Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – February 13, 2025

The February 13, 2025 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:00 AM by Paul Nettinga.

Board members in attendance were Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Oonagh Wood, and Greg Neugebauer. Others in attendance were Paige Uher (NRCS), Jared (NRCS Pathways), Julie Wheeler (USFS, Buffalo Gap NG), Matt Lucas (USFS, Buffalo Gap NG), Mike Linde (Custer County Commission), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Logan Brown (SD Wildland Fire), Lane Ostenson (SD Wildland Fire), Keri Cochran (4-H / SDSU Ext.), Terri Kester (County Planning), 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 agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from January 9, 2025, was made by Oonagh, seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Nothing to report.
- NRCS: Paige Uher –
  - Pennington CD has hired a new District Manager, will be starting soon.
  - Jared is new Pathways intern.
  - All IRA funding frozen at this time.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - Nothing to report. Will contact Tony Seidl about the status of BIL funded grants.
- US Forest Service general: Julie Wheeler, USFS Buffalo Gap National Grassland –
  - Hiring freeze in place and teleworkers told to return to office, but the latter did not affect them directly.
  - Continuing Resolution ends in March.
  - Pipeline and fencing projects moving forward.
  - Julie introduced Matt Lucas who also works for BGNG
  - Delay in new plan revision scheduled for the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands due to staff shortages and hiring freeze.
- 4H/SDSU Extension, Custer County: Keri Cochran –
  - Keri was introduced to the group.
  - Board would like to have a closer relationship with 4H/Ext.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $16,335.65, Grant Checking = $30,595.91,
  - Savings = $35,993.70 (January interest = $12.22).
- Deposits:
  - Cost-share reimbursements - $8,750.00, $20,355.00
  - County appropriation - $9,000.00
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Credit card:
    - Lynn's Dakotamart – coffee and cookies for Burning Beetle Learning Event - $39.56 & $10.28
  - Checks:
    - Cost-share payment to Rasmussen - $8,750.00
    - Cost-share payment to Papcke - $4,245.00
    - Cost-share payment to Webster - $16,110.00
    - SDACD dues - $1,100 request, increase of $100 from 2024
      - Will table SDACD dues until March meeting.
    - SDACDE dues - $50
    - Leadership registration, early-bird rate - $125
  - Rain barrels:
    - $57.50 + freight (their estimate is $15-20 per item)
    - Oonagh will speak with garden club to see if they are interested in any.
    - Will readdress rain barrels at March meeting.
  - Will wait until March meeting for Willow Project sponsorship
- Motion by Oonagh to approve financial report as presented and pay bills except those tabled until March, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
  - 46th Annual Ranchers Workshop, Jan. 15, in White River
  - Grazing Management Workshop. Feb 4-6. Winner
  - A Day at the Stock Show: Financial Assistance Opportunities for Women in Agriculture. Feb 5. Rapid City
  - 2025 Upper Midwest Urban and Rural Ag Innovation Conference – Feb. 6-7, in Oacoma
  - Grassland Management School. Feb 11-12 in Chamberlain
  - webinar – "South Dakota Forest Owner - Available Project Assistance"
  - Winter Grazing Workshop. Feb 19 in Redfield
  - Black Hills Area Botany & Ecology Workshop (BHAEBW), March 7, Outdoor Campus in Rapid City
  - Dakotas Society of American Forester's (DSAF) Annual Spring Conference, May 6-7, in Rapid City & BH Experimental Forest.
- SD DANR – Arbor Day Calendars and 2024 pocket planners
- SDACD legislative updates from Angela Ehlers
- SDFFA awarded $5M to support landowner forest resiliency work

- Delay in Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands Land Management Plan Revision due to staff shortages

Old Business:

- Burning beetle learning event:
  - Event went well. There were approximately 45 attendees.
- Planning Commission review packet:
  - No comments were made on the packet, but the Board appreciated Terri including them in the review process.
- 2025 Annual Work Plan:
  - No additional comments/edits were made. Mike will submit to the State.
- Landowner forestry meeting:
  - Scheduled at 10:30 AM Friday, March 28 at Argyle VFD Fire Hall.
  - SD FFA offered to pay up to $250 for lunch. Greg has not heard back from caterer but cost is probably too high. Oonagh will talk to Custer Deli to see how much they would charge.
  - Speakers confirmed are:
    - Tony Seidl (SD DANR), John Haskvitz (SD Wildland Fire), Brad Humbracht (NRCS), Bill Coburn (SD FFA).
    - No USFS representative at this time due to restrictions on public speaking events.
  - Still not certain if a field tour is possible due to lack of active machinery by that date. Patricia is working on it.
  - Prior to today's meeting there was some discussion of combining our workshop with another forestry management tour in the area; however, the organizers of that tour would like to wait until green-up. Board did not want to delay workshop again so will not try to combine events.

New Business:

- Promoting Firewise Communities:
  - Discussion on trying to get more road districts / communities to strive for "Firewise Community" designations.
  - Logan Brown and Lane Ostenson with SD Wildland Fire discussed process for communities to become Firewise and process for maintaining that designation. Currently only 8 communities in the Black Hills with this designation. They have tried mailings in the past to encourage more participation, but had little success. Logan emphasized importance of having someone within the community who is the "spark plug" to get things done.
  - Mike will work with Logan on a new mailing to the 60+ road districts in the county. Mike will draft letter and Logan will add 1-2 sheets of information.
  - Lane noted there may be people from existing communities that could encourage/help others.
  - Board asked Mike to include Firewise information in the next district newsletter.

- Thinning grants:
    - Forest Health grants:
        - 2023 grant:
            - Paulsen 5 acres completed. Start working on rest.
            - Torkelson has a contractor, but has not started work. No timeline yet.
        - 2024 grant:
            - No updates.
    - State Commission grants:
        - 2022-2025 grant:
            - Reyelts project has not started. Contractor said they will start in April.
            - Weimer completed 3 acres. Will likely seek reimbursement for those acres. May be able to complete some more, but not all 3.3 acres remaining.
            - Webster working on 17 acres Board awarded to him in January.
        - 2025-2027 grant:
            - New landowner application for Board consideration – Denise Swartz, 5.8 acres in the Argyle area.
                - Discussion about plan by landowner to use some larger trees for firewood and reseeding after disturbance (e.g., pile burning). Micheal did not have an issue with their plan. Board recommends reseeding with natives.
                - Motion by Greg to approve application, second by Tamarah, motion carried. Mike will relay message that the Board prefers that reseeding occur using native plants.
            - Mike will advertise grant in the paper.

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - BHNF:
        - Plan Revision:
            - Coop. Agency meeting on 2/12.
            - Areas under consideration for Wilderness/Scenic Rivers. Commissioners will likely pass a resolution opposing any new wilderness and/or scenic rivers in the county.
            - LiDAR data still being processed but field verification data have been released to the public.
        - New ranger for Hell Canyon Ranger District is Todd Butler, was Admin. Officer in Supervisor's Office.
    - SDACDE Executive Board meetings – Jan. 17 & Feb. 4.
        - Planning for Leadership – finding speakers and sponsors

- Annual reports were submitted to State (Activities, Financial)
- Financial report and annual activities report submitted to County
- Partner vegetation treatment map:
  - Still waiting on GIS files from a couple partners
- Student contests:
  - No entries in speech, creative writing, or poster contests
  - No scholarship applications received, deadline is 3/31.
- Mike will be at the Weed & Pest Conference next week in Huron

Next meeting: Thursday, March 13 @ 9:00 AM – Commissioner's Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Public Comment:

- None

Critique:

- Discussion on booth at upcoming Custer Trade Show, will wait until next year.
- Think about booth at County Fair this year.

Adjournment: Regular meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM.