

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
June 2022, via Zoom**

Attendees:

*Jim Cecil, CACD President - Republican River Watershed
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Mike Cleary, CACD Secretary/Treasurer - Gunnison Dolores Watershed
Scott Jones, CACD Director/Past President - Colorado River Watershed
Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative
George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed
Dale Parker, CACD Interim Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
Bob Warner, CACD Alternate Director - CO NACD Representative - NCF Trustee
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director*

Absent:

Charlie Carnahan, CACD Director - Upper South Platte Watershed

Guests:

*Randy Randall, NRCS
Les Owen, CDA
Cindy Lair, CSCB*

Call to Order:

*The meeting was called to order by **President Jim Cecil** at 7:34 AM after establishing a quorum.*

NRCS Update:

Randy Randall

Clint will finish detail around end of July. Gene and Randy will act on a rotational schedule. Covid; continued to see a few hotspots. A few offices had to go back to masking. Appears to have hit a peak and calming down. Requests from field offices for training and meetings with up to 50 people. Staffing; NRCS has a new Area 1 conservationist, Chad Cherefko from HI. He will work out of the state office. They are working on funding allocations to complete projects. Tim Macklin and Baily Rapp have obligations in place. Hard to ask for additional funds when they still have remaining funds not obligated. Budget remains extremely tight. Down to 237 employees. Increase of 70 employees and costs for employees has had an impact on budgeting and on program agreements. Oct FY 23 budget will make course corrections. Plan is to go through and prioritize with CDA and CACD. Having to move pots of money around.

Legislative Update – Brett Moore:

The legislation session ended May 11th; the Governor gets 30 days to finalize. There were 657 bills introduced by 100 legislators. The 10 yr. Ave is 642. We monitored 46 bills that had impacts to districts,

producers, and natural resources. Senator Donovan worked with CACD to eliminate the statute expiration that gives the districts a small annual funding amount in the state budget. Thank you to CACD President Jim Cecil, who testified on behalf of the districts and CSCB Cindy Lair for providing historical information on the great work and leverage districts are able to accomplish with this funding. It was a team effort. CACD also lobbied and received for the districts an additional \$148K, coming out to \$2K added to the \$7K base fund to each district. It is an incremental increase and locked in. Senator Donovan deserves a special thank you for sponsoring our Bill and fighting for our districts. Brett stated she will be CACD Legislator of the Year and CACD will present a special plaque to her at the summer face-to-face meeting. She has been a great supporter of CACD. There were 6 bills on wildfire. All were signed by the Governor. SB30 to include Ag in the Interim Water Resource Committee as a testing ground for some Ag bills to help with Ag and rural issues.

CACD did take an oppose position on SB22131-Protect health of pollinators and people. This Bill would have hurt the Ag industry. Don McBee testified and the bill was killed. This Bill will be coming back next year. CACD will reconvene their legislative committee next month and bring a report to the next board meeting. Gary had discussions on Congressional District 3, Negotiations of State vs. Federal Delegation. Gary asked if anyone had a take on this. All agreed it is difficult to unwind. George said there was a lot of attention on this and that it has a long way to go, being it has been in existence over 100 years ago. This task will be tough, but keeping track of it. Gary's area gets negatively impacted. George asked about the Ag Labor Bill. Brett said legal action is to be expected. Brett and Bobbi are following the meetings and will keep the BOD updated via email.

CSCB Update - Cindy Lair:

Special thanks to Brett for districts in this session. Nice work. Glad to partner. Finally, fully staffed. Thank you to Jim for helping with interviews. Job for Outreach and ED Specialist new hire is Kayla Hladky. She comes with a deep farm background in weld county. Garth has been doing a lot of the outreach and education work. Garth will focus on helping with the Conservator and any outreach materials CACD needs. Kayla will be working on helping Petra and CDA district operations and soil health work. Aubrey Kukral is the new CSCB administrative assistant. She works for Nikki. The next state board meeting is September 22-23 in Greeley. They will have the same format starting with tour on the 22nd and a morning meeting on the 23rd. The SHAC meeting will follow the afternoon of the 23rd. This will be the first SHAC meeting. Emmett invited surrounding districts to a Tuesday night meet and greet dinner. CSCB is having turn over on the state board. Anthony Lobato is moving and stepping down from the state board. Looking for a replacement.

Les Owen hired Patty York for the weed program. They are working on making more weed programming available and working on the "America the Beautiful" grant with Nikki. Making it available to districts. CSCB will be asking CACD for a letter of support when that time comes. The Soil Health program launched and is up to 130 producers signed up. Score sheets are coming in and will be sent to districts to deliver the producer signs. They only have Ryan to work on this, so it is slow going. The other planned positions are not able to be filled with NRCS because of budget challenges. Eventually they hope this will be filled in with NRCS. They experienced some challenge and confusion with CIG grants concerning the CPA52 form to be filled out. The districts were told they had to complete the form and the districts were confused. CDA is working closely with NRCS to resolve the issue and this form is not being put on the districts. This involves NEPA documentation and NRCS does this.

Director George Fosha said he was unable to get in touch with Maggie Hannah. Cindy said she thought she was going to make it for the CSCB Upper Ark representative. George asked about the consolidation

issue and if it would be on the CSCB agenda. Cindy said yes, but that it probably would not be resolved at this meeting. Hopefully some of these districts will be coming and this topic can be discussed with them. Cindy sees pros and cons on both sides. This is a symptom of funding issues, and a valuable discussion to have. There is a concerned voice for CACD and impact on dues. CACD needs to think of ways to adapt. Gary Thrash feels promoting stronger districts makes a stronger state association George gets called every week from districts who want to consolidate. George is on the fence. Maybe a merger of sharing district managers would be better. Scott will zoom in for the SHAC meeting. Cindy asked for the CACD Annual meeting dates. The dates are November 28-29. A tentative agenda has been sent around, but no venue will be decided until next Wednesday.

CDA Update – Les Owen

Organizational Update for CDA: The ADCRO Bill created a new office was under the Commissioner's office and now this will move to the conservation division. The Climate Preparedness leg will bring another position. Wolves: The North Park wolves are becoming less fearful of people. The measures in place are now less effective. With the federal listing there are no other options available. Hired for 10J rule process. Moffat county has had some requests. Need to figure out how to involve the cooperating agency, but no draft MOU to look at yet. Time will tell. The stakeholders advisory groups are going on. Last meeting finalized management of wolves and series of recommendations and scenarios. Consensus on some things but not all. Phase 1, 2, and 3 being looked at and what circumstances will it take before legal take of wolves will be allowed. Two ideas: 1. If a wolf is in an act of biting or killing (teeth marks) CPW could take or a permit to producers to take. This did not receive full consensus. 2. Caught in act of chasing (start pursuing their prey), producer permits would be issued. Majority support but not as much support. All of this will be in the report that goes to the CPW Commission.

Another question is what they will decide to put in the state management plan. The Take permit problem is the chance of catching the wolf is not great and chances of hitting it are not great, but hopefully this would scare them. This is all reflected in the report. Funding livestock compensation program issues is there is no money for this program. There is a willingness to pay to know there are wolves on the landscape. No guarantee on these funds.

New recovery plan for the Gunnison Sage Grouse. Federal front: NEPA's step two is to do some further changes. WOTUS was repealed and will be going to the Supreme Court on WOTUS definition, at least on the wetlands piece. Time will tell.

Director Nick Charchalis: *There is no good news at all and it is all infringing on private property rights. The CACD board should take a stronger stance on wolves. The intent is on putting private landowner ranchers out of business in NW CO. This is not happening on the eastern slope. Real estate values down due to hunting reserve. A lot of people are already selling and moving and going to other states. Not a good recipe for success. This is very serious.*

Sec/Tres Mike Cleary: *Questions why it has not been challenged just because it is a constitutional amendment. This should be challenged as a discrimination fight, more than a fight against cattle people. This is an infringement. Majority vote does not mean it is right. No hope for CPW. No interaction between any of these state agencies(state and county) to get anything done. The best is the Federal government. State and county departments are not helping.*

Further discussions took place on how the board should move forward.

CACD Update – Gary Thrash/Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash: NACD tracks WOTUS at a national level. We do have this route to take. It is an interesting dynamic with all the eastern vs. western states. 2022 Distinguished service award currently accepting nominations until August 23rd. summer meeting in Puerto Rico next month. Gary is attending. The regional meeting is still in Maui, Sept 7-10. NACD promotional going on right now. If you donate \$75 or more to Friends of NACD you receive a neck gator with the NACD logo. Funds go to the district grant program. NACD President Michael Crowder testified before the House of Representatives Agricultural Subcommittee on Conservation Forestry. They had a hearing on supporting careers in conservation workforce training education and job opportunities looking at problems agencies or even private land getting formal training for conservation and coming up with some ideas for that.

Bob added that Gary gave the change for the starting date for the SW Pacific combined regional meetings at the Royal Lahaina Resort. He encouraged anyone who can attend. Personally, Bob thinks Gary would be a good nomination for the Outstanding Conservationist Award. Bob will not be able to attend the summer Puerto Rico Board meeting due to a medical procedure. Rachel Theler sent out a newsletter looking for opportunities for states to highlight so we should be thinking about this.

CACD Programs:

Annual Meeting tentative agenda is done. Shaved off a day and sent it around to everyone. Also, posted on the website as subject to change. Bobbi showed the website agenda on the screen and reviewed with the board. Resource meetings are the week before Thanksgiving. Anyone who wants to be on the planning committee is more than welcome. The shorter agenda is necessary with budget constraints. Ideas were shared for discussion. Venue issues were discussed. There is no way to get around the higher prices and it is important to choose a low crime rate area. Current proposals and other venue ideas were discussed. No further questions or comments.

Envirothon steering committee has been meeting. Discussed a teachers' webinar in July and gave updates on marketing to the schools and science teachers. Next meeting is June 28th.

We have six demonstration projects approved and close to closing out final grant reports on the previous agreement and working on the new one. No other program reports.

Jim called for another roll call prior to discussing May financials. Quorum has been determined.

Prior Meeting Minutes:

President Jim Cecil asked for a motion to approve the May 2022 minutes. ***Director Gary Thrash*** made the motion and ***Director George Fosha*** gave the second with request of two corrections. EQIP is \$31M, and need to correct George's last name. All in favor. Motion passes.

CACD Financials

Sec/Treasurer Mike Cleary wanted to get with ***Bobbi*** offline with the reports sent to him. May monthly review of financials are fine. ***Director Nick Charchalis*** made the motion to approve the 2021 year-end financials and 2022 first quarter financials. ***Sec/Treasurer Mike Cleary*** gave the second. All in favor. Motion passes.

President Misc. Discussion and Updates:

CACD President Jim Cecil called for a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:15 AM, Wednesday, June 15. **Director George Fosha** made the motion. **Director Gary Thrash** gave the second. All in favor. Motion passes.

CACD President Jim Cecil called the Board out of Executive Session 11:06 am, Wednesday, June 15.

CACD Secretary/Treasurer Mike Cleary made the motion to suspend Camp Rocky for the 2022 year due to multiple financial reasons. **President Jim Cecil** called for a second. **CACD Director Nick Charchalis** gave the second.

President Jim Cecil asked if there was any discussion.

CSCB Program Manager Cindy Lair asked as a partner if she could get further information on the decision as both NRCS and CSCB are strong partners in Camp Rocky. She wants to know where the need is to find out if they might be able to augment and help. What is the shortfall, and where are the challenges on that financially?

Sec/Tres Mike Cleary stated that we have struggled with it every year. The liabilities with unclear rules and medical and services just like we saw years back what we had to do with Envirothon. This is our opinion.

Director Nick Charchalis stated that the Board does not think that the future looks all that bright for CACD to continue without doing something about this budget to allocate. We barely have enough money right now. We have saved money through COVID. Getting back into the swing of things, we need to serve conservation, and it might be better served to spend this money on the annual meeting for this year and have a reserve. We do not know how, and we need to talk about districts, and there are so many things to talk about right now, we are kind of uncomfortable about the whole thing.

Cindy stated she thinks this is the end of Camp Rocky with the Conservation Districts is the way she interprets this. She thinks this is the decision being made here. She is not making this decision, but it sounds to her that this is the end of Camp Rocky, and she thinks it is unfortunate it is important. **Nick** stated we feel it is important as well.

Executive Director Bobbi Ketels asked **Cindy** if she felt the state could take it over this year. **Cindy** said it was important to have it through a 501© (3) for the expense of it all because it is a bureaucratic mess to do it through CDA and the state or NRCS, and that is why we partner with CACD on a lot of things like video productions and things like that because of the ease on that administratively. It is a week or two or three out, and it is a little too late to say, oh, we are going to take it over now. That is really hard, but she thinks if it is a case of money, what is the need, and how do we figure out what that amount is. **Cindy** said she does not even know, and if we would mind telling her what that dollar figure we need to make it break even so it could go forward because there has been so much work done on it to cancel at this point.

Sec/Tres Mike Cleary stated we could give her numbers of what it costs to run it, but we cannot give you numbers of our exposure. He canceled Head and Heal Branding years ago not because it costs money but because he could not stand the liability of watching kids under eighteen and guys with horses trying to

empress their girlfriends over thirty-five torturing his calves. He decided to cancel because his calves were stressed. They do not gain weight after being roped and heeled by a bunch of guys enjoying torturing calves. The liability of having someone get hit with a branding iron, getting run over by a horse, or getting kicked in the face by a calf was just more than he could stand, so on a personal level, there is much more than just a personal line item involved.

CACD Director Gary Thrash stated that the Board did have a discussion also that they might be better off doing day events instead of trying to do a housed event. Down in Durango, they used to have this Colorado Outdoor Leadership school. They just shut down because trying to run overnight camps is where part of the issue comes into play. We think we can do a better job and reach more kids with that money by doing daytime events and spreading it around the state, making it more accessible that way.

Mike said we had the same issue with Envirothon several years ago, having to increase infrastructure to make it work under current rules, and he thinks Envirothon suffered. **Cindy** said she was not ever that bought into Envirothon as she was Camp Rocky because Camp Rocky has been around so long. People in the conservation program attended Camp Rocky as kids, so she thinks the longevity of Camp Rocky is kind of ending an era. With Envirothon, she was sorry not to have it going and wants to see it going again, but she did not ever feel as big about it being as important; it was important, but it was not like Camp Rocky. Camp Rocky has been really something that has influenced a lot of young people and their careers.

Mike told **Cindy** that he did not think CACD was putting the nail in the coffin of Camp Rocky; he really did not. He stated that CACD voted to suspend it for one year. If we can find a budget and venue to go forward in future years, he does not think what he saw in the Executive Session was, and he is speaking for himself, but he did not see anything where he felt anyone was saying this was a forever thing.

Director Gary Thrash stated it might be hard to get it going again. **Cindy** said she agreed it would be hard to get it going again with our leaders and things like that, and it would be starting from scratch. She is just disappointed.

Mike said he did not see that. He sees if we can have secure facilities where we do not cross lines or allow lines to be crossed and there is proper supervision, then it can proceed. This requires money and an untold amount at this point, and we have to regroup and see what we can find as a venue in future years. He does not think it is the kiss of death, and he feels it is just the smack of reality; he really does.

Director George Fosha stated the discussion in the Executive Session was only to suspend the operation for 2022.

Director Nick Charchalis said things are changing quickly, and he just got an email that CSU President Connell; Nick was going to be at a meeting that she was going to join, and now she will not be joining because now she is resigning from CSU on June 30. So, we cannot even keep a president at our University. He said everything was in turmoil, and we needed to step back and take another run. Camp Rocky has always been on the discussion since he has been on Board; do we do it, do we not do it. He knows people have worked hard on it, and CACD appreciates the support from CSCB. **Nick** said maybe CACD and CSCB could work on someday presentations together like **Gary** brought up.

Director Scott Jones has mentioned a few ideas too. It might be time to kind of talk about these kinds of things for the future. Right now, he thinks it is good to step back.

Director Gary Thrash stated the districts should weigh in on a future Camp Rocky. We work on their behalf. We may need a resolution as to what the conservation districts want to see as to the future of Camp Rocky.

Director George Fosha stated that he needed to drop off.

President Jim Cecil called for a vote; all in favor of the motion to suspend Camp Rocky for the 2022 year, please say aye. Seven ayes, any opposed say no; none opposed, motion is carried. **Jim** thanked everyone for sticking in so long.

The next Board meeting will be July 20, 2022, via Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned by President Jim Cecil at 11:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director