Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2026

The June 11, 2026, meeting of the Custer County Conservation District was called to order in the Commissioner's Conference Room at the Custer County Courthouse, at 9:04 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 Val Riter (NRCS), Todd Butler (USFS-BHNF), 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:

Request by Dave to add "RAC Nomination" to Old Business and to discuss "NWTF Grant" in Correspondence. Motion to approve today's modified agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from May 14, 2026, was made by Paul, seconded by Oonagh, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Encouraged voting in the governor's run-off election.
  - Board thanked him for serving as the Commission liaison. He will remain in that role until January.
- NRCS: Valerie Riter –
  - Val is the new acting Resource Unit Conservationist (RUC) through August 8.
  - Wrapping up EQIP applications, four awarded in Pennington, zero in Custer.
  - No CSPs awarded, no interest in program this year.
  - Kathleen Bush to work in Rapid City office, transfer from Hot Springs.
  - Working on obtaining a new NWTF forester to replace Kylie Hammett.
  - Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) receiving interest. Most in Pennington County, but a few in Custer. Deadline to apply with FSA is in July.
  - Regenerative Ag Pilot – have had a few signups.
- US Forest Service: Todd Butler, USFS Black Hills National Forest –
  - Qury Fire:
    - Declared as officially controlled on Monday.
    - BAER report complete. Funding to be used to rehabilitate the Glen Erin dam.
    - Timber salvaging options being examined in burn area.
  - FRASS project complete.
  - New plan for NEPA process for the Hills – 10 year cycle for all 1.2 million acres.

- Provided an update on mining exploration in the Hills.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
  - First Interstate Bank: Business Checking = $13,338.67, Grant Checking = $19,686.91, Savings = $9,296.45 (May interest = $2.95)
  - Black Hills Federal Credit Union (BHFCU): CD = $25,000 (3.75%, 12-month)
- Bills to pay/approve:
  - Deposits:
    - Business Checking - $517.50 deposit, reimbursement for various meetings/trainings that Mike attended.
    - Grant checking - $17,696.00 deposit, thinning grant reimbursement
  - Checks:
    - Mitch Paulsen - $17,696.00, Grant Checking - cost-share reimbursement
  - Credit card expenses:
    - Vector Print - $449.73, printing & postage for newsletter
- Insurance bill update: Mike updated the Board on our insurance payment delay. Our payment was combined with the County's insurance bill and sent in one check to SDPAA. SDPAA thought the county overpaid and refunded the portion of the check that was mean to cover our cost. Refund was received and deposited in the County General Fund. A separate check was then mailed to SPDAA to cover our bill; however, funds came from our account again, not the General Fund, so now we are account is overbudget. Will likely need to do a budget supplement request at an upcoming Commission meeting.
- Motion by Paul to approve account balances and expenses, second by Oonagh, motion carried.

Old Business:

- Nomination for membership to the Black Hills Resource Advisory Committee (RAC):
  - Dave submitted a nomination for Mike Linde on behalf of the District.
  - Todd Butler is waiting for reauthorization of the charter before nominees can be considered.
  - Mike Linde will ask the County Commission if anyone else would like to be nominated since he will not be on the Commission after December.
  - Todd stated that they are also interested in nominees with backgrounds in ranching, timber, recreation. Todd will email Mike information about opt-in / opt-out training and information about Secure Rural Schools (SRS).
- Hills Area meeting recap:
  - Discussion on local working groups and an online tool to help with planning and hosting a meeting.
  - Chuck Nicholas nominated as the Area Endowment Honoree. Supervisors pledged $100 from the Hills Area account towards endowment fund.
  - State Convention scheduled on September 20-22 in Oacoma.
  - Supervisors voted to increase membership dues from $75 to $100.

- Ben Pucket provided a summary of the BDA/Willow project at Meeker Ranch and highlighted the District's involvement, including the BDA workshop.
- Discussion on whether Area was going to host a Legislative Meeting this year. Left unresolved. Will put topic on the July meeting agenda.
- Discussion of possible new tree species to be brought to the state for planting in shelterbelts – Yellowhorn. Tree is native to China. Mike voiced his concerns to Angela about introducing a non-native species. Board members are reluctant to support introduction, but they support sound science.
- Employee meeting in the morning. Mike was voted to continue to serve as the Hills Area representative on the SDACDE Board of Directors for two more years.

- Conservation District personalized clothing:
  - Motion by Oonagh that District pay for one item for each supervisor, advisor, and manager, second by Paul, motion carried.

New Business:

- Supervisor election:
  - Reminder that deadline for submitting petition is July 1.
  - Last check with County Auditor's office, no petitions have been turned in. Tamarah said she turned in hers. Mike and Tamarah will check with Auditor's office after meeting.
  - Required notice of vacancy published in the June 10 & 17 editions of the Custer Chronicle.
- Update on thinning grants:
  - Forest Health grants:
    - Project complete, no further updates.
  - State Commission grant:
    - Two new applications in hand, but waiting on forest prescriptions to be completed.
- Natural Resources Conservation Awards:
  - Still waiting on award signs from the State. Were supposed to be available by the Area meeting. Once received, will plan on getting photos with recipients on location, present signs, and have a news release.

Correspondence:

- Upcoming events:
  - SDSU Extension Drought Meeting, June 17, all-day beginning at 9:00 am, at Mueller Civic Center, 801 S. 6th St, Hot Springs.
- FOIA request from Trileaf, Schaumburg, IL:
  - "…questing information regarding any environmental concerns including, but not limited to, Records of underground/aboveground storage tanks, chemical spills, inspection records (if they also contain tenant names), any records on asbestos removal." Mike responded to the request. District does not have any such records.
- Update from NACD on recent Executive Actions, May 19.
- Notice of Intent to mine limestone by Pete Lien & Sons, Inc. Location south of 7-11 Road. Mike will send standard response letter.

- USDA designated Custer County, among others, as Natural Disaster Area due to drought.
- South Dakota State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation - Conservation and Hunting Heritage RFP, due by July 3.
    - If District was to apply, it would require partners. NWTF will only fund up to 25% of total costs. Board will ask Ben Pucket about potential collaboration in the future.
- Thank you card from Keira Alfson for scholarship award
- Thank you email from Keira Nelson for scholarship award

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - Newsletter:
        - Electronic copy emailed to mail list June 1. Printed copies were picked up from the printer yesterday afternoon and dropped in the mail this morning.
    - BHNF Plan Revision:
        - Cooperative Agency meeting:
            - 6/10 meeting, Notice of Intent (NOI) is expected in late September or early October.
        - Species of Conservation Concern Working Group:
            - An all-day in-person meeting is planned on July 1 at Outdoor Campus, Rapid City. Mike will attend.
        - Growth and Yield Working Group:
            - Revised yield projection review document shared with group. They are expected to begin work on models and be completed this summer.
    - Review packet from the County Planning to the IRC (Interagency Review Committee) – nothing of concern.
        - Oonagh asked that Mike send her the packet for any future review packets concerning the Argyle area.
    - Public meeting related to Qury Fire:
        - Tate has been communicating with Scott Thompson (District 5 Director, FSA). Scott feels no need now; however, FSA is seeking EFRP funding for fire damage to timber and fencing. If/when that is awarded, will reconsider hosting a meeting.
    - BHRFP
        - Group considering naming Ben Wudtke, BH Forest Resource Association, as coordinator. Will be decided at June meeting. Ben is an advocate/lobbyist for the timber industry.
        - Board stated that a State or County agency person would be a better fit for the coordinator position.
    - Fire mitigation RCPP funding proposal:
        - Still waiting on the National Funding Opportunity (NFO) to be released.
    - Leadership Conference June 25-26 in Oacoma. Mike will attend conference, and also attend the Board of Directors meeting late on June 24 since he is the Hills Area representative.

Public Comment:

- Paul gave praise to Mike for the latest newsletter.

Critique:

- None.

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

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:11 AM.