Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2025

The October 9, 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, Oonagh Wood, Tamarah Caster, and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Others in attendance were Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Ben Pucket (SD GF&P), Mike Linde (Custer County Commission), 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.

Approve Agenda/Minutes:

Mike asked to move "Discussion on minimum acreage for development" from Old Business to the first item of New Business due to Kester's schedule availability.

Motion to approve today's modified agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from September 11, 2025, was made by Paul, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Nothing new to report.
- SD DANR RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - Nothing new to report. Will have some information to share while reviewing current thinning grants.
- SD GF&P: Ben Pucket –
  - Six hardwood enhancement projects started. Few more projects expected to start in a few weeks.
  - Currently have five projects to fence off aspen.
  - GF&P staff meeting in December to discuss landowner programs and cost-share rates. Let Ben know if have suggestions/concerns.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $11,338.48, Grant Checking = $1,990.91,
  - Savings = $34,086.30 (September interest = $11.95).
- Deposits:
  - $359.00 – reimbursement for SDACDE Leadership Conference costs.

- Bills to pay/approve:
    - Chamber of Commerce – 2026 membership, $105.00
    - NACD annual dues – $350 was previously set aside for this year
    - Thinning cost-share reimbursement to J. Green – $11,410.00
    - SDACD Convention travel costs for Mike:
        - Hotel = $183.98; fuel = $144.27 ($77.17 + $67.10); meals = $19; total = $347.25
        - Cost-share expected to cover majority of convention costs, but do not know the amount yet.
- Motion by Tamarah to approve account balances and bills, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

New Business:

- Discuss minimum acreage for development in the county:
    - Paul discussed concern about sewage issues with decreasing minimum acreage for development.
    - Linde stated that the Commission would appreciate input from the Board. Most public input has been against decreasing the minimum acreage.
    - Terri Kester stated that the minimum acreage requirement originates from County Ordinance #2. That ordinance will be reviewed in November.
        - Terri noted that if a developer installs a central sewer and water system in a development, then there is not much to prevent the developer from building lots smaller than 1 acre.
        - There is consideration of a policy for 0.5 acre lots, revising to 2 acres, and allowing 2 houses on one acre.
        - Draft of ordinance will be provided to the Commission for review and input on October 22. Will then probably start discussion in November.
    - Dave stated the primary concerns relevant to the discussion: water quality, water quantity, and fire preparedness/suppression.
    - Terri will email a draft of the ordinance to Mike and will keep him in the loop for the Commission review.
    - Paul would like to provide a letter to the Commission within the next month addressing Ordinance #2.
    - Board's plan is to provide comments on ordinance by end of November.
- Potential fire mitigation proposal for funding through NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):
    - Discussion tabled because of NRCS absence due to federal government shutdown.
- Update on thinning grants:
    - Forest Health grants: No updates.
    - 2025-2027 State Commission grant:
        - Updates from Micheal and Mike:
            - Green project completed. Reimbursement submitted. Landowner is owed $11,410.00.
            - Stratton project in progress.
            - Swartz project ~80% complete.

- Wahle project should start soon. Micheal just flagged the property.
- Oyler project moving along.
- Unknown status of Youssef project.
- Couple other landowners interested in future funding.

- 2026 Arbor Day tree order:
  - Tabled until next meeting due to lack of 2026 pricing from other districts.

Old Business:

- Fall Grant application for SD Conservation Commission cost-share funding:
  - Water development grant application delayed due to discrepancies between current docket prices versus payments made by NRCS and GF&P for similar practices.
  - Mike did a review of docket rates for all conservation practices – looking at year of last update and comparing NRCS/GF&P prices when possible. Many of the practice payment rates had not been updated in 10 to 20 years and were significantly lower than comparable rates through NRCS/GF&P.
  - Board asked Mike to share docket evaluation to the SD Conservation Commission and encourage them to review the docket rates.
- Revitalize Local Working Groups with NRCS:
  - Tabled until November meeting.
- 2026 budget request:
  - Mike reviewed the 2026 budget approved by the County Commission. The district will receive $9,000 for operating expenses, $900 for insurance, $500 for supplies, and ¼ of Mike's salary.
- SD challenge conservation districts to recognize America's 250th anniversary.
  - No nominations at this time. Angela had requested that each district nominate two producers.
  - Board asked Mike to put topic on the November agenda, and to email Ben Micheal, Paige Uher, and Brad Humbracht and ask for potential nominees. Kari Sandes and Patricia Weyrich might also have suggestions.
  - Try to have names by November meeting. Angela's due date is December 31.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
  - 2025 South Dakota Grassland Coalition Annual Conference, December 4-5, 2025 in Box Elder.
    - Mike expressed interest in going. Attendance is free due to our membership. Motion by Paul for Mike and any board member to attend. Second by Oonagh, motion carried.
  - DANR Forest Health Workshop: Herbicide Management for Windbreaks and Landscapes, Oct. 22 at noon. Mike will email information to the board.
- Updates from NACD on recent Executive Actions:
  - Dave discussed recent update that included a draft letter to Congressional representatives concerning the government shutdown. Dave suggested using the

draft and sending a letter to the offices of Thune, Rounds, and Johnson. Board concurred. Dave will work with Mike on the letter.

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
  - SDACD State Convention highlights:
    - Mike participated in the Employee Board of Directors meeting, Employee meeting, and the banquet. He also attended the SD Conservation Commission meeting, Big Sioux Nursery meeting, sessions on 'Economics of Conservation' and 'USGS LandSat guiding management,' a USDA Leadership forum with Ben Ready (representative for Thune), Jennifer Hieb (rep. for Rounds), FSA (Roger Chase), and NRCS (Tony Sunseri).
    - He also attended a tour of demonstration farm owned by Beadle CD –
      - They are currently growing corn with cover crops at 30" and 60" row spacings. Examining cover crop forage biomass and corn yields. Also examining herbicide residue effects on cover crops.
  - SDPAA Loss Control Survey meeting held on September 16:
    - Only recommendation was to acknowledge hotline available to the district for legal guidance, when necessary.
  - Joint Powers Agreement with Fall River Conservation District:
    - JPA is complete, Mike sent copies to the SD Legislative Research Council and SD Attorney General's office.
  - BHNF Plan Revision:
    - No meeting in September and October meeting was cancelled due to federal government shutdown.
  - BH Resilient Forest Partnership:
    - Late attending due to Commission meeting, but gave brief update on district activities.
  - County Planning IRC (Interagency Review Committee):
    - Nothing of concern identified in last batch received from Planning.
  - Update on County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) stakeholder meetings:
    - Mike attended September meeting. Provided brief update.
  - Weed & Pest
    - Field season for spraying is complete.

Public Comment:

- None.

Critique:

- Mike mentioned that the District will turn 85 this year. Suggested having a small birthday celebration with a cake. Board agreed that was a good idea. Mike will contact the

Chronicle to see if they would be interested in attending. Consider contacting Angela and invite her to attend.

Next meeting: Thursday, November 13, 9:00-11:00 AM, Commissioners Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:33 AM with a motion by Tamarah, second by Paul.