Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – May 14, 2026

The May 14, 2026, meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:05 AM by Dave Thom.

Board members in attendance were Dave Thom, Paul Nettinga, and Oonagh Wood. Others in attendance were Ben Pucket, (SD Game, Fish & Parks), Mike Linde (Custer Co. Commission), 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 April 9, 2026, was made by Paul, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Voting to take place on June 2. Historic Courthouse Museum renovations look good. County funding is a little tight – HVAC estimated replacement costs are $4.5-5 million.
- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket –
  - Three water pipeline projects in county under review. Archaeologist just looked at all three and should be good to start work next month.
  - New water project funding expected for our area($80-90K). It's funding received by NGOs that are not able to administer program so partner with GF&P. They are federal dollars so will require cultural surveys. Total project length about 1 year.
  - Agency looking into purchasing air curtain burner to dispose of slash from forestry projects. They are hearing from landowners enrolled in hardwood release program that they are concerned about burning their slash piles when we have not had sufficient snowfall. Board thought it was worth pursuing but had questions about operation and transportation.
  - GF&P fisheries biologist seeking grant funds for stream restoration on Upper French Creek above West Dam.
- SD DANR-RCF: Patricia Weyrich –
  - RCF foresters continue to work on EFRP projects for FSA. 476 landowners in the Hills involved from Custer, Fall River, and southern Pennington counties.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:

    - First Interstate Bank: Business Checking = $13,553.38, Grant Checking = $1,990.91, Savings = $9,293.50 (April interest = $9.08)
    - Black Hills Federal Credit Union (BHFCU): CD = $25,000 (3.75%, 12-month)
- Bills to pay/approve:
    - Deposits:
        - Grant checking - $10,500.00 deposit, thinning grant reimbursement
    - Checks:
        - BHFCU - $25,000, Bus. Checking – CD deposit
        - Jacki Wahle - $10,500, Grant Checking - cost-share reimbursement
    - Credit card expenses:
        - Dakota Greens - $509.52, trees for Arbor Day
        - Lynn's Dakotamart - $22.69, wrapping tree seedlings for Arbor Day
    - Misc expense:
        - Snacks for bus tour - $24.96, from Sam's Club on Mike's personal card
- Motion by Oonagh to approve account balances and expenses, second by Paul, motion carried.

Old Business:

- NRCS locally led training in Philip:
    - Dave provided a summary of meeting. Dave, Oonagh, and Mike attended. All districts in attendance were tasked with creating a project proposal. Our group proposed developing effective communication strategy with new county landowners on effective forest management. Board felt that Qury Fire bus tour met that objective.
    - More discussion on locally led will occur at the Hills Area meeting.
- Qury Fire bus tour:
    - Tour was a success and was well attended, 50 people – bus full. KOTA had a segment on the tour on the evening news. Photo also in the Chronicle.
    - Board discussed making a contribution to YMCA for bus use. Motion by Paul to contribute $200 to the YMCA for appreciation and their partnership with the district. Seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.
- Public meeting related to Qury Fire:
    - BAER meeting - Burned Area Emergency Response interagency team. No update on when we might be asked to host the meeting. Report has not been released and BAER team was waiting until then before planning a meeting.
- Arbor Day:
    - Event was successful. Dave and Mike provided recap of Custer elementary school event. Greg was at the Hermosa elementary school event, but was not available for a recap. Tamarah's husband brought trees to the Elk Mountain school.

New Business:

- SD Conservation Commission spring meeting (April 30):
    - Mike attended virtually. District was awarded $35,000 for thinning cost-share. Had applied for $50,000, but not enough funds for all grant requests so Commission awarded ~70% to most.

- Mike also participated in discussion on docket prices:
  - Pipeline/tank docket price increase suggestion was not approved, which had been tabled since the November meeting. Commission preferred addressing all docket prices simultaneously.
  - Commission agreed with concerns Mike initially raised and agreed to form Committee to address issue with docket pricing issues. Committee to meet at State Conference. Commission asked Mike if he was interested in serving on the committee, but he could not commit due to weed and pest obligations. Committee will seek input from SDACDE, NRCS, SDACD, SD DANR.
- Natural Resources Conservation Awards: Commission approved District's nominations of Penny and Paul Svenkeson and Julie Oswald. They are in the process of ordering signs for awardees and hope to distribute them during the Area meeting. DANR will have a generic press release. District can put together specific press release for county awardees and plan on presenting awards to the recipients.
- Soil erosion:
  - Angela Ehlers discussed current erosion complaints – five active complaints that deal just with headstone burial by blowing dust in cemeteries. Also a recent multi-car pileup caused by blowing dirt. Angela might put together refresher training videos for district supervisors and managers.
  - Mike commented on recent erosion observed in the county due to 79 Fire and ongoing drought. Some

- Update on thinning grants:
  - Forest Health grants:
    - Paulsen project complete. Finished 19.7 acres of 23.9 acres allotted. Deadline has passed so no additional acreage allowed. Documentation submitted to the State.
  - State Commission grant:
    - Two new applications received, waiting on prescription to be completed. Foresters have been busy working on FSA EFRP projects. Patricia stated that we should have those by the next meeting.
- Conservation District personalized clothing:
  - Board discussed options – go with existing vendor for districts or try different vendor that Butte CD uses. The later requires a minimum order of 25, so if place order, would go with first option. Board asked if Mike will check to see if can get shirts without logo on the back. If they will do that, Mike will bring order form to next board meeting.

Correspondence:

- Invitations to upcoming events:
  - SDACD Board meeting, 5/21 6:30-8:30 pm.
  - Hills Area meeting, June 8 @ 1:00 PM at the Outdoor Campus, Rapid City. Employee meeting will be at 10:30.

    - Dave and Paul plan to attend. Oonagh may attend as well. Mike will post meeting agenda in case there are 3 or more supervisors in attendance.
- Re-establishment and solicitation of nominations for membership to the Black Hills Resource Advisory Committee (RAC):
    - Discussion on board member applying for membership. Dave's name was suggested. Dave was unsure, but he will check if Mike Linde is applying again.
- Update from NACD on recent Executive Actions.
- Soil erosion concerns in state – discussed earlier.
- NRCS data call summary from Angela
- Gunderson, Palmer, Nelson & Ashmore, LLP – regarding PowerTech water permit application. May 4, 2026 letter – order granting motion to dismiss without prejudice.
- 2025 annual reports for NACD and for NCF. Mike will look for pdf copies and will email them to the board.

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - BHNF Plan Revision, various meetings Mike participated in:
        - Cooperative agency meeting, 5/13
        - Species of Conservation Concern Working Group
            - 1st virtual meeting on 4/28. All-day meeting planned for June or early July.
        - Growth and Yield Working Group
            - All-day meeting on 5/6. Mike provided a summary.
    - Review packet from the County Planning to the IRC (Interagency Review Committee) – nothing of concern.
    - Fire mitigation RCPP funding proposal:
        - Still waiting on the National Funding Opportunity (NFO) to be released.
    - SD Grassland Initiative Partner call, 5/11

Public Comment:

- None.

Critique:

- None.

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

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:48 AM.