Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – April 10, 2025

The April 10, 2025 meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:10 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Oonagh Wood, and Greg Neugebauer. Others in attendance were Paige Uher (NRCS), Micheal Bordelon (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.

Dave asked to move the scholarship review to after public comment and in executive session.

Motion to approve revised agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from March 13, 2025, was made by Paul, seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS: Paige Uher –
  - One pre-approved contract in Pennington Co.
  - Pushing technical assistance work within agency – including forestry management. Conducting more field visits.
  - Some probational employees are not coming back.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - Nothing new to report.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $14,783.23 ($100 endowment check still not cashed), Grant Checking = $1,490.91,
  - Savings = $36,016.97 (March interest = $12.23).
- Deposits:
  - $250 from SD Family Forests Association for lunch sponsorship at workshop
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Credit card expenses:
    - Quicken: annual license renewal - $74.90
    - Lynn's Dakotamart: bottled water & cookies for workshop - $20.55
    - Custer Deli - $48.93, additional sandwiches for workshop
  - Checks:
    - Custer Deli - $477.58, sandwiches for workshop

        - Southern Hills Publishing - $56.00, grant ad
        - SD Grassland Coalition - $50.00, annual membership
        - SD Soil Health Coalition - $25.00, annual membership
- Rain barrels: will hold off on final sale price until next meeting.
- Mike reported that office file cabinet broke.
- Motion by Oonagh to approve account balances, bills, and for Mike to purchase new file cabinet, second by Paul, motion carried.

New Business:

- Thinning grants:
    - Forest Health grants:
        - BIL funding still frozen.
    - State Commission grants:
        - 2022-2025 grant:
            - Reyelts - project re-flagged by Micheal. Baker starting soon.
        - 2025-2027 grant:
            - New landowner applications for Board consideration –
                - Jeff Green, 16.3 acres, NW of Custer off.
                - JoAnne Stratton (6.3 acres), Elk Mountain area.
                - Board review applications and prescriptions. Motion by Paul to approve both applications, second by Tamarah, motion carried
            - New landowner application received:
                - One other application received (10-12 ac), and two other potential applications waiting on.
- Arbor Day:
    - Custer Elementary – planning for Monday May 12 @ 2:30
    - Hermosa Elementary – planning Wednesday May 14 @ 2:30
    - Tree seedling preparation –with meet May 12 @ 9:00 at shop. Mike will send reminder to Board.
- Review scholarship applications:
    - Moved to Executive Session at end of meeting after 'Public Comment'.
- SD Wildlife Federation Camp sponsorship:
    - Motion by Tamarah to approve Samantha (Sami) Owens as recipient of sponsorship. Sami is a junior and active in 4-H for two years.

Old Business:

- Landowner forestry workshop in Argyle:
    - 70 registered attendees including speakers and board members. There were also 5 that did not register, but a few that registered weren't able to come.
    - Bill Coburn called in sick the day before so Patricia filled in for him as best she could on short notice.
    - Field tour at Rasmussen property went well.
    - Dave emailed the Board after the event with a critique of the workshop.
    - Workshop made front page of the Custer Chronicle.

- Board discussed offering a donation to Argyle VFD for hosting event and also Library Foundation for projector and facility use for Beetle Burning Learning Event. Motion by Greg to approve $200 donation to Argyle VFD and $100 donation to Library Foundation, second by Paul, motion carried.

- SDFFA grant application for Forest Stewardship Plans:
  - SD Conservation Commission awarded $19,000 to Pennington CD for the Forest Stewardship Plan Grant. They had asked for a waiver to begin project on May 1, but was denied. Project will start July 1.
  - Joint Powers Agreement was approved by Pennington CD board at last meeting. Eva is filing a copy with State.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
  - Dr. Ball virtual workshop, "What to Expect This Spring Tree Pest and Problem Forecast for 2025", April 9
  - 20th Annual Soil Days & 41st Annual Rangeland Days, June 10-11, in Belle Fourche / and sponsorship request letter
  - Reminder of the Weston County NRD workshop – registration required:
    - "Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Workshop", May 20 & 21 (Intersection of Hwy 450 and Hwy 116). Will leave from USDA Service Center in Newcastle at 8:00 AM each day.
    - Plus 3 days of speakers starting at 8:30 each day. Talks will be recorded for later viewing. No cost.
      - April 16: Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration 101
      - April 30: Project Planning and Partnerships
      - May 14: Project Implementation and Collaboration
- Draft agenda for the Hills Area Meeting, June 9 in Rapid City
- Updates from NACD on recent Executive Actions
- Oonagh mentioned a letter she received from USFS Black Hills NF about the proposed FRASS project near Pringle. The District had not received a similar letter. No comment from the Board at this time.

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
  - Firewise Communities: outreach to road districts:
    - Logan and Mike have heard from 5 districts about interest in Wildland Fire meeting with them. They are working out a schedule to meet – everyone meeting during same week.
    - 4 district letters came back undeliverable. Working with Auditor's office on getting current addresses.
  - Planning Commission review packet - Nothing applicable this month
  - USFS BH National Forest:
    - Plan Revision:
      - March & April Coop. Agency meetings were cancelled
      - Effects of funding/staffing on plan revision not known

        - County Commission approved resolution opposing Wilderness/Scenic Rivers
    - Student Contests:
        - No entries for poster/speech/writing contests. Keri Cochran, 4-H/Extension offered to help with student participation for next year.
    - Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership meeting held March 27 in Rapid:
        - USFS funding for invasive plant management is a serious issue. A resolution going to county commissioners across Black Hills in coming weeks.
        - Ventenata in Harding County more expansive than originally known – several hundred acres infested.
        - Upcoming webinar "Ventenata: Small Grass, Big Problem", April 24 at 10:00 AM.
    - Black Hills Resillient Forest Partnership:
        - Meeting on 3/19, attended virtually for 1st hour. Discussion on recent news story about forestry work near Deerfield Lake "Simon Restoration Project". Mike had not seen the news video and was unfamiliar with it so did not provide comments. News story was apparently critical of the forestry project. Some in the partnership were going to draft a news release in response to the initial story and would invite media to attend field trip to site.
    - Weed & Pest activities:
        - Working on a new county weed booklet for publication
        - Near complete with the new SD Weed ID pamphlet/booklet
        - Near complete with spring newsletter

Public Comment:

- Oonagh mentioned a recent visit to the Meeker Ranch and checked on recent BDA installs. Looks like they are working.
- Paul, Micheal, and Oonagh will work on willow project.

Executive Session:

- Motion by Paul to enter Executive Session to review scholarship applications, second by Tamarah, motion carried. Board entered Executive Session at 10:15 to review scholarship applications.
- Board came out of Executive Session at 10:35. Motion by Greg to award Brylee Grill with the $1,000 scholarship, seconded by Paul, motion carried. Out of seven well qualified applicants, the board approved Brylee as the winner. Note: prior to the review process, Mike removed names, photos, contact information, and other identifiers from the applications so that they were anonymous during the Board review.

Critique:

- None

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

Adjournment: Motion by Paul to adjourn at 10:42 AM, second by Greg, motion carried.