

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
April 21, 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
Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed
Joe Pope, CACD Director – Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Bob Warner, CACD Alternate Director - CO NACD Representative - NCF Trustee
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison

Absent:

Mike Cleary, CACD Director - Gunnison Dolores Watershed
Nancy Berges, CACD Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed

Guests:

Clint Evans, NRCS
Les Owen, CDA
Cindy Lair, CSCB
Nikki Brinson, CSCB
Noah McCord, CSCB

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 February 17, 2021, and March 17, 2021 minutes. **Director Charlie Carnahan** made the motion to approve the minutes and **Director Joe Pope** gave the second. Without any further discussion, the motion to approve the CACD BOD's February 17, 2021 and March 17, 2021 minutes was **passed**.

CSCB Update:

Cindy Lair: Cindy said she was here on the call, and she feels the last meeting it kind of changed the tenure of our relationship she feels like. Because working on the soil health program as she has for the last couple of years, she has brought us many messages about updates and invited participation. The same with the Colorado for Healthy Soils. They have really tried to make sure CACD was aware of what was going on. Cindy just wanted CACD to know that after many years of doing a lot of work that helps CACD be able to function, she feels like she did not communicate clearly that a soil health program really does link with the past of the Conservation Districts.

The important part about it is that it links in with young people; young farmers and ranchers that are looking for their way. And every step of the way as we have talked about the STAR program, we have adapted it from other conservation districts to suit Colorado producers. She feels like it is not the answer to everything, but it is a way to bring funding that benefits the districts into the future. The future is where we need to be looking,

not in the rearview. If we are a rearview organization, we are going to fail. Cindy does not understand what CACD thinks is going on with the Department of Ag. They have been there; she has been there for almost 16 years doing as much as she possibly can do for Conservation Districts ultimately, and for CACD as an Association.

Cindy does not have any written list of things she wanted to go over with CACD today, she just wanted to say that the way things have gone with these Bills really could have been different and could have been a greater partnership. She thanks NRCS; they are not on the phone right now, but they have been wonderful. Clint and Randy both see the value, the compliment that a soil health program that is offered through CDA and with the Conservation Districts and with CSCB. To her that is what partnership is about.

Clint and Randy, they have seen how it can complement and they have supported it with their contribution agreement. They have match. They are off and running with offering some potential tools that could bring a lot of meaning to Conservation Districts and their place in the future. Cindy just wants to say that she is really disappointed in where we stand. It's heartbreaking after these many years of being there for CACD, and having this sense from CACD of "No, can't trust them," so she just wanted to say that.

*Cindy said that they are trying to get Rachel's position rehired. She has been pretty busy getting Ryan Taylor oriented and he is on off and on his way. He is excited to work with districts and that is what his marching orders have been. They got the **Conservator** at the printer, and she thanks her team. Nikki has been working a lot of different jobs and she has had a lot of hats on lately. Cindy is really glad that she was able to, even in Rachel's absence, she and Alyssa have worked hard to get the Conservator out the door and it is at the printer now. They also have an Annual Report that they have done, another annual report, and will be sending it out to all of their partners to show what the State Conservation Board has done in the past year.*

*A lot of other things going on and she knows Noah is extremely excited about **Camp Rocky** and about **Envirothon** and Envirothon is going to be a little different this year because of its remoteness, but definitely Noah is so excited to get Camp Rocky back up and where it used to be with numbers and excitement from young people that are interested in learning about natural resources and agriculture. Thanks very much to Noah for that. Cindy said she was done with her report and asked if anyone had any questions for her.*

***Director Gary Thrash** told Cindy that he was involved in a rather heated discussion, not personally, but between the President of the La Plata Conservation District and another Supervisor on the Board who is also a holistic management soils health consultant. She has been involved in the Soil Health legislation from the non-profit side of things. Her comment was that the Conservation Districts are doing nothing for soil health, so the NGOs need to get involved. For Gary, this is where he sees the rub, is that you have folks like that. She is a supervisor on a Conservation District who does not believe conservation districts are doing the job in soil health.*

Gary noted that Cindy had submitted a write up to Joe about what Cindy's office was already doing so Gary tried to explain the STAR program and hiring a soil health staff and stuff like that; that we are already doing separate from the legislation. It's just that rub between the NGOs and the conservation districts right now that Gary sees as being an issue that's not being resolved through that legislation. Gary said this supervisor looked very heated that the La Plata Conservation District does absolutely nothing and she is a board member that's an expert in soil health, so that was really frustrating for Gary to hear that discussion going on.

Cindy thanked Gary for his input. She stated that a year ago they were talking with New Mexico because they had already started a soil health program and similar to what Gary said, it was all NGOs, and they were not bringing along the conservation districts at all; they left them. Cindy said she thinks she has told CACD this story before, and it's like gosh no, we are not having that in Colorado. That is going to be our example of what not to do. And so, every inch of the way it's been this is a tool that the conservation districts can use. Now, is it voluntary? Heck ya, it has to be voluntary. It's a tool, it's an option, it's a way to build capacity if they can get funding through there, and they have been working their tails off getting grants and things like

that. And now they have the potential for stimulus money that could go to soil health. \$2M they are looking at. Cindy said they want to spend it on conservation district capacity to run the program. And, they also have ideas of partnering with other grower groups to work it as well. Looking at the soil health partnership nationally. That is probably not going to be a possibility but focusing everything that they can on providing the capacity so that it can be operated locally and maybe even by district managers who have some good technology and maybe they have a degree in Ag, maybe they don't. But Cindy says there are ways they can help train them to run it. And if they get this capacity money for the districts, the districts could run it, they could train the districts and they can talk to producers about the STAR program and do a consultation, take soil test, things like that.

Cindy said they are also at a place where she has talked to Clint a couple times about how they are planning to engage the field offices of NRCS. Cindy said they don't want to dump it in their laps and say oh this is supposed to be run by the districts, but you are running it. No, they do not want to do that to NRCS. Cindy said they want to get NRCS involved, and they want to get the resource team leads to say this is how they would like to work into it with their district. Because it is probably going to be different for every RTL as it is with every district.

Understanding that its different for NRCS through all the field offices as well as different for the districts. But trying to find a way to give them something they can plug in and play and work with and make a difference for their landowners. But ya Gary, you know the New Mexico, that's what they did. They have been running it by NGOs that really don't know much about Ag. Cindy said she does not claim to know much about Ag because she does not farm or ranch. But she does feel, and she has always felt very committed to doing what they could do to help farmers and ranchers with what they do, so she will leave it at that, unless there are other comments or questions.

Brett Moore stated it was his understanding that CACD supports the soil health program and soil health programs in the state, but what we have seen here is a couple of clunker bills. The Climate Resiliency Bill and the Soil Health Bill had a lot of problems with them and there have been multiple, multiple pages of amendments to both. Certainly, if that is the source of angst, certainly don't take that personally. That is just part of the process that we have to work on to make those Bills the best we can for CACD members.

Brett said we are still working and CACD had a conversation with the Commissioner yesterday and with Jordan, still trying to get into a position where we can move off of opposing those two bills, but both needed a lot of work when they came out. Brett stated this is one of the tools in CACD's toolbox is to be able to oppose a bill that is poorly written and try to get that thing back into better shape. So, if that is the source of the angst, please don't take that personally and if there are other issues maybe we can take it offline.

President Scott Jones stated he thinks, and he has always stated that, without going deep into it, but he believes in soil health and he thinks most of the conservation districts do as well. He and one of his district board supervisor who sits on the CCHS have had many discussions about it. Scott feels that there is not a CACD board member that takes it lightly and doesn't hold it on their shoulder. Personally, for himself he is afraid that the conservation districts are going to get left behind and listening to some of the testimony and listening to some of the members that are part of the collaboration it makes him think in the back of his mind that they are not really fans of conservation districts. Scott told Cindy he will try to reach out to her personally to talk. Scott asked if there were any other questions for Cindy.

NRCS Update-Clint Evans:

Clint Evans informed the Board that NRCS is currently pre-approving the EQIP applications. They are in the neighborhood of approving almost \$22M out of the \$30M allocation. So, roughly about 72/73% preapproved. They are on track to have their \$30M obligated by May 21st. Right at a month from today they should be at least 90/95% obligated. They requested an additional \$8M in EQIP funds across various fund pools to support everything. They received around \$5-6M in applications for WME's under the EQIP sign up opportunity.

Initially there was \$1M set aside for general EQIP and then they have roughly \$1.5M available under the Colorado River Salinity Control funding that is going to be designated for WMEs in those salinity project areas. NRCS may be able to fund somewhere 40 to 50% with the existing funds, but they went ahead and asked for enough money to fully fund all eligible applications under WMEs.

Clint said they are still waiting on guidance for the new EQIP Conservation Incentive contract signup opportunity. They talked about that opportunity during the March 16 State Technical Committee meeting, and they had a lot of support from the Republican River Water Conservation Districts and the folks out in the Ogallala region requested that their area be a priority region area for the conservation incentive contracts. This allows NRCS to go a minimum of 5 years and upwards of 10 years for EQIP contracts to pay management practice incentives payments for the first 3 years out of EQIP and then pay additional enhancement type activity payments through Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for the remaining 7 years of the contract. National is still working on the guidelines, which should be out in May.

NRCS had a record year for the sign up for Conservation Easement Program. There were 25 applications received for various land trust entities on 86,000 acres. \$34.3M dollars were requested. The initial allocation was \$8.8M so they will be able to fund about ¼ of the easement applications. He has requested additional monies from headquarters.

The Conservation Stewardship Program applications are being ranked right now and should be obligated by the end of June. NRCS should have the majority of their program contacts obligated earlier, unless there is a second allocation to support additional applications that come later in the year. NRCS will see what they get to support these programs and to try to continue to grow the programs in Colorado.

NRCS has been working on a Conservation Planning First project started internally within NRCS in order to do better workload management. They started in late December and early January. Then in February they rolled out a National Conservation Planning Partnership Priority between NRCS, NACD and the National Employee Association for Conservation Districts working together. They charged states to develop a state plan for putting conservation planning first to get TA back in the forefront of their program implementation.

Cindy Lair, Bobbi Ketels, Gary Thrash, as well as some of Cindy's staff have all been participating. There was a series of three meetings with the partnership going over some potential action items of what each can do and how each can boost outreach on conservation planning and technical assistance. This is all planned pretty well and NRCS is putting the final touches on it and it will be routed to all partners for signature and then sent to the NCPP and have it put on the books. This will be the initial plan and will be reviewed in June and NCPP will provide feedback to the states with any feedback for adjustments.

Clint will setup Bi-monthly meetings to continue the conversations to amend the plan as we need to and then revise on an annual basis. The goal is to take a cultural shift from focusing on program signups to putting TA back in the forefront and making sure when the producer comes in that the focus is to first do a resource inventory and develop a conservation plan. One of the things put in the state level plan is to encourage conservation district board member to create a conservation plan if they did not already have one, to participate with their local office and develop a conservation plan so they would have a good working knowledge of the process and be engaged at that level as well.

This effort can also dovetail in with the state Department of Ag and CSCBs efforts to implement the STAR program as well as other initiatives as we try to roll out this overall statewide soil health effort. Clint feels there is an opportunity here to work collaboratively as partners on things like soil health, or whatever terminology folks want to put on it whether you talk about regenerative ag, or the department is talking about now climate smart agriculture. They have not defined that for them yet, so there are a lot of definitions out there. He thinks there is a lot of work to do and there is a lot of collaboration that is going to be needed and Clint's main ask is that as we work together; Clint has been on a couple of watershed meetings to where there are some concerning things happening from his perspective. From his perspective he is concerned about

some things in the Southwest, in the San Juan area. Clint feels that the President of the La Plata Conservation District is using his position on the Board to try and get other Districts to take action against the NRCS to support his personal business as a TSP. He works as a technical forest provider writing forest stewardship plans. Clint had a conversation with him prior to the board member writing a letter to the NRCS Chief that was full of misinformation and inaccurate information.

Cindy had been kind enough to talk to the board member and suggested it be worked out at the local level. Clint talked to him and thought things were resolved and thought they were building a relationship, but the board member went ahead and got the Association of Consulting Foresters to send a letter to the Chief with all kinds of misinformation. Clint said it was like the board member did not listen to anything Clint said. At the San Juan meeting he made an effort to try to get all the Districts in the Watershed to essentially rise up against the NRCS and to state that NRCS is not supporting TSPs. Clint said the fact of the matter is that it is just not true.

NRCS funded every TSP Conservation Activity Planning application in the 6 years that he has been here and over the last 10 years on forest stewardship plans alone they funded every one of them; that is 155 forest stewardship plans covering 41,000 acres, \$367K in TSP funding going out the door. NRCS continues to support those. Yes, NRCS expanded their partnership with the American Forest Foundation. They have been working with the CO State Forest Service and what got this all stirred up is NRCS was further expanding to the Southwest Conservation Corp.

This particular individual had an opportunity as a consulting forester to work as a consultant and a mentor to these new forest techs and chose not to. Instead, he started this letter writing campaign that all it does, is it goes to the Chief and goes right back to Clint to write a response. Clint is asking that as these things come up at the local level, be a partner and encourage these folks to talk to Clint and set up a meeting. He is more than happy to have those conversations and work things out. The fact of the matter is this individual is spreading misinformation and now he is trying to use his position on the board to get others to support his own private business.

Clint is sorry, but he thinks this is wrong and knows this is a behavioral issue and not anything CACD has control over, but if CACD could help share that messaging that hey let's talk it out and work it out here in Colorado and show some evidence. In Montezuma county the number of Forest Stewardship Plans developed by TSPs went up in 2019 after NRCS started their partnership with the AFF, State Forest Service and US Forest Service on the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative. The number of TSP plans went up from 6 in the previous 8 years to 19 after the outreach that was done and the public awareness that was created about doing proactive forest stewardship planning.

La Plata County has there has only been 6 plans, with 3 plans written over the last 10 years and in Archuleta County, there were only 3 plans written in the last ten years. That is why NRCS reached out to AFF, the State Forest Service and other partners to try to build some capacity because there were not enough TSPs to do the work. There was over 2900 private forest owners in those counties in that small region in SW Colorado. In over 10 years TSPs have written a total of 24 plans, 18 of which were written in 2019 in Montezuma County. NRCS has the data to show that the information this person is trying to say is not accurate and not true and them trying to protect their own personal business.

The fact of the matter is he is trying to charge 3 times the approved rate. NRCS TSP rates do not pay the full cost and is a cost share. He can charge over that rate, but when you are out there trying to charge 3 times over the approved rate. He is not only competing with NRCS doing partner agreements, he is competing with other consulting foresters that are not charging that much. So, this is a concerning thing that is happening.

Clint also noted that in the Lower Ark meeting, a district board supervisor said that soil health was not any good and how we did not need another entity at the State level telling everyone how to farm. Clint said that has never been the message. He is aware of Cindy's updates as well as other partners about soil health in the

state, and it is not about telling people how to farm. It is about offering additional resources and assistance, it's about maybe looking at different alternatives, it's a way of working together collaboratively like Clint said at the beginning of his comments. That is not telling people how to farm. So that perception, if anything CACD could do to help convince people that it's not about telling people how to farm, it is about saying hey here is an alternative to try. If it can make you more profitable and productive, let's give it a go and see if it will work for Colorado.

The same individual at the Lower Ark meeting also stated that conservation easements are not worth it and that anytime you are giving up some right to property on your deed that it does not pay enough to be worthwhile. The easement program may not work for everyone however CSU did a study showing that a perpetual easement returns \$11 on a \$1 investment in that local rural economy. NRCS invested between \$10M and \$15M per year just in the Federal share for conservation easements in Colorado in the last 6 years annually. By the time you add on the land trust contribution of 20 or 25%, the landowner contribution, take that figure over the last 6 years, even if you just rounded down to \$10M a year, you are at \$60M, take it times 11 and see what that economic impact is and does to the local rural economies. It also preserves working agricultural lands and makes sure they will be there for the future generations.

Clint said that it is concerning that it seems like there is this building attitude or energy out there in a lot of the associations with a lot of the boards that is pretty negative. Negative about the soil health effort, about the easement program, negative about how they are working with TSPs. Clint said he would be honest, he does not know how to fix it. He is willing to have a conversation with anyone that is willing to listen, anyone who is willing to talk and to be open-minded, but if this trend continues, he does not really know how to get there to get us past it. One of his former Chiefs used to say conservation is about relationships and so for us to all be able to work together we have to be able to talk through problems and we can have differences of opinion that is fine, but for one or two individuals to go and try and influence all of the districts within a watershed to oppose certain programs or activities because they don't agree with it, that he thinks is wrong.

Clint thanked the board for listening, but just wanted to express in his opinion a lot of the folks that are involved in their partnerships around the state are headed in the wrong direction. He will make himself available anytime anyone wants to meet and have a conversation, but he is getting a little tired of some of the negativity and the pushback and rather than folks looking for opportunities, they are just building walls.

President Scott Jones thanked Clint for those comments. He said that he thinks we should circle back around and talk as a board to see what can be done to help partnerships. Scott also volunteered to be in on any of those calls, whatever he can do to help on his end because he does have a conservation easement on this ranch and so he sees the pluses and the minuses. Scott stated he was up in the mountains; he is in a different world and he is very well aware of that, but if somebody wants to talk to a person in the motions that has gone through it, he can talk to them. Scott asked if there were any other questions for Clint.

Director Nick Charchalis stated that he wanted to share that same emotion really, he is pretty frustrated with a lot of this stuff. A lot of this is tough, Clint and Cindy, you guys are in a tough position there because you have to represent the whole country. People are, he really does not know how to explain it, he thinks there is a lot of negativity out there. Politics have been just off the charts. He thinks people are worried and they are looking past those of us who are trying to help them really to keep their business together.

All of these are voluntary programs. You can say what you want, your choice is to not participate. And, of course, he wants to, and he does participate a lot and so to have those outliers and it kind of sounds like they are and it's too bad they are so vocal. You guys need to know there are a lot of people that support NRCS programs; all the different programs, the state programs too. In these bills at the state level, we want to include more of that; more participation with grants and funding coming with these new ideas of climate resiliency, the 5 STAR program, all that stuff is good, and we just need to get out there and try to explain to people to produce a vision of these programs for them. It's hard to control some of these people, we have them all over and in our position, he feels we need to, and we have a lot of districts that want these new bills.

CACD has kind of put on the breaks because we want to make sure that our districts as they exist are relevant and more relevant than they have been. And they have been darn relevant over the years. Nick told Cindy that he was sorry he missed her talk, and we will certainly work on it as a board and those programs kind of depending on what area you are in, they are a lot different and maybe they are not as lucrative in specific areas, but anyways thanks.

Director Gary Thrash noted, from his view from the San Juan Watershed it was frustrating for him to see kind of the targeted letters; they saw two from former US Forest Service employees come after us, so that caught him kind of blindsided too. Gary is not real sure how to deal with it from CACD, because like Clint said they manage their own boards and Gary is also concerned that La Plata is losing Board members because of this. Gary is also looking at conservation districts around the state that are on the verge of collapse. So, how do we deal with that. It is an ongoing thing that he is frustrated with too.

Gary told Clint he shares his feelings and glad Clint brought it up to us. Clint thanked Gary and said he appreciated his comments and that he is open to talk anytime so if we hear something and you think we need to jump on a call just let him know and he will try to make himself available as soon as possible. Clint told Nick he also appreciated his comments and thanked Scott again for letting him talk. Clint said we need all of us, right, so we need to continue to work together and look for solutions. Let's look forward and granted we got to look at the past sometimes to plan for where we want to go in the future, but he thinks looking ahead on how we can work together in improving conservation for Colorado and strengthening districts, strengthening our programs whether state or federal or otherwise, he thinks is the ultimate goal.

Clint wants everyone to know he is all in and we may disagree at times and that is fine; that is actually healthy, but it just felt like there was starting to be a lot of backdoor type stuff coming around and he was not quite sure how to get his hands around it. Clint knew it was not something he could solve by himself, so just reaching out, asking for help, asking for collaboration and he really appreciates it.

CDA Update-Les Owen:

Les Owen stated he would keep his update pretty brief. He does not have a lot of new updates. As a department they are kind of starting to move back towards occupying that space again at the Department. They are lifting their restrictions where they are able to get out and see people as long as the group sizes are less than 10 people. There are some restrictions, but they are not impossible to work with, so a movement in the right direction as far as the COVID side of things.

The main thing Les wanted to bring up this morning was a request for help. He is sure we all have had discussions about the state stimulus bills that are floating through down at the General Assembly. The ones that are very germane to the Conservation Division are the Senate bills that are 234 and 235 that Cindy had mentioned the \$2M for the soil health program, which much of that is targeted to go through districts and they got \$3M to run through the renewable energy and efficiency program. They are looking for projects because all of these dollars need to get out the door within the next 12 to 18 months from when the bills are signed so they will have to move very quick. So, if we know of any projects that fit in those be on the lookout.

The other one is the one he really needs some direction at the department on is the \$3M to spend on drought; drought relief, drought resilience. It mentions wildfires in it and recovering from that it mentions the freeze of the last growing season that impacted the Grand Valley. So, it mentions all of these impacts from bad weather and basically like a \$3M check with a lot of sideboards with how to spend it. \$3M is a good chunk of change but when you are trying to think about mitigating the impact of the drought on a \$45 billion Ag Industry it's not very much money. So, trying to figure out how to target the \$3M to where it is most meaningful is the charge and it is falling on the Conservation Division and himself to try to figure out where it will have the most impact.

He asked that the Board keep this in mind and have some discussions with your local boards and local coffee shops and how they should direct the \$3M that will be most beneficial to the Ag Industry in Colorado. That

would be the sideboards that he would put on it are extremely broad. Like he said it's a good chunk of change, but it could get spread so thin it could be somewhat meaningless.

Les also noted the other important bill to look at which he knows we are tracking as well, and he does not even think it has been introduced yet is the State Dredge and Fill program legislation that is being worked on right now and he knows Brett is engaged in that and we are all at the table on that and Les encourages CACD to stay there. And there have been a lot of conversations going on with potential amendments. The last he heard it appears to not have a sponsor at the moment. So, its an evolving situation and they will see where it goes.

Les said this is all he has for this morning and asked if anyone had any questions. Les also mentioned he just wanted to make sure we all know his phone number and if there is ever any of these conversations or disagreements or anything that is going on we can give him a call anytime. As Clint and Cindy said, he is always happy to jump on a call and have a discussion to see if we can get some things figured out. He knows there is a tremendous amount of frustration because of politics and that is what he thinks is driving a lot of this. He will leave it there and appreciates everyone and if anyone has any questions, holler them out.

Brett Moore thanked Les for that and said that we did when we were on the phone with Jordan and the Commissioner yesterday, we discuss the 234 and 235 briefly and we suggested that 76 times \$5k that's \$360K, or say 76 times \$10K that's \$760K, that's a pretty quick way to help spend a portion of those funds. Jordan did not like that idea because those stimulus packages are worked out in a way ahead of time, but Brett can say there are a lot of districts out there that would love to have a hand on some of those funds so we will keep working with Jordan, but certainly if there are any suggestions that you guys have on how we can communicate to the districts that this is money in the pipeline that is going to be accessible to them he thinks that it would make Bobbi's job and a lot of the hurt feelings and a lot of whatever the reason feelings are hurt out there it might help move us back to some reconciliation there.

Brett said to the other point on Dredge and Fill he had heard from someone that is very anti-dredge and fill that the House Majority had declined late Bill status for anyone to run the Bill. As far as we know, it is still in draft form and CDPHE does not have a Bill sponsor just yet or doesn't have a Bill Title in the House would be more accurate, so not sure if that will be coming this year or not, but Brett happens to get to monitor Water Congress state of affairs for another client, so just happen to have a few details on that, but he thanked Les for bringing that up as well. Les stated he figured Brett would have more details on that than he did and appreciates that. Brett added until it shows up as an introduced bill it is pretty hard to count on where it is going.

Director Nick Charchalis added that direct funding to the districts should be a serious consideration on some of these funds you guys have. Many There are a lot of districts that are struggling, which has already been said here today and he thinks that is a big deal. Most of the counties with this pandemic everything has kind of been slowed down, shut down. They just had a meeting the other day about working with the commissioners to try to get more money; of course, in Moffat County they are losing their energy, they are losing their power plants, they are losing their tax base, so funding is pretty critical. This is the case in a lot of places and particularly on the Western slope there are areas that are losing a pretty big tax base so some direct funding to some districts would be a good thing. That should be a huge consideration.

President Scott Jones asked Les about the ACE 404 ditch permit. Les said it is clear as mud. On April 23, 2021, Colorado will go under the new definition, the 2020 Rule that defines WOTUS. The scope of the jurisdiction from the Corps shrinks on that day. The Corps sent out a draft for a general permit that covers ditch to piping projects. That memo from last July through a wrench in things. He does not know when that permit will be active. If anyone is looking at doing ditch improvements, they should talk to the Army Corps. They may tell you that it is no longer jurisdictional and don't worry about it or they should know the status of that general permit for this region of Army Corps operations that should be coming online to address those types of projects. That is all the clarity he has right now, because there is not any. There are a lot of unknowns when

we fall under the new WOTUS Rule from the federal level CDPHE may become the regulating agency but currently there is no State program that covers this. But now there is just a tremendous amount of uncertainty with things and that's about all the clarity he can throw at it.

Legislative Update - Brett Moore:

Brett Moore gave the legislative update. The general assembly is almost half-way over. June 12th is the estimated final day. He has heard that they want to wrap up by Memorial Day. There is a full month of session left so there is a lot of time and opportunity for good and bad bills to continue to make their way through the process

For CACD purposes, they are still engaged in conversations on the Soil Health Bill 1181, and the Climate Resiliency Bill 1242 and looking at 234 and 235. CACD has 44 Bills on the legislative tracker. There is a mess of stuff out there. CACD has taken a position on a few Bills including Soil Health and the Climate Resiliency Office. They are opposing the Ag Workers Rights, Senate Bill 87 which will really turn upside down the way employers and employees interact in the Ag and rural sectors. It does not really take into account the realities on the ground as far as seasonal work and overtime and breaks and other things. CACD is part of a bigger coalition on this bill. Staying very busy down at the Capitol and please send any feedback along if you have it.

President Scott Jones asked for an update on Proposition 16. Brett said it went through the title board and that it has an approved title now. He believes that it is being litigated up to the Supreme Court. Bobbi stated that she is putting together an email for the Districts with an update and on how to come together so that everyone is on the same page and coming forth with the same message. It should go out tomorrow for approval before sending to the districts.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash said that tomorrow morning there will be SW Regional conference call meeting to update everyone on what is happening in the Region. They are also finalizing a fall meeting in Jackson, WY. He asked that he be notified of anything that should be brought up at the meeting.

Gary reminded the Board of the request made by the Region to donate extra funds to help with travel expenses for the President and Board. They have not finalized how to deal with dues. There are funds left from the Western Region that they may be able to use, and they are also talking about a gun raffle to raise funds. This is still an unknown on how this will work out.

A news report that came out from NACD is that there is a Wind, Water, Wildfire Summit webinar on May 6 covering the West Region. They will be dealing with drought issues that Less brought up. There may be ideas on how we could use some of the drought funds that will be available in Colorado.

Next week is the 66th Annual Stewardship Week. The education theme is Healthy Forest, Healthy Communities. There will be information online for use by educators. NACD is interested in stories on how this material is being used around the state. The NACD Summer meeting will be July 24-27 in Chicago. This is where Hugh Hammond Bennet approved the first conservation district, so this is a big event for conservation. This was the 75th year for NACD as the National Association so conservation is still healthy in parts of the world, maybe not in all areas of Colorado but it is kind of refreshing what other states are doing.

A virtual Spring Fly In was held. CACD participated and met with some of the Colorado Legislators, including staff from the offices of Sen. Bennet, Congressman Buck, Sen. Hickenlooper, and Congresswoman Boebert.

The NACD 2022 Annual meeting will be held in Orlando, Fl. Feb. 12-16, 2022.

Bob Warner added that NACD will follow through with a meeting in New Orleans in 2023. If anyone would like to be on the SW Regional meeting tomorrow, they will send them the Zoom information.

Gary wanted to thank Cindy for training Rachel Theler well as she has come over to the NACD side as the new Western Region Specialist, so this is good for us still being able to work with her.

CACD Youth Programs:

Noah McCord reported that **Envirothon** was scheduled to be rolling around next week, but now will be pushed out a little bit. This year is just crazy and hectic for our subject matter experts where they are all being able to get back to their field work for the first time in a while. And then the schools are having state testing moved around so we are just trying to confirm dates and times. We are going to have an Envirothon this year. The plan has changed for about the 20th time on what that is going to look like, but we are probably looking from 2 to 3 weeks from now and we will be having a scaled back virtual version of the Envirothon and making sure we are making it as low barrier as possible for teachers and teams that want to participate and districts that want to support those teams so we can make sure we are keeping people engaged, even when we can't bring them all together.

Camp Rocky is looking very positive, but with covid restrictions and what this will look like. We have not heard anymore from the host facility on COVID restrictions and obviously they have to be a little bit more careful. Their County has rolled back some restrictions and we hope to see new plans for restrictions as it applies to liability for the RMMC camp. Bobbi has received confirmed names for 5 people that want to attend camp which is a good number for where we are at this year and that is a good sign for when we open up registration in the next couple of weeks. Bobbi will push that out and do FB campaigns. Noah feels we will have a good turnout. Amy has identified some returning youth leaders.

Noah has identified some adult support so we can have that over 18 adult supervision help this year as well. Noah was contacted on Friday Colorado Mountain College who runs an outdoor leadership adventure camp, and they have a lot of well-trained folks who have been through their program before and have a lot of experience. These people wanted to go back but there are not enough staff spots open, so we were contacted to see if we had need for volunteers and Noah confirmed we do, so staff is looking good. This is all Noah has on these two programs

Noah wanted to also mention he and Alyssa when they are working with Districts, they are really trying to push district engagement with CACD and really trying to encourage them to work with Bobbi on different opportunities for education and workshops that CACD can support. Some of those newer districts where they have not been very active and where they are now getting boards back together Noah is trying to make sure they are talking to them about the importance of engaging with CACD and taking advantage of what CACD can offer them, but also thinking about what the districts need to contribute to get those benefits and how important it is to have a collective voice for the conservation districts. This is all Noah has for us this month.

Bobbi added that covid restrictions have been turned over to the Counties. They are requiring a scaled back Camp, but she hopes to still have good participation. They are treating it as a "go." In a normal year they start advertising in February. But this year it was delayed.

Director Nick Charchalis said he has reached out to Routt CD and North Park CD but has not received replies. He asked Noah could help to reach out and engage with them. He also told Noah that the School Principal in his area would like to participate in the Envirothon. Nick will give the Principal contact information to Noah and Bobbi. Further discussions took place between Nick and Noah on these two subjects.

CACD FINANCIALS: 03-31-2021:

Beginning Balance in checking on 3-1-21, 2021, \$113,023.03

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$5,908.99 , Deposits & Credits Cleared \$11,621.96

Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of 3-31-21 \$118,736.00

Total Uncleared Transactions = -\$2,565.70

Ending Register Balance as of 3-31-21 \$116,170.30

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**)
NOI as of 3-31-21 \$80,288.99

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 4/06/2021 \$282.78

Total District Dues Paid as of 04/20/2021 **\$32,050.00** (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)

Total District Dues Paid as of 04/30/2020 \$35,750.00 (down by \$3,700.00)

Grand Total District Dues PD in 2020 \$55,650.00

UARRP Activity 03-31-21 YTD:

Total pass-through income \$62,332.04

Total pass-through expenses -\$62,332.04

Total CACD Income Earned YTD 03-31-21 \$3,856.60

(Includes 5% Admin & Payroll Reimb)

Balance of UARRP Federal Funds Available \$54,288.32 from Mod #2 – Most likely will not be a Mod #3

CACD/NRCS Programs-Revised 2021 Budget:

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

(6) Total \$19,768.89 (NRCS & UARRP) As of 4/20/21 \$0

P&L Q1 2021 \$8,726.12

Balance Sheet = *Accts Receivable \$19,768.89 – As of 4/20/21 \$0

2020: \$11,257.50 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – (Forgivable SDA Loan) – Forgiveness App in process.

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

Bobbi noted that she has received \$7,500.00 for a video project with NRCS and CSCB to be held until the project starts. Approval of the Financial Report was moved, but the decision was made to table until the May meeting since there were only 5 directors still on the call.

President Misc. Discussion and Updates:

Bobbi informed the Board that she has prepared a Quarterly Report to go along with the Annual Report for 2020 to be used at the Watershed meetings. Brett will also include a page with the Legislative Report.

Director Jim Cecil asked about the CAWA meetings. Bobbi reported that they are working on their summit. She sends a monthly recap, from Greg Peterson to the Board. At the last meeting, their grants were reviewed. They did not receive the CWCB grant.

Director Gary Thrash mentioned that at their Watershed meeting, a District asked if administrative functions could be combined with other Districts. This would be things like reports to DOLA. Gary asked them to come up with a firm proposal. Maybe the CACD District Outlook Committee could assist with this request. Bobbi said that the letter of request was sent to the Board. Jim noted he is aware of one manager that is handling several Districts.

Director Nick Charchalis addressed Prop 16 again and suggested that the Board take a stance on this Proposition. Bobbi said she has an email ready for the Districts and she asked Nick to review the information in the email. Terry provided Bobbi with a video and Fact Sheet. CACD is signed up to receive the most current information. Further discussions took place. Nick will review what Bobbi put together for the districts.

Bobbi asked if the Board wants to take a position on the Ag Workers Bill amendments or stay opposed. She needs this information for an update at the meeting tomorrow. Jim asked the board to get any comments to Bobbi. If she does not hear from Board members, she will report that CACD is still opposed and still considering commenting on amendments. Further detailed discussion took place.

The next Legislative Meeting will be May 5th. The next CACD BOD zoom meeting will be **May 19, 2021, starting at 7:30 AM.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 AM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director