Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2024

The September 12, 2024 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Pine Room at the Custer County Courthouse Annex, at 9:00 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Others in attendance were Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Tom Miklos (SD GF&P), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Nate Andersen (SD DANR-Watershed Protection Program), Jordan Fostvedt (SD DANR-Watershed Protection Program), Julie Wheeler (call-in; USFS-BGNG), 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.

Request by Paul to add 'County residential acreage size limit' to New Business on today's agenda. Motion to approve modified agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from July 11, 2024, was made by Greg, seconded by Paul, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- SD GF&P: Ben Pucket –
  - Currently working on 3 hardwood release thinning projects, and will potentially have 1 more.
- SD DANR-Watershed Protection Program: Nate Andersen and Jordan Fostvedt –
  - Nate: working on the Riparian Buffer Initiative (RBI). Provided an overview of the program including benefits and contract details. They are working to get BDAs added. Can stack RBI with CRP to receive more funds. Our district can help spread the word about the program to increase participation in western South Dakota.
  - Jordan: discussed volunteer water quality monitoring program – for people with an interest in water bodies (lakes, creeks). Water sample collecting by volunteers across the state. If interested, more information available on state website.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - Mentioned SD Commission Grant deadline is approaching.
  - Discussed recent meeting he attended (Project Learning Tree) where they talked about Envirothon – a high school natural resource and environment education program.
- US Forest Service general: Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland –
  - Julie had to leave early for another meeting, but left a brief update:
    - The eastern part of the county is in Moderate Drought. So far all of our permittees have made it through without much issue. We have 8 pipeline

projects in the works across the district with a couple of them in Custer County. We'll be coordinating with the state over the next couple of weeks on prairie dog management for this fall.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $12,552.00,
  - Grant Checking = $1,490.91 (deposit 15,478.87),
  - Savings = $35,933.02 (July interest = $12.99; August interest = $11.81).
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Credit card purchases:
    - Subway – sandwiches for BDA workshop participants, $124.43 and $21.20
    - Lynn's Dakotamart – chips & water for BDA workshop participants, $33.85
    - Yesway – ice for BDA workshop, $13.78
  - Bills:
    - Registration for SDACD Convention – $185
    - Thinning grant cost-share payment to landowner – $15,478.87
- Requests for funds:
  - Custer Area Chamber of Commerce – 2025 membership, $95.00 ($10 increase)
  - Hills Area Endowment – in honor of Mitch Faulkner
  - Pennington Conservation District Conference sponsorship
- Mileage rate increase by State and County:
  - Mike noted increase from $0.51/mile to $0.66/mile. Will need to consider for 2025 budget.
- Motion by Greg to approve financial report, pay $95 Chamber of Commerce renewal, and donate $100 to Hills Area Endowment, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Healthcare for District employees
  - Petition the SDACD board to take up cause to allow employees to participate in the State healthcare pool. Board took no action.
- Pete Lien & Sons, Inc. – Notice of Conversion and Intent to Continue Operations
  - Board asked Mike to send standard response letter.
- Simon Contractors of SD, Inc. – Notice of Conversion to License and Intent to Continue Operation
  - Board asked Mike to send standard response letter.
- SDACD Convention materials – shared with the Board
- Pennington Conservation District Conference – September 25, Rapid City
- SD Grasslands Initiative, quarterly partner meeting, October 1, Rapid City
  - Mike will attend on behalf of the District
- Fall River Soil Health Conference – October 4, Hot Springs
- Addition from Patricia – Family Forests Association will host a Landowner Appreciation event on October 5, Rapid City.

Old Business:

- Beaver Dam Analog Workshop:
    - Mike stated about two dozen people attended and he received lots of positive feedback from the event. The Custer Chronicle published an article on the front page of the paper. Michael Beck, Public Affairs Specialist with NRCS, expressed interest in writing an article about the event. Mike shared pictures with him to include in the article.
    - Ben felt the event went well and there is interest of conducting a similar event in the future.
    - Some discussion on establishing priority watersheds, akin to our priority thinning areas. Mike will try to gather a group of folks to identify these watersheds.
- Fall Landowner Forestry workshop:
    - Workshop was cancelled, but will be rescheduled next spring. Can have active machinery on site if held before April 15.
- No-till Drill discussion:
    - Yvette Kirkman, Butte/Lawrence CDs, generously provided an annual break down of costs for their drill. The board expressed their appreciation for the information.
    - Mike noted another inquiry into renting a drill from us – a resident near Pringle.
    - Paul will speak with Kari in the FSA office in Hot Springs. Paul is gathering information. Will not have topic on the next meeting agenda unless there is new information to discuss.

New Business:

- Thinning grants:
    - State Commission grant:
        - No updates at this time. Remaining projects ongoing.
    - Forest Health grants:
        - 2023-24 grant:
            - Have $9,270.00 (~10.3 ac) available.
            - At July meeting, board discussed awarding Mitch Paulsen remainder of funds if he is still interested – his original request was for 35 acres, but he was only awarded funding for 5 acres. Mike spoke with Mitch and he is still interested in more funding.
        - 2024-25 grant:
            - Newly awarded funds are now available to use. Excluding administrative costs, there are $24,750 (~27.5 ac) available.
            - New landowner application received from Andrew Webster for 40 acres. He recently completed a 37.7 acre project.
        - After discussion, motion by Paul to combine remaining funds in both grants ($34,020.00 total) and award half to Mitch Paulsen and half to Andrew Webster ($17,010.00 each), seconded by Greg. Mike stated that he will need to check with Tony Seidl to make sure the funds can be

combined in this way. Motion carried after a vote with Tamarah abstaining. Applicants to be encouraged to get a Forest Stewardship Plan to improve chances of getting cost-share in future.

  - 2024 Fall Grant Round for SD Conservation Commission funding
    - Deadline is October 1. If board applies for a grant, Patricia encouraged us to consider a 3-year timeline and include administrative costs – can be up to 15%.
    - After discussion, motion by Paul to apply for $60,000 thinning grant and add 15% for administrative costs, seconded by Tamarah. Mike questioned whether we could ask for that much in administrative costs. Board agreed that amount for these costs may need to be modified. Mike will look into the grant guidelines and will work out the details. Vote taken, motion carried.
  - USFS RFP for cost-share funding for resilient forests – IRA funding
    - After discussion, board took no action.
- USDA SUSTAINS Act:
  - Paul discussed Act that was signed into law in 2023. The bill authorizes private sector donations and incentivizes private funding by awarding sponsorship of targeted conservation initiatives. Mike noted that NRCS is currently seeking public input on how to implement the Act with comments due by September 16.
- 2025 Burning Beetle Forum:
  - Dave – next forum is scheduled on January 16, 2025. Dave would like the District to support the event by providing cookies and coffee.
  - Motion by Paul to provide snacks and drinks for event, second by Tamarah, motion carried.
- County Residential Acreage Minimum:
  - Paul discussed recent County Commission meeting that discussed reducing minimum acreage from 1 acre to 0.5 acre. He expressed concern if this were to occur. Dave asked Paul to share any additional information he receives with the board.

Other Business:

- Mike shared a recent publication that features Oonagh and her ranch. The article is titled "A walk in the woods: Family forest owner perspectives" and is published in 'Woodland', a publication by the American Forest Foundation.
- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
  - SDACD Convention:
    - Mike will be attending conference in Watertown, September 15-17.
  - Mike has been very busy with spray season.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 10 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Critique:

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:59 AM.