Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2024

The February 8, 2024 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:02 AM by Paul Nettinga.

Board members in attendance were Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Absent was Dave Thom. Others in attendance were Laura Bosworth (NRCS), Kylie Hammett (NWTF), Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Tom Miklos (SD GF&P), Julie Brazell (TNC), Lori Brown (TNC), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Patricia Weyrich (SD DANR-RCF), Mike Linde (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 and to approve the meeting minutes from January 11, 2024, was made by Oonagh, seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Briefly mentioned SB 134, a bill currently under consideration at the State Legislature. Also referenced a decrease in property taxes this year due to measures taken by the school district.
- NRCS: Laura Bosworth –
  - Acting DC in Rapid City office is busy with CSP rankings. No update on when a new DC will be hired.
  - Brad in the Hot Springs office is on a detail. No acting-DC at this time.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - No updates at this time. Will have information for grant updates later in the meeting.
- SD GF&P: Ben Pucket –
  - Working on hardwood enhancement signups.
- NWTF – Kylie Hammett
  - New NWTF forester in the Rapid City office – will assist NRCS with forestry related projects. Plans on attending upcoming NWTF National Convention in Nashville.
- TNC – Lori Brown
  - Here to discuss BDA workshop later in the meeting. Noted that TNC's Whitney Preserve near Hot Springs is available for events.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $16,812.18,
  - Grant Checking = $8,738.41,
  - Savings = $35,849.64 ($12.96 interest earned in January).
- Deposits:
  - Thinning grant reimbursement – $7,105.00
  - County contribution – $9,000.00
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Bills:
    - SDACDE ($175): annual dues ($50) & Leadership registration ($125)
    - Needles View Ranch, LLC – $7,247.50
  - Credit card purchases:
    - Wal-Mart – cookies $58.77
    - Safeway – coffee $6.89
    - Soil Health Coalition – conference registration $50.00
    - SleeveSupply.com – promotional coffee cup sleeves $56.43
- Motion by Oonagh to approve financial report, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Invitation to South Dakota Grasslands Summit "Connecting around South Dakota's most important resource: Our Grasslands", March 18-19 in Oacoma.
  - None of the board members plan on attending. Mike was asked if he was available to attend. He will check his schedule.
- National Wild Turkey Federation - 2024 Waterways for Wildlife Initiative Request for Proposals, due Feb. 9.
- Invitation to Workshop on Bats of the Black Hills hosted by SD Family Forest Association and Dakota Society of American Foresters, Jan. 31 in Rapid City.
- Invitation to Forestry Across the Plains Conference – 2024 Spring Conference Dakotas SAF/Great Plains SAF, April 2-4, Pierre.
- SD Conservation Commission spring grant round notice – application deadline for new grants is March 1.
- SDACD legislative updates from Angela Ehlers (SDACD).
- SD Locally Led – 2024 is our block year to reevaluate resource concerns
  - Paul asked Mike to place this on the March agenda.

Old Business:

- Burning Beetle Learning Event:
  - Good turnout, approximately 50 people in attendance.
  - Article about the event was in the Jan. 24th edition of the Custer Chronicle.
  - The February issue of NACD Forestry Notes will include an article on the Burning Beetle and the Learning Event.
- Discussion on purchasing a no-till drill:
  - No updates at this time.

- Pennington CD has a used no-till drill for sale, but board is not currently interested.

New Business:

- Discuss potential beaver dam analog (BDA) workshop this spring:
  - Lori Brown:
    - Discussed use of BDAs as a tool for stream restoration projects. Can be used on intermittent and perennial streams. BDAs were developed as a lower-cost tool for landowners wishing to mimic beaver activities.
    - BDAs needed due to declining beaver numbers in the Black Hills – latest SD GF&P survey found only 16 caches in the Hills. Mimicking beaver's role important for stream restoration.
    - TNC hosted BDA workshops last year in Hot Springs and Newell. Workshops can be short or multi-day. Typically have classroom portion in the first part of workshop and then move outside for rest. Use local materials for constructing BDA. Workshops usually hosted between late-June through September.
  - Board is interested in co-hosting a single-day workshop this year. Will work with Lori and Ben on scheduling event this summer.
  - Ben Pucket:
    - SD GF&P will likely end trapping and hunting of beaver in the Black Hills until caches reach 50 again.
    - GF&P is building a willow propagation system for willow planting projects in the Black Hills area. The District is welcome to attend a tour of the site. Board expressed their interest in touring the site. Ben will get back to the board with additional informational.
- Supervisor terms ending on December 31, 2024 – Dave, Oonagh, Paul. Mike passed out information on running for reelection and asked supervisors to let him know if they plan on running for another term.
- Conservation thinning grants:
  - 2021-23 grant update:
    - All projects completed, final report submitted, and final reimbursement request received.
  - 2022-24 grant update:
    - Request by a landowner for grant extension – contractor probably not able to finish work by grant deadline. Also, may have at least 1-2 additional people needing extension. Motion by Oonagh to request a 1-year extension, second by Greg, motion carried. Formal request will be presented for consideration at the next SD Conservation Commission meeting.
    - At SD Conservation Commission meeting on Jan. 31, commission approved our request to use 2024 docket for our current grant.

- Mike noted that if contractor costs for all remaining thinning projects come in higher than anticipated, the most we can pay each landowner is $405.67 per acre.

- Forest Health grant update:
  - Board considered whether to submit a request to use the 2024 docket for this grant – request would be made to SD DANR-RCF directly as opposed to the SD Conservation Commission.
  - Motion by Oonagh to request approval to use 2024 docket for current Forest Health grant, second by Tamarah, motion carried. Mike will send a letter to SD DANR-RCF.
  - New landowner applications:
    - Application received for approximately 7-acre thinning project west of Custer. Landowner does not have a forest plan and has not had a forester visit the property. Board will consider application after forester has visited property.
    - Outstanding application for thinning project north of Custer: application from lessee, not landowner:
      - Bordelon made contact with landowner about providing written permission for lessee to move forward with thinning work. Landowner agreed, but still has not sent approval. Board will not consider application until written permission from landowner is received.
    - Mike is expecting a landowner application for 5 acres in the Argyle area. Property has been visited by Micheal Bordelon. Landowner said application was in the mail – will consider at next board meeting.
  - Board discussed whether to apply for new thinning grant. Grant options are the Conservation Commission grant and/or the BIL Forest Health grant. Motion by Greg to apply for Forest Health grant once they begin accepting applications, and then apply for Commission grant in the fall. Tamarah seconded, motion carried.
- Board briefly discussed whether cost-share rates should be reduced if landowner does the work versus hiring a contractor. Mike will speak with SD DANR-RCF about concerns and see if State has recommendations.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - SD Grassland Initiative partner meeting in Wall, Jan. 16
    - Mike called-in to meeting, provided input on grassland decline.
  - 2023 Annual Report, 2023 Financial Report (balance sheet, profit/loss statement) were submitted to State (SD DANR-RCF).
  - Attended SD Soil Health Conference in Rapid City, Jan. 23-24

- Updated County Commissioners on the District's 2023 activities/accomplishments at the Jan. 24 Commission meeting.
- Black Hills Stock Show (Jan. 26 – Feb. 2):
  - Helped staff SDACD/NRCS/FSA booth on Monday, Jan. 29
  - Helped staff Weed & Pest booth on Thursday, Feb. 1
- Attended Bats of the Black Hills Workshop, Jan. 31
- Called-in to SD Conservation Commission meeting, Jan. 31 to speak on behalf of District for our request for use of 2024 docket for existing grant.
- New scholarship application received (2 received to date)
- Student contest information – no longer able to mail home-school students. School District does not keep student addresses anymore – now kept by the State.
- BHNF Forest Plan:
  - Cooperative agencies have not met since the last Board meeting. Next meeting scheduled on Feb. 14
- Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership (BHRFP):
  - No meeting in January, next meeting scheduled on Feb. 21
- SB 134:
  - Reviewed proposed bill in legislature.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 14 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Critique:

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:25 AM.