Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – April 9, 2026

The April 9, 2026, meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:00 AM by Paul Nettinga.

Board members in attendance were Paul Nettinga, Tamarah Caster, and Greg Neugebauer. Others in attendance were Paige Uher (NRCS), Jordan Leach (NRCS), Micheal Bordelon (SD DANR-RCF), Kylie Hammett (National Wild Turkey Federation), Steve Esser (Custer Co. Emerg. Mgmt.), Mike Linde (Custer Co. Commission), 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 March 12, 2026, was made by Tamarah, seconded by Greg, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- NRCS: Paige Uher & Jordan Leach –
  - Paige:
    - EQIP approvals starting next week.
    - Attended producer round table in Wall, received feedback on practices.
    - Jordan's last day is next Friday, Val Riter will be new acting RUC.
  - Jordan – info. related to the Qury Fire:
    - USFS sent list of landowners that might be impacted by heavy rains. NRCS will survey those areas.
    - Potential for Emergency Forestry Restoration Program (EFRP) to be expanded to include burned timber.
    - Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) potential for damages to livestock fences and pipelines/tanks.
- National Wild Turkey Federation: Kylie Hammett –
  - Checking on completed EQIP projects and starting next round of EQIP. Mike asked about the recent loss of the forester position in Newcastle. Kylie said there were more than 20 foresters let go due to inability to establish new agreement between NWTF and NRCS.
- SD DANR-RCF: Micheal Bordelon –
  - Busy working on EFRP projects for FSA. About 400 landowners in the Hills involved in Custer, Fall River, and southern Pennington counties. He has covered more than 5,000 acres, with > 8,000 trees down and still lot of work left to do. A

60-day extension was granted for landowners that would still like to apply for cost-share funding. Deadline is May 25.
    - Pennington CD probably letting grants expire. Patricia wondered if potential for Custer CD to work with Pennington landowners. Mike stated that Joint Powers Agreement is in place; however, a grant modification would have to be requested through the SD Conservation Commission.
- County Commission: Mike Linde –
    - Nothing to report.
- Custer County Emergency Management: Steve Esser –
    - County Commissioners signed the new Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
    - Steve doing public outreach to various groups about fire related information.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
    - Main Checking = $13,634.53 ($26.25 deposit for virtual training Mike attended), Grant = $1,990.91, Savings = $34,284.42 (March interest = $12.02).
- Bills to pay/approve:
    - Credit card expenses:
        - Quicken = $81.15, annual software license
    - Checks:
        - None
- CD investments:
    - Account not active yet, still waiting on paperwork and signatures.
- Motion by Greg to approve account balances and bills, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Old Business:

- NRCS locally led training in Philip:
    - Mike provided a brief update, but topic was tabled to next meeting so that Dave and Oonagh can provide their thoughts on the meeting – since both attended the meeting.
    - Additional discussions to occur at Hills Area meeting
- Fire mitigation RCPP funding proposal:
    - Mike attended meeting on 3/26. Still waiting on the National Funding Opportunity (NFO) to be released. Could be any day or not until end of the year, nobody knows for sure. Will keep monitoring.

New Business:

- Public outreach opportunities related to Qury Fire:
    - Field trip
        - Potential to host bus tour on the 17th. Tour would include a couple stops within the burn area and have speakers from Wildland Fire and Black Hills National Forest to talk about fire behavior and fire mitigation.

YMCA has agreed to offer their bus for us to use. Motion by Greg to approve hosting bus tour, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.
    - BAER meeting - Burned Area Emergency Response interagency team
        - Request to host meeting. Waiting on details. Motion by Tamarah to host meeting, seconded by Greg, motion carried.
- Update on thinning grants:
    - Forest Health grants:
        - One project left. March 31 was deadline in for work to be completed. Micheal is scheduled to certify work on the 13th or 14th.
    - State Commission grant:
        - Wahle project complete (13.4 ac). Mike is waiting on final documentation and then will submit reimbursement request to State.
        - Youssef project – acres reserved for project to be reassigned to new applicants.
        - New application received – 4-5 acres near Lower French Creek Rd. Area burned, but most of problem trees survived. Micheal planning on visiting property soon.
- Arbor Day:
    - May 11 set for Custer, Josh Larson committed, tree wrapping that morning @ 9:00 AM.
- Conservation District personalized clothing:
    - Board tabled discussion until next meeting since Dave and Oonagh were not present.
- BHNF Plan Revision update and Species of Conservation Concern:
    - Mike provided an update on where things stand, and shared that he was asked by the County Commission to be the County representative for the Species of Conservation Concern Working Group.
- Scholarship applications review:
    - Tabled until the end of today's meeting.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
    - Hills Area meeting, June 8 in Rapid City.
    - SDGI 46.9 for the Grasslands Challenge, walk, hike, ride in grasslands covering 46.9 miles, which represents 46.9 million acres of grassland in SD 250 years ago. Complete by July 4.
- Updates from NACD on recent Executive Actions.
- Gunderson, Palmer, Nelson & Ashmore, LLP (re: Powertech water permit application) – Amended notice of hearing.
- NRCS OMB request for all Districts in the country to reply. Questions about aid provided to NRCS by the Districts and to report any funding received from NRCS.
- Caitlin Uthe – local support for LWG meetings, looking for part-time support for planning/facilitating LWGs (e.g., retired NRCS staff, former CD employees, other partners, etc.).
- 2026 Rangeland and Soil Days – sponsorship request.

- Aspen transplants for project work – Lori Kempton WY State Forestry, Scott with Woodland Trees.
- Grass Is Greener AgSpire program. Enrollment for perennial plantings 512 & 550 are open to producers. Includes any pasture or hay ground overseedings, or new hay and pasture establishment from crop ground.

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - SD Conservation Commission meeting, 4/30, Mike asked to participate to discuss needed changes to docket
    - Attended Forest Management Workshop, 3/24.
    - Attended Black Hills Invasive Plant Partnership, 3/18
    - Attended Black Hills Area Botany & Ecology Workshop, 3/13
    - SDACDE Board of Directors meeting:
        - Meetings on 3/27 & 4/7 to discuss Leadership Conference planning, and NRCS data call.

Public Comment:

- None.

Un-tabled New Business:

- Scholarship applications review:
    - Board reviewed their individual scores for each student. Scores were tallied by Mike. Motion by Greg to award Student 1 and Student 3, the two highest scoring students, with $1,000 scholarships. Second by Tamarah, motion carried. 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. After the winners were selected, Mike revealed who each of the applicants were. The winning students (1 & 3) were Keira Alfson and Keira Nelson. Note: there were several well qualified applicants for the scholarship.

Critique:

- None.

Next meeting: Thursday, May 14, 9:00-11:00 AM, Commissioners Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:14 AM.