Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – November 14, 2024

The November 14, 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, Paul Nettinga, Oonagh Wood and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Others in attendance were Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Paige Uher (NRCS), Mike Linde (Custer County Commission), Patricia Weyrich (call-in; SD DANR-RCF), Micheal Bordelon (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 Dave to add '2025 Goals' in New Business on today's agenda. Motion to approve modified agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from October 10, 2024, was made by Paul, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - No report.
- NRCS: Paige Uher –
  - Paige is the new District Conservationist in the Rapid City office.
  - Recent EQIP/CSP application deadline was November 1. Received 66 applications combined across Pennington and Custer Counties.
  - New Soil Conservationist starting at end of December. Will be fully staffed at that point.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - District awarded new thinning grant – will discuss in more detail later in the meeting.
- SD GF&P: Ben Pucket –
  - Recent interest in aspen exclosure grant has illustrated need to update prices to reflect current prices.
  - GF&P meeting December 10-12 in Chamberlain. Will go over cost-share programs. Let Ben know if have any suggestions on current programs.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $12,229.76 ($280 deposit for Leadership cost-share),
  - Grant Checking = $1,490.91,
  - Savings = $35, 957.44 (October interest = $12.21).

- Bills to pay and/or approve:
    - Credit card purchases:
        - None
    - Bills:
        - NACD annual dues. Motion by Oonagh to pay $350.00, second by Paul, motion carried.
- Motion by Paul to approve financial report, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Invitation to Mountain Pine Beetle Forest Health Workshop, November 13, 12-1 PM, virtual meeting.
- Invitation to Black Hills Riparian Health and Available Programs, November 15, Outdoor Campus, 1-2 PM Rapid City, hybrid meeting.
- Weston Co NRD rain barrel inquiry:
    - Weston Co NRD interested if any of the Hills Area districts want to purchase rain barrels. Cost would be $57.50 per 55-gallon rain barrel, not including freight.
    - Board is interested in pursuing, gathering more information (deadline, gauging interest).

Old Business:

- Hills Area Legislative Forum:
    - Forum held October 23 in Rapid City. Topics discussed were IM-28, forestry management, watershed protection, solar energy, and primary roles of the area Conservation Districts.
    - Political candidates in attendance included Representative Mike Derby, Representative-Elect Heather Baxter, Senator-Elect John Carley, and Representative candidate Susan Scheirbeck. Others in attendance included representatives from SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, NRCS, SDACD, SD Grasslands Initiative, SD Conservation Commission, and Pennington County.
- 2025 Arbor Day tree order:
    - Since Black Hills spruce is not available, Mike suggested going with 100 Colorado blue spruce. Mike did confer with Josh Larson about choice and he concurred it should do well in the area. Consensus from the Board was go with blue spruce.
- Review of the District's thinning program and Partner meeting:
    - Mike reaching out to partners with potential meeting dates in early December to discuss past work, current/future projects, and reassessing priority areas. Partners to invite include SD Wildland Fire, NRCS, SD DANR-RCF, SD GF&P, USFS, County Planning, and County EMS.

New Business:

- Thinning grants:
    - 2024 fall grant round application:

        - Application was approved for $61,200: $60K for thinning cost-share and $1.2K for administrative costs. Grant should be active in January.
    - State Commission grant:
        - Bordelon provided an update on ongoing projects.
    - Forest Health grants:
        - Tony Seidl sent begin work letter to landowners. No other updates.
- 2025 meeting pay/mileage:
    - Board discussed whether to follow State's increase in mileage pay to $0.66/mile. Motion by Paul to increase mileage payments in 2025 to $0.66/mile, second by Oonagh, motion carried.
    - Meeting pay for 2025 was discussed. Board asked Mike to meet with Oonagh and look at feasibility of increase to $50 per meeting. They will also work on 2025 draft budget. Will present budget at the December meeting.
- Landowner forestry workshop:
    - Patricia proposed March 14 as workshop date with CCCD as a co-sponsor. She has reached out to SDFFA to request support in purchasing sandwiches for lunch. Will try to make event into a combination classroom and field tour workshop.
    - Board asked if later dates were possible. If the workshop is to include a field tour with working machinery, then latest dates would be late March or early April. Patricia will see if March 28 will work, with April 4 as backup weather day.
- 2025 goals:
    - Dave asked Board to think about conservation needs for discussion at January Board meeting. Examples could be healthy riparian areas and watersheds, development in the county, pollinators.

Other Business:

- Miscellaneous office manager updates:
    - Supervisor elections:
        - No other candidates ran against Dave, Paul, and Oonagh during past election so they will begin new four-year terms starting January 1.
    - Lindsay Mader is resigning from Pennington CD at end of year. Mike was asked to take over her role as Hills Area representative on SDACDE Board of Directors beginning in 2025.
    - Patricia asked Mike to be a speaker during 2025 Landowner Project Assistance Virtual Workshop on Feb. 12.
    - Dakota Conservation Network:
        - Mike created entry for the District's forestry program, waiting on administrative approval for it to go live on the website: http://www.conservesd.org/.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 12 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Public Comment:

- Dave mentioned the upcoming Burning Beetle Learning Event in January. District will co-sponsor the event. Planning committee is meeting this afternoon to work on the agenda.

Critique:

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:34 AM.