Custer County Conservation District
Meeting Minutes – July 9, 2026

The July 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 9:04 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 Paige Uher (NRCS), Ben Pucket (SD Game, Fish & Parks), Mike Linde (Custer Co. Commission), Terri Kester (Custer Co. 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:

Motion to approve today's agenda and to approve the meeting minutes from June 11, 2026, was made by Paul, seconded by Tamarah, motion carried.

Partnership/Guest Reports:

- County Commission: Mike Linde –
  - Dansby Park residents upset about development in area. Concerned about water use and increased traffic.
  - Jesse Sorensen is interested in being Black Hills RAC member.
  - Paul thanked Mike for his participation/attendance in District meetings.
- NRCS: Paige Uher –
  - Val is the new acting Resource Unit Conservationist (RUC) through August 8.
  - Kathleen Bush now working in Rapid City office.
  - Waiting on hire for new NWTF forester.
  - Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) – some funding awarded in Custer County.
  - Five new EQIPs awarded – all in Pennington.
  - Local Working Groups (LWG):
    - State Conservationist promoting locally led meetings. Created postcard that can be distributed and a QR code to direct people to a survey for providing input.
    - SDACD created webpage with tools for running a LWG meeting. Board asked Mike to share link to webpage with the Board.
    - Board discussed planning LWG meeting in fall. Could cover thinning, wildlife, water, other issues. Board ultimately decided to focus workshop on water and will dedicate portion of workshop on LWG and seeking input on natural resource concerns.

- SD Game, Fish & Parks: Ben Pucket –
    - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant awarded for water development projects. Grassland focus so will probably exclude most of the Black Hills. Invasive annual grass treatments also to be cost-shared on private land.
    - 3 active water development projects in Custer County. Funded through Ducks Unlimited grant.
    - Put in request to increase payment for hardwood enhancement to get closer to 75% cost-share. If approved, payment would increase around next spring to ~$800/ac.
- Custer County Planning: Terri Kester –
    - Discussed current development projects in the county including one on Argyle Road and another north of Renegade Pass Road. Water and traffic are primary concerns for the latter development.
    - Building permits in the county are up this year. Two new cell towers expected.
    - Discussion on developers doing forest thinning prior to development. Board member(s) could come to Planning meeting and speak to the Commission about topic. Linde noted that if forest cut too thin, lots are less attractive to buyers.

Financial Report:

- Account balances:
    - First Interstate Bank: Business Checking = $13,338.67, Grant Checking = $1,990.91 (uncleared check of $17,696.00), Savings = $9,299.71 (June interest = $3.26)
    - Black Hills Federal Credit Union (BHFCU): CD = $25,146.63 (3.75%, 12-month), (dividend interest: May = $70.68, June = $75.95)
- Bills to pay/approve:
    - Deposits:
        - None
    - Checks:
        - SHP Holdings, LLC - $22.52, Bus. Checking - notice of vacancy
        - Hills Area - $100, Bus. Checking - dues notice
        - Northwestern College - $1,000, scholarship for K. Alfson
        - Iowa State Univ. - $1,000, scholarship for Nelson
    - Credit card expenses:
        - Payment due = $1,254.23
        - Previously reported – Vector Print $449.73 for newsletter
        - GCN Design - $451.35, district apparel
        - Leadership Conference costs:
            - Hotel, Quality Inn - $256.40
            - Gas, Common Cents - $96.75
            - Registration already paid - $175.00
            - All food was covered
            - Total costs = $528.15
            - Cost-share payment expected = $752.50

- Motion by Oonagh to approve account balances and expenses, second by Tamarah, motion carried.

Old Business:

- Black Hills Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) and Secure Rural Schools funds:
  - Mike Linde mentioned at the past County Commission if anyone would be interested in being a RAC member. Jesse Sorenson said he was interested.
  - Mike emailed the Board prior to the meeting the information shared by Todd Butler on Secure Rural School funds.
- Natural Resources Conservation Awards:
  - Award certificates received at Leadership Conference; however, may be a while before receiving signs. Hopefully will have them by State Convention. Board will wait on presenting awards until signs are received.

New Business:

- 2027 budget request:
  - Letter from county stating budget requests are due by August 3.
  - Oonagh inquired whether the City of Custer contributes any funds. Mike said he was not aware of any time in the past when they did. Oonagh suggested that the Board ask the city next year.
  - Motion by Paul to submit report to Treasurers office with District accomplishments including names of partners, and state that the Board considered budget adjustments, but will not ask for an increase. Second by Tamarah, motion carried. Dave asked if partners could submit data to Mike on their financial contributions within the county. Paige and Ben said they would look into it.
- RCPP funding proposal - notice of funding opportunity released:
  - NFO released, application deadline August 24
  - No board meeting before deadline so Mike asked if Board had any concerns before moving forward on project proposal. Board will let Mike know if they have any questions/concerns.
- Update on thinning grants:
  - State Commission grant:
    - Two new applications in hand, but waiting on forest prescriptions to be completed. Hope to have them available for review at next meeting.

Correspondence:

- Upcoming events:
  - Weston County NRD - Low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR) field tour, 9:00 am Friday, Aug. 21 near Newcastle. Will visit structures built in 2025.
  - Ventenata & Medusahead workshop, 9:00-2:00 Wed. Aug. 12, in Sheridan, WY
- YMCA thank you letter
- Update from NACD on recent Executive Actions, dated June 22
- Request for nomination(s) for Wildlife Habitat Award from the Izaak Walton League of America

- USFS Black Hills National Forest, Roby Forest Management Project – request for comments, due date July 15
- SD-DANR funding opportunity for CRP technical assistance
- Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan Update. Will not implement full plan revision, will only make administrative changes.
- Call for nominations from the SD Society for Range Management for the 'Excellence in Range Management' and 'Top Hand' Awards, due Aug. 17
- NRCS/SDACD Local Working Group (LWG) survey – QR code to share local resource concerns
- Thank you card from Keira Nelson

Other Business:

- Office manager report:
    - Black Hills NF Plan Revision:
        - Natural Range of Variation report – USFS response to comments released 6/18 to cooperators.
        - Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) Working Group:
            - 2nd meeting, in person all-day on 7/1 at Outdoor Campus
            - Reviewed handful of species – bighorn sheep, beaver, American dipper, black-backed woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, Brewer's sparrow, Frenchman's bluff grapefern. USFS still reviewing ~60-70 plant species
            - SCC does not affect State's ability to manage species on the list
            - At-risk species science decision, not mgmt. decision
            - Further correspondence this week expected
            - Future call at end of month
            - Aug. 31 deadline to complete
        - Cooperating Agency meeting, July 8
            - SCC review list (plants) to be completed by Aug. 3. 'No' species list to be sent to cooperators by end of week.
            - Desired Forest Conditions – draft released Monday, Mike has not read. Will review at Aug. coop. agency meeting.
            - Preliminary Need for Change – will start discussing in Aug.
        - Growth and Yield Working Group
            - No update
    - Review packet from the County Planning to the IRC (Interagency Review Committee) – no concerns.
    - Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership (BHRFP):
        - Mike was not able to attend meeting. Ben Wudtke will be new coordinator for the group. He will be the coordinator, not the director.
    - Leadership Conference – June 25-26 and Board of Directors meeting June 24:
        - SDSU President Barry Dunn main speaker
    - Supervisor election:

        - Deadline for submitting petition was July 1. Tamarah and Greg were only people that submitted a petition so names will not appear on ballot.
    - State Convention, Sept. 20-22 in Oacoma:
        - Mike checked if Board wanted him to attend, they do.

Public Comment:

- Stuart commented on the FSA sending out letters that the Emergency Forestry Restoration Program (EFRP) was out of money. FSA submitted request for additional funds.

Critique:

- None.

Next meeting: Thursday, September 10, 9:00-11:00 AM, Commissioners Conference Room, Custer County Courthouse. **NOTE:** NO MEETING PLANNED IN AUGUST.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:56 AM.