Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – February 12, 2026

The February 12, 2026, meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:02 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, Oonagh Wood, Tamarah Caster, Greg Neugebauer, and Stuart Adrian (advisor). Others in attendance were Paige Uher (NRCS), Jordan Leach (NRCS), Kari Sanders (FSA), Patricia Weyrich (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.

Approve Agenda/Minutes:

Motion to approve today's modified agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from January 8, 2026, was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS: Paige Uher & Jordan Leach –
  - Paige introduced Jordan who is serving on a detail as the Resource Unit Conservationist – Justin Boerboom's old position.
  - IRA contracts have been approved.
  - NRCS programs are undergoing new changes across the agency. There will be training for staff next week.
- FSA: Kari Sanders –
  - Drought monitor update – nearly all of Custer county is in D1 category (moderate drought). Kari will send Mike information for how people can submit "on the ground" reports, which can be used to refine the drought maps.
  - Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):
    - EFRP - funding made available for qualified landowners affected by the December windstorm.
    - Kari is only aware of one other time that program has been used.
    - Kari reviewed the EFRP step-by-step application process, requirements and exclusions of the program, cost-share rates (for trees and fence repair), and answered various questions from the board. The board appreciated Kari taking the time to attend the meeting and answer questions. Mike has been fielding several phone calls about the program, so information provided today will be very useful moving forward.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - Main Checking = $13,709.88 ($9,000.00 deposit), Grant Checking = $1,990.91,
  - Savings = $34,131.90 (January interest = $11.22).
- Formal review of District's 3-year financial records:
  - Review conducted by Christine Baker. Report was shared with the Board. No issues were found.
  - Question about cash in cash box ($130.00) – Board agreed to deposit cash in savings account – not necessary to keep cash on hand.
- Bills to pay/approve:
  - Credit card expenses:
    - Family Fare - $40.50, cookies for Burning Beetle Learning Event
    - Lynn's DakotaMart - $17.35, coffee/cookies for Burning Beetle Learning Event
  - Checks:
    - Christine Baker - $250, financial review
    - SDACD - $1,100 annual dues
    - SDACDE - $50, annual dues
    - SDACDE - $175, registration for Leadership Conference
- District investing in CDs:
  - Board discussed options for depositing funds into a CD. Board looked at interest rates for various terms offered by Black Hills Federal Credit Union and First Interstate Bank.
- Motion by Oonagh to approve account balances, credit card purchases, pay bills, approval of financial review, and to deposit $25,000 in a 12-month CD at Black Hills Federal Credit Union, second by Paul, motion carried.

Old Business:

- Revision of County Ordinance #2 - minimum acreage for development in the county and letter from the Board to the County Commission:
  - Draft revisions of the ordinance were shared with the Board. The current draft does not change the minimum acreage for development. Commission discussed topic after their Tuesday board meeting, but no changes were requested.
  - Board will send letter to the Commission stating that the current revision is suitable to the District. Paul will draft letter, send to Mike for revision. Mike will send letter to the rest of the board for comments.
- Burning beetle learning event:
  - Good turnout considering the weather, roughly 42-44 people attended.
  - Dave said the actual burning of the beetle may still happen – dependent on the weather cooperating.

New Business:

- Fire mitigation RCPP funding proposal (Regional Conservation Partnership Program):
  - Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership agreed during their January 29 meeting to be the lead partner pending review of the NFO once it is released. RCPP changes are expected and will not be known until the release.

    - Meeting held with Black Hills Energy, not sure if they would participate. They need to seek approval up the chain on their end.
- NRCS Unfunded Cooperative Agreement:
    - District's past agreement with NRCS expired on December 31. NRCS stated that changes are expected and there is a possibility of funding attached to new agreements for tasks. They are waiting to see what those changes will be. Board will table discussion until March meeting.
- 2026 Annual Work Plan:
    - Motion by Paul to carryover 2025 plan into 2026. Second by Oonagh, motion carried. Board will send any comments to Mike by next week.
- Update on thinning grants:
    - Forest Health grants:
        - Only one landowner left with work incomplete. State deadline to complete all work is March 31. Mike communicated this deadline to the landowner.
    - State Commission grant:
        - Previously awarded project of 13.2 acres awarded to Youssef. Mike discovered that after the District awarded cost-share to him, he decided to go with SD Wildland Fire for cost-share but did not inform us of the decision. His contractor is near completion of the project. However, Wildland Fire will only cost-share 10 acres of the project.
        - Mike asked if the Board wanted to cost-share the remaining 3.2 acres or save the funding for another project. Motion by Greg to table decision until March meeting to allow for additional landowner applications. Second by Oonagh, motion carried.
- Spring grant round – SD Conservation Commission:
    - Mike inquired whether the Board wanted to apply for a new grant in the upcoming grant round. He suggested against applying for a water development grant since the docket rates for those practices have not changed. Board's consensus is to not apply for water development funds.
    - Also discussion about applying for grant dollars for Forest Stewardship Plans and for thinning grants. Patricia stated need for cost-share for forest stewardship plans since SD FFA no longer has funding, and Pennington CD's grant is used up and they will not apply for additional funds.
    - Board expressed interest in applying for a thinning cost-share grant. After discussion, motion by Tamarah to apply for a $50,000 thinning grant. Second by Greg, motion carried.
- Reflections on 2025:
    - No discussion due to lack of time.
- County Commission briefing:
    - Dave and Mike provided an update at this week's commission meeting. Mike gave a slide presentation and Dave reviewed an annual summary report of the District's 2025 activities. Copies of the report were provided to each Commissioner.
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP):
    - Stakeholder meeting held Monday, February 2. Stakeholders were provided a draft plan for review. Follow-up stakeholder meeting scheduled for tomorrow at

10:00 am. Comments from stakeholders due by Feb. 15. Mike has reviewed the main document, while Dave has reviewed the four appendices.
    - Public comment period planned for Feb. 23 – Mar. 15.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
    - Succession Planning Workshop, February 13, 9:00 AM at Outdoor Campus, Rapid City.
    - SD Grasslands Summit, March 3-4 in Mitchell. A special session planned for those involved with conservation districts from 4:30-5:45 on Tuesday, March 3rd.
    - NRCS Forest Management Workshop, March 24 in Rapid City.
- USDA FSA Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance for December 18 windstorm.
- SD DANR-RCF packet on Supervisor elections:
    - Tamarah's and Greg's terms expire on Dec. 31. Both were given paperwork to review/complete if they are interested in running for a new term.
- USFS Black Hills NF – seeking comments on proposed exploratory drilling project (October Jinx Mineral Exploration). Company is Clean Nuclear Energy Corp based in Vancouver, BC, CA. They are looking for uranium. Public comment period is Feb.2-Mar.3.
- Legislative updates from Angela Ehlers (SDACD)
    - Note: HCR 6003 (not included in Angela's updates) mentions the work of local conservation districts in the Black Hills.
- Updates from NACD on recent Executive Actions
- Conservation District personalized clothing – Board asked for more information, may consider placing an order.
- SD DANR-RCF – 2026 pocket planners

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - BHNF Plan Revision –
        - Cooperative Agency Meeting on January 14 (but without USFS), this was the first Cooperative Agency meeting since last August.
        - Participated in meeting with the Vegetation Growth & Yield Working Group yesterday, February 11. Follow-up meetings are planned.
    - Review packet from the County Planning to the IRC (Interagency Review Committee) – nothing of concern.
    - SDACDE Board of Directors - 2 meetings since last board meeting:
        - Leadership Conference planning
        - NACD TA Grant application was submitted for new statewide position. If funded, person hired to position would assist district managers across the state as well as assist NRCS with various tasks.
    - Completed 2025 reports to the State (annual activities, financial)
    - Completed annual report to County Commissioners
    - Submitted 2025 entry to Conservation Connections (new name for Contour Lines)
    - Promoted student contests (speech, writing, poster):

        - Information sent out to schools. Keri Cochran also communicating with some teachers to encourage participation.
    - Mike will be at the State Weed & Pest Conference, Feb. 18-20

Public Comment:

- None.

Critique:

- None.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 12, 9:00-11:00 AM, Commissioners Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made by Paul, second by Oonagh. Meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.