

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2021, via Zoom Meeting**

Attendees:

Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative
Jim Cecil, CACD Director - Republican River Watershed
Charlie Carnahan, CACD Director - Upper South Platte Watershed
Mike Cleary, CACD Director - Gunnison Dolores Watershed
George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed
Nancy Berges, CACD Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
Joe Pope, CACD Director – Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison

Absent:

Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed
Bob Warner, CACD Alternate Director - CO NACD Representative - NCF Trustee

Guests:

Clint Evans, NRCS
Randy Randall, NRCS
Les Owen, CDA
Cindy Lair, CSCB
Noah McCord, CSCB
Alex Funk, CWCB

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by **President Scott Jones** at 7:30 AM after establishing a quorum. **President Scott Jones** asked for any additional agenda items. Without any additional agenda items, the board agreed to move on with the agenda.

Prior Meeting Minutes:

President Scott Jones asked for a motion to approve the **April 2021** minutes. **Director George Fosha** made the motion to approve the minutes and **Director Charlie Carnahan** gave the second. Without any further discussion, the motion to approve the CACD BOD's **April, 2021** minutes was **passed**.

NRCS Update-Randy Randall & Clint Evans:

Randy Randall shared an update on the Covid issues. The Service Centers are operating at a 50% capacity. All employees that are fully vaccinated are no longer required to wear masks in the buildings. There are weekly national updates. Colorado is in a manageable situation.

Financials are solvent for the year. They received less additional ACEP funding than they anticipated.

Staffing continues with direct hire positions. They always have challenges with getting the additional equipment needed for the additional positions (computers, vehicles, etc.). They have asked that 15 computers be expedited for the employees.

Clint added that there will be in-person training if it is held outdoors for small groups in their local area as no overnight travel is allowed. He has asked the National Office if there is a way to verify if an employee has been fully vaccinated for Covid. He has not received a response yet.

CSCB Update – Cindy Lair:

Cindy told the Board that CSCB is short staffed right now. They have asked Districts to call Rakel Sanchez and she will forward the information to the person that can address the issue best. The plan is to rehire the two Regional Field Specialist positions. They are also looking at how to get the best coverage with the three Regional Field Specialist positions across the State.

CSCB is working to finalize the STAR program. They have all the different cropping systems covered and are now working on the rangeland part of the program.

There have been stimulus bills introduced that CDA is excited about. SB21-234 is the drought bill that, if passed, will provide stimulus funds to the districts. SB21-1235 gives \$2M to the soil health program as well as \$3M to the ACRE3 program. They are working on a budget for the soil health portion of the Bill that would be a capacity building direct payment to the districts that are engaging in the soil health program. Also, it will put dollars on the ground for producers that want to participate with the districts. It seems that a good place to start would be to have a minimum of 400 acres enrolled and 10 different landowners.

Cindy feels that it is important to have districts involved in the program as it would provide much needed funding for districts. CDA would assist with the STAR program rating for the landowner. Ryan Taylor is meeting with Districts and is also working on developing training for the districts interested in implementing the STAR program. They will be rolling out new information on the Soil Health page of their website with information for districts that are interested, to submit a questionnaire for CDA that defines their level of interest in participating in the STAR program and how many landowners they may have interested. Another questionnaire would be for landowners. They hope to have it ready when the stimulus monies are available.

As mentioned previously, they were awarded a 319 grant from Water Quality Control Division to have a pilot for the STAR program. They are currently working with 4 Conservation Districts (Shavano, Routt County, Boulder Valley and Longmont). They were working with the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District and their soil health program. Due to staff changes at the Lower Ark WCD, they are looking for another Conservation District to work with in the Lower Arkansas. They are also applying for other grants through NRCS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through the Conservation Partnership Program. These grants would be for the Republican Watershed and the Lower South Platte. There are 4 Conservation Districts in this area that they would like to work with. CSCB is also working on a Conservation Innovation Grant through NRCS that would be a statewide approach for the STAR program.

Cindy mentioned that Nikki has worked very closely with the Shavano and San Miguel Conservation District consolidation. They have merged and will continue to be called the Shavano Conservation District. Director Gary Thrash asked Cindy how that affected the direct assistance for the Conservation Districts. Cindy replied that for 3-years the Shavano Conservation District will receive double the direct assistance. She stated that there have been several districts that have expressed interest in consolidating. Quite often there are not enough Board members to have a quorum and have the Board function and conduct business.

Cindy added that she has been invited to speak on the STAR program at the NACD Summer meeting in Chicago. There are additional states interested in the program.

Cindy and Clint have been working together to set a date to meet with the Resource Team Leads and the Area Conservationists to address how the local offices want to engage in the STAR program. Districts and NRCS should be working as a team.

Cindy and Noah visited with Liz With about the Local Work Group (LWG) meetings. Coordinating with Districts is important for connecting the NRCS needs and the local needs. This also helps the Conservation Districts with their Long-Range Planning. Dr. Gene Kelly at CSU is interested in opening the Research Stations to the CDs to hold meetings. They would like to participate with Local Work Groups so they can hear from landowners as well.

Director Jim Cecil asked Cindy who the three Districts were in the Republican and Lower South Platte that are working with CSCB. Cindy explained that she is planning on speaking with Haxton, Yuma and a couple others, but has not touched base yet.

Director Gary Thrash told Cindy that discussions with NRCS and the Conservation Planning Partnership focused on Conservation District participation in the Local Working Group meetings and their importance. He would like to see the consolidation of conservation districts promoted. That could be beneficial for some districts. Cindy suggested a coffee hour or webinar to get ideas for ways to improve the LWG meetings.

Cindy will pursue: 1) Conservation District consolidations; and 2) Have directed training with Districts on LWG meetings.

Clint told Cindy that NRCS is looking at producing maps for the districts that show crop acreage, weed maps, water quality maps, etc. He also suggested that CACD consider a working session during the annual conference to talk about ways to run LWG meetings.

Legislative Update - Brett Moore:

Brett reported that Bills 1181 (Soil Health) and 1242 (Climate Resilience) have funding Bills attached; SB 235 and 234. He shared the Bill Tracking form with the Board. CACD assisted with multiple amendments to HB 1181. This included CSCB and CACD having two members on the advisory committee. CACD worked hard to get to a neutral stance on this Bill. SB21-235 is the stimulus funding for this Bill. It includes (\$1M) funding for the ACRE3 program, and (\$2M) to the Soil Health Program; of which (\$1M) is allocated specifically to the Conservation Districts for the new soil health program.

HB 1242 spotlighted drought conditions throughout the State; not just the rural areas. CACD provided amendments to this Bill which were adopted. CACD went from an opposed position to a neutral position with the adoption of these amendments. SB21-234 is the funding for HB 1242. SB21-234 is the stimulus Bill that includes a direct payment of \$15,000 to each of the 75 Conservation Districts. Total Bill funding is \$3M.

Cindy added that she spoke with their business operations department on how the stimulus funds would go out. They would like to have it go out with the direct assistance payment. There are no sideboards for these funds currently.

Brett recapped some of the additional Bills on the CACD Bill Tracker that CACD took position on or was monitoring.

Director Jim Cecil thanked Brett for all his help. **President Scott Jones** thanked Brett and the **Legislative Committee** for their time and effort.

CWCB Guest Speaker - Alex Funk, Ag Policy Specialist:

Alex shared his screen with the Board. He updated the Board on the Colorado Water Plan scoping process that is wrapping up. Basin Roundtables will be updating their Basin Implementation Plans and will be released later this summer for comments.

The State Plan update runs along side this update. There are three phases to the State Plan update: scoping, drafting, and finalizing. They are wrapping up the scoping phase now. The scoping will be reported to the CWCB in July. The draft report will be released April 2022 for public comment and feedback. The final will be complete late 2022.

Alex continued by stating that he encourages CACD to get involved in the Plan as there are grants that go along with this Plan. The Plan addresses water in agriculture, municipal and urban water, and watershed issues. More information can be found at engageCWCB.org. CWCB has hosted 7 ag scoping workshops over the last several months. Over 430 Ag water groups have been engaged.

A few items that have come from the work group include aging infrastructure, lack of funding for rehabilitation of the structures (O&M), declining ground water availability, augmentation water availability and affordability, drought conditions and ongoing competition for water around the State. Some hopeful solutions include expanding local capacity, infrastructure planning and assessments, and peer to peer water conservation programming.

Alex also reported on HB21-1260, General Fund Transfer for implementing the State Water Plan. There will be funding (\$15M) to help implement the Water Plan Grant Program and \$5M for the Roundtable funding. They will announce two funding rounds for the Water Plan Grant, one in July and one in December.

Alex said they have recorded all the workshops and they should be available on the website.

CDA Update - Les Owen:

Les addressed CDA's position on SB 87, Ag Workers Rights. The official position is "amend" which means they are not in support unless some needed changes are made to the Bill.

He spoke to HB21-234, which is a \$3M Bill directing 1.125M to Conservation Districts leaving 1.875M. These funds will be directed to helping water projects. He would like CACD to provide their input on ideas to spend the funds. There will be outreach for all Department stimulus Bill funding. The goal would be to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Les reported on WOTUS stating that not much has happened on the Federal side. EPA will be doing outreach with Roundtables around the country to get input on what the next version of WOTUS definition is going to be. He does not know the timeframe. He is anticipating that it will be 1 to 2 years out for a new definition.

*CDPHE is looking at the State authority for a dredge and fill program. They were unable to get a bill introduced this year. At the last stakeholder meeting they presented a different approach. It is basically a different Bill that does not provide them any new authorities but does specify that dredge and fill activities **are** a violation of the current State Water Control Act. This would allow them additional spending authority to conduct enforcement activities. It does not solve the things they were trying to cover under the old WOTUS rules. Within State Statutes, there are no exemptions for agricultural activities.*

CACD Youth Programs - Noah McCord:

Noah updated on Envirothon: Registration opened yesterday. They will be modifying how it's done this year. They will proceed with just the testing portion which will allow them to qualify a team for Nationals. He asked that everyone let folks know that it is free this year and they can register until the 2nd day of testing.

For Camp Rocky, they are hoping there is some flexibility at the venue to allow kids to cross between groups. Local guidance will dictate covid requirements. Noah is confident the Camp can happen this year one way or another. Many familiar faces will be back this year. He will be meeting with Bobbi on Thursday or Friday to discuss the final logistics. From feedback he has received, they are expecting a good turn out this year.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash informed the Board about the Southwest Conservation Districts water information program. They host an informative website. They have a part-time employee that organizes some big events. They have an 800-student event that takes place at Fort Lewis College every year on water issues. It brings in middle school students from the southwest part of the State. **Waterinfo.org** is the website.

NACD's summer meeting will be in Chicago this year on July 24 thru 27. He will be attending the meeting. The Southwest/Pacific Region meeting will be in Jackson, WY the end of August. The **2022 annual meeting** will be in Orlando, FL on Feb. 12 thru 16, 2022. They are looking for meeting topics. NACD hosted a web seminar on May 6. The information from that seminar is available.

The current administration has their America the Beautiful preliminary report in their 3030 proposal that has concerns from Conservation Districts. NACD has a survey out for Conservation District input.

NACD has a Forestry Resource Policy group that is looking for a representative from the southwest region. If you are aware of anyone that might be interested, please contact Rachel Theler.

The Stewardship and Education Committee has announced their 2022 poster theme, **Healthy Soil Healthy Life**.

NACD has an ARCGIS story map page. They highlight agricultural urban conservation initiatives. The Jefferson Conservation District received an Urban Conservation Grant from NACD and are highlighted on the story page.

The National Conservation Foundation hosts the Envirothon, and they are raising funds for the Envirothon. Bob Warner is our representative on the Foundation.

Financials for Jan/Feb/March 2021

Bobbi presented a quarterly report for approval of previous months Financials:

Director Mike Cleary moved to approve the 1st quarter 2021 Financials as presented. **Director Jim Cecil** gave the second. **Motion Passes**.

Mike asked if the Board would like to adopt quarterly financial reports instead of a monthly report. Bobbi asked for clarification on what reporting the Board would like to see. Mike stated that monthly reconciliations with P&L and Balance Sheet as a quarterly report would be sufficient. **Director Mike Cleary** moves to adopt quarterly financial reports with monthly reconciliations provided for review. **Director Jim Cecil** gave the second. Bobbi asked if she should provide a monthly summary reading that will **not** be voted on. The Board agreed with the summary reading. **Motion Passes**

CACD FINANCIALS: 04-30-2021:

Beginning Balance in checking on 4-1-21, \$ 118,736.00

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$ 6,857.70, Deposits & Credits Cleared \$ 57,447.74
Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of 4-30-21 \$ 169,326.04.

Total Uncleared Transactions = -\$ 3,284.99
Ending Register Balance as of 4-30-21 \$ 166,041.05

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (remaining payback due to reserve total \$15K)
Funds designated for Envirothon 2021 **\$9,806.16** (minus admin \$573.87 = **\$9,232.29**)
Funds designated for 2021 Partner Video Project **\$4,700.00**

Bobbi asked the Board if they would like to payback the reserve total of \$15K. If so, she would open a savings account at US Bank in La Junta. **Directors Mike Cleary and Scott Jones** would be signatories on the savings account. **Director Mike Cleary** made the motion to payback the \$15,000 to the reserve account and to facilitate ease of interbank transfer, open a savings account at US Bank in La Junta. **Director Gary Thrash** gave the second. **Motion Passes**

Bobbi noted that for accounting purposes they allocated Envirothon \$9232.00 to carry over from 2019 to 2020. They need to have a motion to move the funds classed to Envirothon to where the Board designates these funds from 2020 to 2021. She stated that with Envirothon going virtual last year and this year, there are enough funds for Envirothon but not Camp Rocky. Some of the funds are from a private donor and are unrestricted. She would like to visit with the donor about moving the funds and if the donor agrees, designate the funds to 2021, as mentioned above, and take a portion of these designated funds and apply it to 2021 Camp Rocky.

Director Mike Cleary asked how much money she is considering transferring. Bobbi stated that is would be around \$5,000. **Director Mike Cleary** moved to transfer the surplus from 2020 in Envirothon in the amount of \$9267.31 to the Envirothon budget of 2021 with the proviso that Bobbi contact the private donor and request that we further transfer \$5,000.00 of those funds to the 2021 Camp Rocky Budget. **Director Jim Cecil** gave the second. **Motion Passes**

Bobbi mentioned that they are holding \$4,700 in their account for a partner video project that was approved with Clint and Cindy. Christi Bode, the videographer, was delayed and will start in June. The funds will remain in the account until she asks for the deposit. The remainder of the funds will be coming from the cooperative agreement with NRCS. The video will be about Bob Warner and his many years dedicated to conservation at a local, state, and national level.

NOI as of 4-30-21 \$126,033.61 before the \$15,000 move in reserves

Cleared transactions after 04/30/2021 \$0.00
Uncleared transactions after 04/30/2021 -\$6,544.25
Register balance as of 05/16/2021 \$159,496.80

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (remaining payback due to reserve total \$15K)
Funds designated for Envirothon 2021 **\$9,806.16** (minus admin \$573.87 = **\$9,232.29**)
Funds designated for 2021 Partner Video Project **\$4,700.00**
NOI as of 5-16-21 \$119,489.36

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 5/06/21 \$2,554.91 (as of 5/15/21 \$0)
Total District Dues Paid as of 05/16/2021 **\$42,850.00** (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)
Total District Dues Paid as of 05/16/2020 **\$39,350.00** (up by \$3,500.00)
Grand Total District Dues PD in 2020 \$55,900.00

UARRP Activity 04-30-21 YTD:

Total pass-through income \$63,063.29

Total pass-through expenses -\$63,063.29

Total CACD Income Earned YTD 04-30-21 \$3,923.16

(Includes 5% Admin & Payroll Reimb)

Balance of UARRP Federal Funds Available \$53,585.08 from Mod #2 – There will be no Mod #3. CACD contract will end once this balance is expended, or by 12/31/22.

CACD/NRCS Programs-Revised 2021 Budget (Update will be given in June):

2020/2021 cooperative agreement funds remaining in the amount of \$109,740.42 (2021 agreement \$90,035.00 plus funds leftover from 2020 in the amt of \$19,705.42).

Conservator (3 issues)	\$4,500.00
Envirothon 2021 & 2022 Expenses & Admin	\$8,250.00
Camp Rocky 2021 Expenses & 10% Admin	\$8,250.00
2021 Annual Meeting & 10% Admin	\$32,000.00

Partners & Districts Education Workshops/Meetings Speakership Programs

Video Projects & Admin \$56,740.42

Total \$109,740.42

OPEN INVOICES

(4) Total \$1,047.81 As of 4/30/21

P&L April 2021 \$11,074.10 - P&L YTD 4-30-21 \$19,800.22

Balance Sheet = *Accts Receivable \$1,047.81 – Undeposited Funds \$8,400.00 (deposit date 5/19/21)

2020: \$11,257.50 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – Forgiveness App Submitted, pending SDA approval.

2021: \$11,257.00 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – Application Portal not yet open.

Director Jim Cecil moved to approve the financials as presented. **Director Mike Cleary** gives the second. **Motion Passes**

President Misc. Discussion and Updates:

A face-to-face summer meeting was discussed. No decision was made.

The next Legislative Meeting will be June 2, 2021. The next CACD BOD zoom meeting will be **June 16, 2021, starting at 7:30 AM**

Meeting adjourned at 9:56 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels

CACD Executive Director