Custer County Weed and Pest Board
Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2025

The September 9, 2025, meeting of the Custer County Weed and Pest Board was called to order at 1:00 PM by Rittberger.

Board members in attendance were Klinton Rittberger, Bob Smith, June Johnston, Tom Patterson, and Marci O'Connell. Also in attendance was Mike Baldwin.

All motions were approved unanimously unless otherwise noted. For the purpose of continuity, these minutes are not necessarily in chronological order.

Approve Minutes/Agenda:

- Motion made by Smith to approve today's agenda and the meeting minutes from the August 12 board meeting, second by Patterson, motion carried.

New Business:

- Spray progress:
    - Second round of county right-of-way spraying was completed about a month ago. Mop-up work continuing through next week. Remington finished working 3 weeks ago. Nathan will continue working for a couple more weeks before switching over to the Maintenance Department full-time.
    - Canada thistle had a big year. Also observing a good bit of Russian thistle and gumweed on certain roads.
- Herbicide cost-share status:
    - To date, 59 individuals have submitted receipts totaling $24,731.62. Cost-share payments have totaled $12,078.44 (includes adjustment for $1,000 maximum payment). The average payment per landowner is $204.72.
- US Forest Service invasive weed management funding: current and future:
    - Buffalo Gap National Grassland:
        - Spraying on grassland is complete and invoice was submitted to the Forest Service. Agreement was for 25 acres. Areas sprayed were along French Creek (south of East French Creek Road) and in the Chalk Hills grazing allotment (south of East French Creek Road).
    - Black Hills National Forest:
        - Sprayed 14.2 acres to date (74 acres on the agreement). We were asked to spray another property this year for Canada thistle. Due to recent temperatures in the low 20's, will follow up to see if still want us to spray this season or wait until 2026.
        - Discussion on potential new agreement with BHNF for spraying in 2026:
            - USFS expressed interest in working with the County to spray weeds next year on a timber sale area. Primary weeds of concern are leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and spotted knapweed. Project is in the early planning stages now, so USFS is gauging our interest in working with them.

- Funding will pay for about ~600 acres of spraying. Acreage is too large for us to handle, so we would have to contract the work out. Dollar amount is unknown at this time, but if greater than $50,000, we would request sealed bids from contractors.
- If funding is received, we would add administrative fees to the agreement to cover expenses for managing the project. Mike would have to conduct inspections to ensure the contractor is completing the work.
- The Board expressed interest in working with USFS on a new spraying agreement. One concern raised by Patterson was that funding could be pulled by upper levels of government. If work was already completed when this happened, he did not want us to be left paying the contractor out of County funds. Mike will express those concerns to USFS.

Old Business:

- Watch list / enforcement properties:
  - Weed enforcement properties:
    - Evans property was sprayed by landowner even though certified letter mailed to new address was never picked up. Conferred with the State's Attorney about proper procedure for handling enforcement properties that have changed ownership. She suggested sending/delivering letter that provides more information about the enforcement process and give the landowner additional time to treat the weeds.
  - Watch list:
    - Leafy spurge:
      - Property off Pass Creek Rd owned by Donna Alexander:
        - Certified letter was mailed to Donna after the August board meeting. Letter was not received until Wednesday of last week. Mike spoke to Donna's son last week. He said the ranch tenant is going to spray the property this week and he already had the spray equipment on site. Mike will continue monitoring.
      - Property near French Creek Supply owned by Cleve Trimble:
        - No obvious sign of spraying detected. Patteson spoke with Trimble about the weed issue. Patterson was told that Trimble was hiring a contractor. Mike will continue monitoring.
    - St. Johnswort:
      - Property adjacent to Lower French Creek Rd owned by Rodney Wilson, Jr. and Jeffrey Wilson:
        - Certified letter was mailed and received in August. Landowner stated that renter was taking care of the weeds. Mike visited property prior to today's meeting. The weeds were brown, but did not see obvious sign of spraying (tire tracks). Board asked to carry-over issue to next spring.

        - Canada thistle:
            - Mike has been contacting / working with landowners along Beaver Creek to address thistle infestations. Will continue monitoring.

Other Business –

- Miscellaneous updates:
    - "Browning" pine trees near Custer:
        - Mike updated board about pine trees turning brown in patches around Custer. Tony Seidl, a tree pest expert with SD DANR, investigated and determined they are not a result of beetles, but likely caused by diplodia infections. Diplodia is a naturally occurring fungus that can cause infections in trees that experienced hail damage.
    - SD Weed & Pest Commission meeting and field tour, Sept. 10-11:
        - Mike is formally requesting that seasonal labor costs are added as a permissible expense on our grant.

Next meeting:

- Motion by O'Connell to schedule next meeting on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 1:00 PM, second by Johnston, motion carried.

Adjournment:

- Motion by Smith to adjourn meeting at 1:50 PM, second by O'Connell, motion carried.