Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – June 13, 2024

The June 13, 2024 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order at the Highlands Volunteer Fire Department, 25612 Dewey Rd, at 9:05 AM by Dave Thom. Thank you to the Highland VFD for hosting today's meeting.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Oonagh Wood, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, and Greg Neugebauer (call-in). Others in attendance were Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Ben Schumacher (USFS-BHNF), Anita Swanson (USFS-BHNF), Patricia Weyrich (call-in; 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 April 11, 2024 (Note: no official minutes from May 9 meeting due to lack of quorum), was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS – no representative present.
  - Mike was told that an offer was accepted for the vacant District Conservationist position in Rapid City, but starting date was not known.
  - Discussion on RCPP grants and lack of NRCS participation in recent months.
  - Fall River CIS project still has funding available and Brad Humbracht may seek approval to open up applications to all of Custer Couny. Mike will follow up with Brad for additional information.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon & Patricia Weyrich –
  - New staff forester in Lead started two weeks ago.
- US Forest Service, Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
  - Julie Wheeler, Fall River District Ranger (provided an email update prior to today's meeting):
    - District is understaffed and experiencing a hiring freeze. Hope to hear something soon on current opening.
    - Looks like a big sweet clover year.
- US Forest Service: Black Hills National Forest:
  - Ben Schumacher (Acting Hell Canyon District Ranger) and Anita Swanson (Assistant NEPA Planner):
    - Presented information on proposed Antelope Canyon project near Wind Cave NP. Discussed proposed treatments, both commercial and noncommercial (including prescribed fire), project area, and other details.
    - USFS welcomes comments and questions on the proposed project.

        - USFS is interested in bordering landowners that are also interested in prescribed fire. Oonagh will gather local landowners to meet with USFS.
- 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 are also beaver dam analog structures in the area that we can see.
    - Currently planning for a similar willow planting next year in a new project area – 10 thousand willows to be planted.
    - 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 = $16,218.16,
    - Grant Checking = $1,490.91,
    - Savings = $35,897.20 ($12.58 interest in April, $12.19 interest in May).
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
    - Bills:
        - Black Hills State University, scholarship for Drew Lehman – $1,000.00
    - Credit card purchases:
        - Plantsmyth – Arbor day trees – $314.33
        - Plastic bags for Arbor day trees – Lynn's Dakota Mart $7.84
- Discussion on SDACD annual contribution from the District. Motion by Paul to increase our annual contribution from $550 to $1,050. Seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
- Motion by Paul to approve financial report, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Invitation to Ruminating on the Range: Virtual Fencing in Practice, June 12 in Philip.
- Notice that the Izaak Walton League of America is sponsoring 2024 Wildlife Habitat Award, nominations due August 31.
- Training invitation – Seed Mix Design Class on Dakota seed mixes, August 26, in Rapid City. Hosted by SD GF&P.

Old Business:

- Arbor Day:
    - Tree plantings and tree seedling giveaway completed at the schools.
- Hills Area meeting:
    - Did not have time to review details of meeting. Dave, Paul, and Mike attended.
- District Workshops:
    - Fall Landowner Forestry workshop – Argyle area:
        - Patricia drafted an agenda and flyer for the workshop to be held on September 7 at the Argyle VFD firehall.
        - Input on flyer and potential speakers welcomed.
    - Beaver dam analog (BDA) workshop – no update at this time. Ben will reach out to Lori.

- No-till drill discussion:
    - Topic tabled until next meeting due to lack of time.

New Business:

- Conservation thinning grants:
    - 2022-24 grant update:
        - Webster project just completed – 37.7 acres. Work certified by Bordelon. Mike will begin working on reimbursement.
    - Forest Health grant:
        - One landowner withdrew his application for 10-20 acres. He is now going with SD Wildland Fire to get 80% cost share.
        - Second landowner application with completed forest prescription and map was summarized and presented for the Board to review. Application was by Otis Torkelson for 7 acres.
        - Motion by Paul to award Torkelson with cost-share funding for 7.0 acres of thinning, maximum of $6,300.00 in grant funds. Seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
        - New grant application was approved for $25,000, still waiting on final documentation from the State.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
    - Newsletter:
        - Release delayed to accommodate RAC project tour, which follows today's meeting. Newsletter will include an article on the project and tour.

Next meeting: Thursday, July 11 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Critique:

- Board expressed their gratitude to the Highlands VFD for allowing us to hold the meeting at their facility.
- Paul asked to add South Dakota Ag Land Trust to next month's agenda.

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:28 AM.