Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – April 11, 2024

The April 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 9:05 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, and Greg Neugebauer. Others in attendance were Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Patricia Weyrich (SD DANR-RCF), 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 March 14, 2024, was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - New staff forester has been hired in the Lead office. Starting date in May.
- SD GF&P: Ben Pucket –
  - Willow tour scheduled on June 17 in Willow Creek area on USFS property. Willow planting was done by USFS & GF&P. There is also a beaver dam analog structure in the area that we can see.
  - GF&P has several project applications for thinning for hardwood enhancement. Currently waiting on contractors to be lined up.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $16,465.09,
  - Grant Checking = $3,050.16,
  - Savings = $35, 872.43 ($11.40 interest earned in March).
- Deposits:
  - Thinning grant reimbursement from State – $1,559.25
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Bills:
    - Adrian Ranch, LLC, thinning cost-share – $1,559.25
  - Credit card purchases:
    - SD Grassland Coalition membership - $50
    - SD Soil Health Coalition membership - $25
    - Quality Inn - $97.03
    - Quicken – annual license - $74.90

    - Travel expenses:
        - Mileage – 428 miles @ $0.51/mile = $218.18
        - Meals – $25.00
    - County to be paid:
        - Annual insurance (SD Public Assurance Alliance) = $517.45
- Motion by Greg to approve financial report, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands Undesirable Plant Management Project – USFS welcoming comments until May 22.
- Announcement of SD Soil Health Coalition's West River Soil Health School, June 26-27 at Dry Creek Farm and Ranch, Caputa, SD.
- Letter from the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation.
- Sponsorship request from Codington CD for 40th annual Rangeland and 19th annual Soils Days.
- SD DANR letter in regards to Pacer Minerals, LLC – application to temporarily cease mining.

Old Business:

- Field tour of RAC grant project site:
    - Tour scheduled on Tuesday, April 23. Will meet at 9:00 AM at the row of mailboxes in the Highlands.
    - Todd Hoover and Ben Schumacher, Acting Hell Canyon District Ranger, will attend.
    - Custer Chronicle interested in writing an article on the project. Not able to attend in person but will meet with Mike after the fact to write the article.
- No-till Drill discussion:
    - Dave, Tamarah, Paul, and Mike met prior to today's meeting to discuss topic. A brief summary was provided to the board. The primary concern right now is quantifying the amount of potential use for a drill. Ben stated that he's aware of approximately 200 acres of food plots in the county where the landowners get their seeds from SD GF&P.
- District Workshops:
    - Soil Health Workshop:
        - Our grant proposal to Friends of NACD District Grants Program was not selected. Funds would have supported a workshop in Hermosa.
        - Pennington CD is planning on hosting a soil health workshop in the fall. It will probably be an all-day event with speakers. They may request support from us and other neighboring districts.
    - Fall Landowner Forestry workshop – Argyle area:
        - Patricia provided a summary of ideas, estimated costs, and potential location information for workshop. Preferred date is September 7, but no later than end of September due to hunting. Landowner on Argyle Rd has

agreed to host the workshop on his property; however, the property does not have any structures so a tent would be necessary. There will not be machinery present on the property because of bat restrictions.
        - Board preferred hosting event at Argyle Fire Hall if available and then group drives to property for site tour. This would save on the cost for a tent. Mike will contact Argyle Fire Chief to see if hall is available.
        - Dave reminded the Board that the Custer Arts Council would like to cosponsor the workshop.
    - Beaver dam analog (BDA) workshop – no update at this time.
- SD Locally Led – resource concerns
    - Prior to today's meeting, Mike emailed the board the 2021 list of the selected primary resource concerns for the county. No additional thoughts from the Board at this time.

New Business:

- Arbor Day:
    - Schedule for activities is as follows:
        - Tree seedling preparation: everyone meet at Mike's office at 9:00 AM, Monday, May 13 to wrap trees.
        - Seedling giveaway and tree planting at Custer Elementary: starts at 2:30, May 13 on school grounds. Josh Larson (Community Forester, SD DANR RCF) will assist.
        - Hermosa Elementary: Wednesday May 15 @ 2:30 PM. Josh will also assist on this date.
- Conservation thinning grants:
    - 2022-24 grant update:
        - Mike submitted a request for a grant extension with the State Conservation Commission. The Commission met yesterday and approved our request. New end date is June 30, 2025.
    - Forest Health grant update:
        - Request to use 2024 docket was approved.
        - New landowner applications with completed forest prescriptions and maps were summarized and presented for the Board to review. These were:
            - Mitch Paulsen, 35 acre prescription
            - Karen Papcke, 5.2 acre prescription
        - Motion by Greg to award Papcke with 5.2 acres and Paulsen with 5.0 acres, and save remaining grant dollars until other current applications on hold are ready for review; and also considering that SD DANR-RCF will not allow any work after April 30 until October due to the federal listing of the long-eared bat. Motion seconded by Oonagh, motion carried. Tamarah abstained.
        - No update from DANR on our new thinning grant application recently submitted.

- Scholarship application review:
    - Discussion was held at end of today's meeting.
    - Board members reviewed applications anonymously (Mike removed all identifiers from documents that were provided) and ranked them according to a grading rubric. After rankings were summarized, the Board was provided the names for each of the applicants for any further discussion.
    - Motion was made by Greg to award $1,000 scholarships to Drew Lehman and Abigail Studt, seconded by Paul, motion carried.
    - Mike will contact applicants to let them know whether or not they were selected.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
    - Mike attended the South Dakota Grasslands Summit "Connecting around South Dakota's most important resource: Our Grasslands", March 18-19 in Oacoma. About 290 were in attendance. Topics/sessions included Status of grasslands, Grassland economics & profitability, Economics of a changing landscape, Solutions for grassland conservation, and Goals & Supporting grasslands as partners. Mike provided input on how each partner could support the group (outreach, workshops).
    - Landowner Project Assistance Funding Virtual Workshop, March 27:
        - Mike spoke briefly on cost-share grants available through Custer CD and other conservation districts.
        - Other cost-share funding discussed included programs from NRCS, SD Wildland Fire, SD Game, Fish and Parks, and SD Family Forests Association.
    - BHNF Forest Plan Revision:
        - Working meeting held on March 26 in Sundance. Mike called in. April meeting was cancelled.
    - BHRFP:
        - Meeting on March 20. Mike called in but missed some of the meeting due to having to attend the County Commission meeting.
    - Newsletter:
        - Mike is planning on releasing the newsletter in May. He welcomes any topics of interest from the Board.
    - Willow tour:
        - Scheduled for June 17 at 10:00 AM.
    - SD Grassland Initiative – next quarterly partner call scheduled on April 22 at 12:00 PM.
    - Called-in to SD Conservation Commission meeting on April 10, asked for grant extension.
    - Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership (BHIPP):
        - Mike attended meeting in Rapid City yesterday, April 10.
    - State Noxious Weed Poster:
        - Mike shared the new South Dakota Noxious Weed poster that he created. Printing of the poster was paid for by the Association of South Dakota Weed & Pest Boards.

- Work schedule:
  - Commission approved change in schedule for supervisor. Change from salary to hourly at 32 hours per week, but can still work up to 40 hours per week.

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

Critique:

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.