (Custer FFA), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Patricia Weyrich (call-in; SD DANR-RCF), Jamie Schmidt (call-in; Rosa Forestry), Mike Busskohl (Custer Co. Commission), 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 with the addition of 1) Custer Mile High Garden Club, 2) Fall landowner workshop, and 3) NAC to New Business, and to approve the meeting minutes from December 14, 2023, was made by Oonagh, seconded by Paul, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- SD DANR RCF: Patricia Weyrich –
    - Continuing to work on various projects with NRCS, Conservation Districts, and Forest Health. Waiting to hear SD Conservation Commission's decision on our request to use the 2024 docket for our existing thinning grant.
    - SD Family Forest Association and Dakota Society of American Foresters are organizing a bat workshop on Jan. 31. Details to be emailed out later this week.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
    - Main Checking = $8,362.18,
    - Grant Checking = $12,948.41,
    - Savings = $35,836.68 ($11.39 interest earned in December).
- Deposits:
    - Thinning grant reimbursement - $11,315.00
    - Request was made to County for annual contribution
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
    - Bills:
        - SDACD 2024 dues - $550.00
        - Rita Clarke - $3,315.00
        - Wood Ranch LLLP - $8,000.00
    - Credit card purchases:

        - none
    - Note: Quicken annual fee increasing by $12 to ~$75/year
- A motion by Paul to approve account balances and SDACD dues, seconded by Greg, motion carried.
- Motion by Tamarah to approve landowner payments, second by Paul, motion carried. Oonagh abstained.

Correspondence:

- Arbor Day calendars and 2024 pocket planners from SD DANR-RCF office in Rapid City.
- SDACD shared draft legislation for shelterbelt incentives for new plantings or renovations, asked for comments.
- Request to all Conservation Districts from SDSU Extension to support 2024 SDSU Ag Day.
- SDSU Extension Annie's Project for Women in Agriculture, virtual webinar series begins Jan. 22 and ends Mar. 4 (6 sessions).
- Reminder for SD Soil Health Conference in Rapid City, Jan. 23-24.
    - Motion by Paul to approve attendance costs for any board member that wishes to attend, second by Tamarah, motion carried.
- Reminder for SD Grassland Initiative Partner Meeting in Wall, Jan. 16.
    - Mike will try to attend virtually.
- Custer Chamber of Commerce – request for sponsors for various events in 2024.
- National Watershed Coalition – 2024 membership request.

Old Business:

- Discussion on purchasing a no-till drill:
    - Dave, Tamarah, and Paul will continue to research topic into 2024.

New Business:

- Election of 2024 Officers:
    - Motion by Paul to keep officers as is: Dave as Chair and Paul as Vice-Chair, second by Tamarah, motion carried.
- Custer School District FFA program – Brian Albers, FFA Advisor:
    - Brian provided background on his professional career and also the Custer Chapter of the FFA. Currently, the Custer School District does not offer any agricultural classes, which are required if FFA is to continue in Custer. School District still considering whether to include this curriculum in the future.
    - FFA students may be available to help with a District project.
    - Board offered support for FFA Chapter, Brian will let Board know if/when their support is needed.
- Conservation thinning grants:
    - 2021-23 grant update:

        - Last project (22.3 acre) completed and reimbursement request submitted to State. Final grant report completed and submitted to State.
    - 2022-24 grant update:
        - SD Conservation Commission meeting on January 31 and will consider our request to use 2024 docket for current grant.
    - Forest Health grant update:
        - Previous applicant is still interested. Should expect to receive email or letter from landowner granting approval of proposed work – since applicant is the lessee, not owner.
- Burning Beetle Learning Event:
    - Event on January 18 at 6:30 PM at the Pine Room. Agenda shared with newsletter email list and article included in the recent Custer Chronicle. Paul and Oonagh will attend to help with setup. Mike is bringing cookies. Group to meet at 5:45 for setup.
- Promotional coffee cups:
    - Board discussed purchasing disposable coffee cups or cup sleeves with District logo for workshops, meetings, etc.
    - Motion by Oonagh to purchase coffee cup sleeves with logo and plain coffee cups, Greg second, motion carried.
- Custer Mile High Garden Club:
    - Dave reached out to the club to share a NRCS soil health publication and inquired about shared interest between their group and our district. Potential of attending their next meeting.
- Fall landowner workshop:
    - Tentatively plan to co-host forestry related workshop in Argyle area in October. Mike will work with Patricia on planning workshop.
    - Burning Beetle group is interested in being a cosponsor of the workshop.
    - Mike was also asked by Patricia to participate in a landowner virtual meeting this spring to share information on cost-share thinning programs available to the public.
- Natural Asset Companies (NAC):
    - Paul discussed NACs and rancher concerns about the possibility of reduced livestock limits on federal grazing permits.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
    - Mike has nearly completed 2023 Annual Report and 2023 Financial Report (balance sheet and profit/loss statement), which will be submitted to SD DANR-RCF. Mike will forward a copy to Board once completed. Reports are due by March 1.
    - Student contest information (speech, poster, creative writing) sent to Elk Mountain School and Custer School District.
    - NACD Forestry Notes:

        - Our resilient forest video was mentioned in the December issue. Mike received follow-up email/call from New Mexico CD that saw video and interested on how we manage brush disposal.
        - Mike will also contact NACD about the burning beetle event to see if they would like to include it in an upcoming issue of Forestry Notes.
    - Black Hills Stock Show (Jan. 26 – Feb. 2), asked to help man NRCS/CD booth. Mike will help on Monday, Jan. 29.
    - BH Resilient Forest Partnership:
        - January meeting canceled. Next meeting scheduled in February.
    - BHNF Forest Plan:
        - Cooperative Agency meeting held yesterday, Jan. 10.
        - Shawn Cochran, new Forest Supervisor, reports to work next week.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 8 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Critique:

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:39 AM.