Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2025

The May 8, 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 Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, Oonagh Wood, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Others in attendance were Paige Uher (NRCS), Tate Lantz (NRCS), Ben Pucket (SD Game, Fish & Parks), 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 the agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from April 10, 2025, was made by Greg, seconded by Paul, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS:
  - Tate Lantz –
    - Agency has lost many employees, but still operating business as usual.
  - Paige Uher –
    - No preapproved applications in Custer County.
    - National Wild Turkey Federation - Hunting Heritage Super Fund:
      - Funds could be used for a drill purchase or habitat enhancements (e.g., thinning).
      - Ben could help if want to apply. Need defined project area and what goals are. Also need a funding match. Also stated that hardwood enhancement dollars could be used for thinning pines along riparian areas.
      - Finding a funding match can be difficult.
- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket –
  - New grant of $205,000 for water improvement projects on range in West River. Goal is to improve grazing distribution on rangeland. Grant is tied to federal funding. Eastern Custer County could qualify. Notifying landowners through newsletters they send out, email distribution list, and also work with NRCS.
  - Hardwood enhancement project: 5 projects completed this spring and another 15 projects lined up

Financial Report:

- Account balances:

- Main Checking = $13,705.85, Grant Checking = $1,488.91,
- Savings = $36,028.81 (April interest = $11.84).

- Deposits:
  - None
- Bills to pay and/or approve:
  - Credit card expenses:
    - UpCycle Products, Inc.: rain barrels - $850.00
  - Checks:
    - SD Game, Fish & Parks - $2,000.00, contribution to the Meeker Project: willow planting project at old Meeker Ranch.
- Rain barrels:
  - Discussion on final price for barrels. Motion by Tamarah to set sale price at $85.00, seconded by Paul, motion carried.
- Motion by Greg to approve account balances and bills, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

New Business:

- Thinning grants:
  - Forest Health grants:
    - Received letter from Tony Seidl that BIL funding has been released as of April 30. Activities may resume. Mike tried reaching out to landowner, but unsuccessful.
  - State Commission grants:
    - 2022-2025 grant:
      - Reyelts – project was re-flagged by Micheal at landowner's request. Contractor acted like they were starting soon but then started bringing out other contractors to offer quotes. He said those were too expensive so he is backing out of the project. Funds will have to be returned to the State Conservation Commission.
      - Webster project is completed (16.9 ac). Reimbursement at 50% would = $10,562.50 ($625/ac). Mike requested permission to pay that rate and to increase payment from previously completed acres, which was paid at only 41% cost-share. Motion by Paul to approve payment rate for recently completed acres and to approve increasing payment of past project to equal a total of 50% cost-share. Second by Tamarah, motion carried.
    - 2025-2027 grant:
      - New landowner applications for Board consideration –
        - Donald Oyler, 11.6 ac project, in the Argyle area
        - Ehab Youssef, 13.2 ac project, ESE of Custer
        - Board review applications and prescriptions. Motion by Tamarah to approve both applications, second by Paul, motion carried
      - New landowner application received:

        - One other application received (acreage unknown). Micheal is planning on visiting property soon.
    - Board asked Mike to contact Micheal about modifying his forest prescriptions so that they include verbiage about seeding after thinning. Also ask about revisiting property post completion and whether snag trees are kept or cut.
  - Willow Project participation:
    - June 6 & 7 at the Meeker Ranch. About 6,000-8,000 willows will be planted. Camp Bob Marshall kids will be helping. Dave not able to attend, Tamarah is a possibility.
    - Ben will try to get more information about video details.
  - Hills Area Meeting, June 9:
    - Paul will plan on attending

Old Business:

- Arbor Day events:
  - Custer Elementary is planned for Monday, May 12 at 2:30
  - Hermosa Elementary planned for Wednesday, May 14 at 2:30
  - Tree seedling preparation – meet May 12 at 9:00 at the Weed & Pest office. Mike will send reminder to Board.
  - One larger tree to be planted at each school.
  - Tamarah will bring seedlings to Elk Mountain School

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
  - Dakotas Society of American Forester's (DSAF) Annual Spring Conference – rescheduled to Sept. 3 & 4.
  - Masticated Wood & Soil workshop, May 9
  - EAB and Pine Wilt Management webinar, May 7
  - 2025 NACD Northern Plains Region meeting June 23-25, Brookings
- USFS-BHNF, Availability of Frass Forest Health Draft Environmental Assessment: notification of availability to comment
- FOIA request from Trileaf, Schaumburg, IL. Phase 1 ESA at Mud Springs Road.
- SDACD Board of Directors agenda for April 23 meeting
- Updates from NACD on recent Executive Actions
- Thank you card from Custer County Library Foundation
- Letter from SD DANR RCF that BIL funding released

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
  - Newsletter:
    - Draft was provided to the Board for comment
  - Scholarship:
    - Brylee was notified as the recipient, non-recipients notified as well
  - SD Wildlife Federation Camp sponsorship:

        - Sami Owens was notified and the check was received
    - Firewise Communities - outreach to road districts:
        - Wildland Fire has a few meetings with road districts lined up this week.
        - New contact from Lucky Strike R. D. Logan is scheduling a meeting with them.
        - Letter also received from Beaver Valley R. D.
    - Weed & Pest activities:
        - Mike updated status of the County weed booklet, State weed ID pamphlet/booklet, and newsletter
        - The County Commission approved a resolution for invasive plant management. funding on the Black Hills National Forest.

Public Comment:

- None.

Critique:

- None

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

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM.