

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2021, via Zoom**

Attendees:

Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed Director
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Gary Thrash, Director - San Juan Basin Watershed /CO Representative to NACD
Jim Cecil, Director - Republican River Watershed Director
Charlie Carnahan, Director - Upper South Platte Watershed
George Fosha, Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed Director
Nick Charchalis, Director - North Platte/White/Yampa River Watershed
Nancy Berges, Director – Lower South Platte Watershed
Bob Warner, CO Alternate Representative to NACD
Brett Moore, CACD Lobbyist

Absent:

Mike Cleary, Director-Gunnison Dolores Watershed
Joe Pope, Director – Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director

Guests:

Clint Evans, NRCS
Les Owen, CDA
Nikki Brinson, CSCB
Noah McCord, CSCB
Rachel Theler, CSCB
Alyssa Clarida, 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. Scott informed meeting attendees that **Executive Director Bobbi Ketels** will not be in attendance due to emergency surgery. **Director Mike Cleary** will not be in attendance as his brother just passed away. **Vice President Tyler Neely** will take over the meeting when **President Scott Jones** leaves at 8:30.

Prior Meeting Minutes:

President Scott Jones asked for a motion to approve the January 14, 2021, minutes. **Director Charlie Carnahan** noted that the minutes stated he was absent, which is incorrect. **Director Nick Charchalis** noted that his name needs to be corrected in the Discussion and Update Section. **Director Charlie Carnahan** made the motion to approve the minutes with corrections noted and **Director Nick Charchalis** gave the second. Without any further discussion, the motion to approve the CACD BOD's January 14, 2021 minutes was **passed**.

Legislative Update – Brett Moore:

Brett reported that the Legislature reconvened yesterday February 16, 2021, at 10:00 am. The House and Senate introduced about 200 Bills yesterday, which was expected. Typically, 20 to 25 of those Bills have to do with water or natural resources. He will be reviewing those Bills to see which apply to CACD and put them on the tracking sheet. There will be a Legislative Committee meeting call on the 1st Wednesday of the month. The next call will be the 3rd of March. Emergencies will be reviewed sooner.

CDA Update-Les Owen: -

Les Owen updated the Board on CDA activities. He noted that there has been an extension on the comments for US Forest Directive changes. It has been extended until April 17, 2021. Overall, the amendments to the handbook are good.

He also said that there are no changes to the soil health program and how it interacts with ACRO. He does not have an update currently. There has been a draft Bill circulated from the Collaborative for Healthy Soils. He does not know when it might be introduced and be available for others to review. It looks like the covid restrictions will be eased up on the 1st of March and allow more to work in the office.

Brett Moore asked if the new CDA soil health person will be administering the soil health program in this Bill? **Les** stated that if the Bill happens, yes. This person will oversee the whole soil health program including implementation of the STAR program and its implementation at the pilot Districts, grant funding and overall growth of the soil health program. The person will report to **Cindy Lair**.

Brett Moore noted that the Soil Health draft Bill came out yesterday. He sent a marked-up draft to the CACD Board. The first draft had a lot of changes, so it is not ready for introduction yet. Of more concern is what can happen without this Bill and what will be added to the new soil health person's job when and if the Bill passes. **Les** agreed. **Les** said that he welcomes calls from Board members if they need additional information as this moves along.

Director Gary Thrash noted that CACD received a letter from White River and Douglas Creek CDs questing CACD for not pushing the CSCB as the lead in the soil health program. Gary is confused on what they might expect CACD to do on top of what they have already been doing. Other Board members agreed with Gary and are not sure how to further respond to the letter at this time. There was also a water issue in the letter. Further discussion took place on both issues, and it was suggested that they work on these items during the next legislative call.

Director George Fosha asked **Brett** to comment on their discussion with **Senator McCormick** and how CACD emphasized they wanted CSCB very involved in the soil health program. **Brett** noted that CACD had a phone discussion with **Senator McCormick**, State Rep from Longmont, who is running the CCHS Soil Health Bill. They went through the partnership document with CACD, NRCS and CSCB. They wanted everyone on the same page as they work on this Bill.

CSCB Update:

Nikki Brinson noted that CSCB will have a new admin person starting soon. The announcement will be made once she is on board.

NRCS Update-Clint Evans:

Clint Evans gave the NRCS update. He first thanked **Director Nick Charchalis** for his assistance with the fencing specs. He provided important input about the wire in the specs. He also thanked **Director Gary Thrash** and **Exec. Director Bobbi Ketels** for participating in the NCPP partnership calls. There were two meetings where the National Conservation Planning Partnership initiative was discussed. There is now an opportunity for the State to develop an action plan for things they would like to implement. Several meetings will be planned in March to develop the State plan. NRCS has been working on some items and they have a template with actions they plan to implement into year 2022. There is also a customer survey related to the NCPP. It is on the NACD page and the NCPP site.

Clint told the Board that they have a system called **govdelivery**. This has been used by FSA and is now open for NRCS access. This will allow them to have direct electronic contact with customers.

NRCS participates in a Tri-State Leadership Development Program with Oklahoma and New Mexico. Each State has 5 employees participating in employee development and leadership programs. They divide the group into teams, and each does a project. This year one of the teams did a project on energy and Ag energy related practices. A survey will be going out to NRCS customers asking what the producer needs from an Ag energy perspective and where NRCS practices fit within those needs.

NRCS is still waiting on their budget. It is now due the 1st week of March. They are operating on Advisory Allocation and receive funds a few weeks at a time. They are unable to execute any agreements or contracts at this time. **Randy Randall** and **Clint** will be working on the agreement template **Clint** spoke about at the last CACD meeting. This agreement will talk about opportunities for Districts to develop demonstration projects. He hopes to have this template to CACD in the next couple of weeks.

Director Jim Cecil asked if the demonstration projects would be run through CACD or directly through the Districts. **Clint** stated that his idea is to create an agreement with CACD and CACD would basically notify Districts and let them know about the opportunity. **Clint** is thinking these demonstration projects will relate to soil health, forest health, water quality, weed control, invasive species on range land, herbicide treatments, etc.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner

Director Gary Thrash reported that both he and **Bob Warner** participated in the virtual NACD meeting held from Feb. 1 thru Feb. 10. One of the speakers was a 17 yr. old supervisor from Kentucky, one of the youngest elected officials in the US.

The National Conservation Planning Partnership **Hugh Hammond Bennett Award**; for people that work in conservation, was given to **Sylvia Hickenlooper** from Longmont, CO. She has 18 years as a Soil Conservationist with the NRCS. The Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation Districts were credited with contributing to her success.

A special diversity, equity and inclusion conservation panel came out with a policy statement of **“How You Reach Out to Underserved Populations”** that we deal with. Making sure they are included in the decision processes that we have.

Locally our southwest region NACD representative, **Jeff Burwell**, retired at the end of the NACD Annual Meeting. The position has been advertised.

Upcoming NACD meetings include the **Spring Fly-In** on March 22 thru 26th that will be virtual. Information will be forthcoming. **Gary** asked if anyone would be interested in the virtual meeting with our representatives at the Federal level. **Clint** stated that if CACD has any appointments with Federal Reps, he would like to the join the meeting and have a couple of the Tri-State participants join the meeting for the experience. **The Summer NACD meeting** is going to be in Chicago, IL, and the **Southwest and Pacific Region** meeting is going to be in Jackson, WY in September.

The Resolution on the **NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**, sponsored by Oregon and **Colorado**, was modified, and passed. They dropped the funding levels to leave it open instead of a specific amount. They hope additional attention will be paid to the Easement Program in the next Farm Bill.

One year ago, a resolution was passed at NACD for qualifications for Board of Directors that requires each of those people to be an active board member on a local conservation district. **Gary** noted that since he is no longer on his local District board, he can no longer be a representative for Colorado. He can be an alternate. **Bob Warner** will remain the lead for Colorado. The change was effective this year. The NCF virtual auction raised about \$65,000.00.

Bob Warner added that next year's annual meeting will be in Orlando, FL and the 2023 annual meeting will be in New Orleans, LA. Next year the summer meeting will be in Bismarck, SD (2022). Case International provided 3 tractor rentals for the auction. John Deere provided a gator. That is where the majority of the NCF auction funds were raised.

Bob said the meeting was well done and it was a good meeting. He is still on the Board of the NCF. If any other member would like to be the CO Rep for the NACD, he would welcome the participation.

Brett asked that they send the meeting information to Bobbi so she can disseminate the information to the Board.

Monthly Financial Update:

In the absence of Executive Director, Bobbi Ketels, no financials were reported.

CACD Programs:

Envirothon Program Director **Noah McCord** reported that the National Envirothon has changed course and will now hold the competition virtually. Noah's goal is to still have qualified teams attend the virtual competition. He has attended meetings with subject matter experts and coaches throughout the state. They plan on having each subject matter expert record a lesson and instruction video walking students through workshop instruction as it would have happened in person. Students will be able to follow along and do some tests and work out of the color book with soils and make some determinations rather than a closed book written test. It will be self paced. Topic for the year is **Water Resources**. They will come up with a water resources scenario that students will be given based on actual data from a watershed in Colorado. They will be asked what they would do, given the information, to resolve the problem.

Presentations will be recorded so judges can look at them in advance. After judges review the videos, there will be a live meeting with the judges and the teams.

Noah stated that they may need to purchase a few pieces of equipment. \$500-\$700 might be needed. If the Board agrees, he plans to make these purchases with the rollover funds from the 2020 Envirothon. There is about \$9,000.00 in the account. The competition will be the 3rd week of April and spread over 9 days. The awards ceremony will also be virtual.

Camp Rocky is coming up soon. **ED Bobbi Ketels** has attempted to reach the host Camp several times but has yet to speak with them. The Camp is scheduled for the week after July 4th. **Noah's** goal is to double the attendance which means 35-40 students. Current plans are to hold the Camp as safely as possible given the covid situation.

Director Scott Jones asked **Noah** how long it will take to order the needed equipment. **Noah** stated that he will need to start ordering the necessary equipment within the next two weeks. **Director George Fosha** moved to approve the \$500 to \$700 funding needed for Envirothon. **Director Jim Cecil** seconds the motion.
Motion Passes

Noah stated that he will be setting up an inventory system as he will be using both CACD and NRCS funds for reusable items. **Director George Fosha** asked Noah to send them documentation, once the system is set up, so CACD has an idea on how the program is going to work.

Conservator Spring Issue Presentation:

Rachel Theler, CSCB told the Board that she, **Bobbi**, and **Alyssa** met to discuss the new plan for the Spring Conservator. **Rachel** asked the Board the following questions:

- 1) Is there anything they particularly liked about the Conservator that they would like continued in future issues? **Brett** stated it was a beautiful publication. Others agreed.

- 2) *Is there anything they do **not** like and would like to see discontinued? **Bob** said he thought it was great. **Nick** asked even though he liked the issue, are printed publications worth the expense? **Rachel** replied that they had 300 copies printed, it was 32 pages, total cost was \$1,456.26. Next issue will be less expensive since they are planning 24 pages. The Board will take these questions under advisement.*

*The next issue will be about education. **Alyssa Clarida** reported that they plan on having 3 issues this year. The first one being the issue that came out in the fall, a spring issue, and a summer issue. The spring will be focused on education highlighting Envirothon and Camp Rocky. The summer topic will be soil health. She added that they had received feedback from other entities, such as CDOT, Rural Highways, and CPW Private Lands, which are involved in the soil health world and would like to be contributors for this. They are excited that CACD is putting this together and see it as a way to write an article on how Districts can partner with these agencies and organizations. So far for this Spring there are a few thoughts including a message from the CACD President, highlight on Youth Education, recap of the CACD annual meeting, CACD District education workshop program and a spotlight on education coordinators, virtual education, and a “how to” guide for a successful workshop.*

***Jim Cecil** asked about the time schedule for articles. **Rachel** said the content deadline is Feb. 29 with the first draft deadline of March 15. She hopes to stay as close as possible to those dates. **Rachel** mentioned that everyone should have had a draft of the publication and would like to continue to do this as a package. Timeline for the review will remain the same.*

Other:

***Brett Moore** read the letter from the White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts, dated February 12 to the CACD Board. **Brett** suggested that these Districts be invited to the next Policy Committee meeting and give them 10-15 minutes to express their concerns. CACD wants Districts involved in the processes. Discussion followed. It was thought that having them join the meeting would be helpful.*

President Misc. Discussion and Updates-Scott Jones

***President Scott Jones** left the meeting at 8:30. CACD Lobbyist Brett Moore concluded the meeting.*

*The next CACD BOD call will be **March 17, 7:30 AM**. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM*

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director