

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2021, via Zoom Meeting**

Attendees:

*Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
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
Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative
Nancy Berges, CACD Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison*

Absent:

*Mike Cleary, CACD Director - Gunnison Dolores Watershed
George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Joe Pope, CACD Director – Lower Arkansas 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
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 forward with the agenda.*

Prior Meeting Minutes:

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

NRCS Update - Clint Evans:

*Clint provided an update on the EQIP **Conservation Initiative Contract (CIC)** sign up. The closing date was extended until the 21st. The application number was well over two hundred. He feels that at least 90% of Colorado's \$9M will be obligated. The list of enhancement activities was expanded from the initial release to better fit activities for producer operations. CIC is a bridge between general EQIP contracts and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). It adopts activities from both programs. It allows ranches to have enhancement activities without having a full CSP contract and having to enroll their entire operation in the program.*

CIC allows the producer to enroll a portion of their operation in the contract and see how the enhancement benefits them. If it works, they can transition into a full CSP contract at the end of the CIC program. Funds will be obligated throughout August and the early part of September.

The general EQIP obligations are almost closed out. There are about 5% of funds remaining out of a total of \$34-\$35M. There was a higher cancellation rate in applications this year. Applicants got nervous once they saw the final dollars in the contract and were concerned about the process increasing. This was not a surprise since prices are increasing across the board. The national office is looking at options to reinstitute a former program or something similar, which went away with the 2018 Farm Bill, which allows for a regional index payment rate that adjusts for inflation. Our payment schedule region includes Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona. They are considering making this option applicable for all years of the contract.

Clint thanked Bobbi and the CACD Board for getting the Conservation First Initiative information out to the entire State of Colorado. Implementation has started slowly, but they hope to get it rolling. The CIC program and EQIP cancellations caused a domino effect for staff. The eastern plains offices will be working with a heavy CRP workload. This has caused a major shift in the workload and will take time. Following the Conservation Initiative First program, the current NRCS plan is to have 70-80% of conservation plans completed up front of the application. They hope to have this accomplished by FY 2024.

Clint also thanked the CACD Board for their willingness to enter into a new agreement for offering demonstration projects. This agreement has not been finalized yet. Total funds will be \$100,000 with 75% coming from NRCS (\$75k). These funds will be available to all Districts for demonstration projects. Districts could possibly match different State funds from stimulus funds to the districts and STAR program funds as a match for these projects. Clint hopes that this is the start of a program that will grow in the future.

Due to the COVID-19 increase in cases, National NRCS is limiting employee travel. The concern in Colorado is not as great as in other states. It is staying static here.

CSCB Update – Cindy Lair:

*Cindy thanked **Director Gary Thrash, Director Jim Cecil, and Clint Evans** for taking the time to travel to **Bob Warner's Ranch** to help with the video that CSCB, NRCS and CACD has been working on. Bob has quite a legacy with conservation in Colorado and nationwide. She is looking forward to viewing the video.*

CSCB has interviews coming up for Rachel's position, which is the southeastern portion of the State. This position will be the upper and lower Arkansas and Rio Grande areas. This position will also cover the outreach and communications position working with NRCS. The Western Slope position interviews will be tomorrow. They hope to have this position on board the middle of August. She stated that if any of the CACD Board members would like to be part of the interviews, please let her know. The interviews will be virtual instead of in person to accommodate the applicants.

*CSCB will be sending out an email to all Districts with the **STAR** program application information. There are (16) spots for Districts and (4) spots for different grower groups as well. Colorado Corn has indicated their interest in participating. Cindy plans to take one of the soil health positions, partially funded through NRCS, and have that person work with Colorado Corn. If there are more than (20) or (30) Districts that want to participate in the STAR program, they would like it to be available to everyone. They have applied for other grants to help with funding, and she hopes to find enough money to not leave any district out that desires to participate. However, at this time that is not known. The application period will start the beginning of August and go through the end of August. Decisions will be made in time for the State Conservation Board meeting in September.*

CSCB is currently taking applications for the **DCT program**. CSCB has reached out to the Districts and encouraged them to ask their RTL if they need planning positions to accommodate the Conservation Planning First program.

The upcoming **CSCB meeting** will be **Sept. 13-14** in Alamosa. They will be taking tours to look at different things while there. If CACD would like to be a part of the meeting, please let her know.

Director Nick Charchalis asked if the grazing applications have been completed for the STAR program. Cindy stated that they are finalizing the STAR forms for the rangeland setting. STAR contracts will start on Jan. 1, 2022, so they will have them out by then.

Legislative Update - Brett Moore:

Brett noted that things are a bit slower right now. The Governor's bill signing window closed July 8th. The 2021 Legislative Sessions is officially over. All bills that were moving through the process are either signed, not signed, or vetoed.

The legislature did not have interim committees such as Water Resource, Forestry Committee, and Transportation Committee. Those meetings were not held in 2020 so they are announcing the members of those committees but not the schedules yet. He is waiting to see the schedule as CACD does follow the Water Committee because those Bills usually end up on the tracking list. The interim Water Committee also meets around the state and offers an opportunity for Board members to get face time with Legislators in their communities. He will let Bobbi know when the schedules are announced.

CACD is in communication with a large ag group regarding legal issues around the Ag Labor Bill that passed. Some court rulings have come down since the passage that may affect the Bill. He will keep everyone posted on that Bill as well.

There will be an Ag Council summer meeting. He will monitor that schedule.

The Legislative Committee will continue to meet. They have been meeting on the 1st Wed. of each month to review past year Resolutions and where they are. They continue to provide feedback to Bobbi on how to improve and streamline the resolution process for the annual meeting and put the final changes in their complete Policy Book revamp completed last year. He is suggesting that they produce a different way to look at their action items, whether they are listed in the Policy Book as an addendum or otherwise noted, so that folks know CACD is working on them. He would like something more transparent in structure that folks can vote on at the annual meeting.

Bret mentioned that the pandemic allowed people to remotely testify on legislative issues. He asked CACD if they would be interested in advocating at Ag Council or directly to Legislative leadership, to maintain the ability to remotely testify. In the past, remote testimony was allowed at specific locations where a person was able to go to a local community college or university and use a classroom for remote testimony.

This year all were able to testify from any phone or computer in the state. This would continue to be of special benefit to remote and rural areas of the State. **Director Nick Charchalis** stated he feels it is a great benefit for remote areas of the State and it is important to that representation. **Director Scott Jones** feels it is also good to be there in person and be face-to-face with Legislators. Brett added that Legislators did lose focus with remote testimony. Remote testimony will not be allowed for every bill. Brett thinks that for CACD to testify in person is still good but for those that are enthusiastic about a subject; in some cases, it is a long journey to testify.

Directors Scott Jones, Charlie Carnahan and Nick Charchalis feel it is a good idea to support remote testimony. The Executive Committee of the Legislature will have a roll in voting on this issue. Brett would like to have this

addressed by producer groups. **Director Jim Cecil** moves that Brett pursue the remote testimony option. **Director Nick Charchalis** seconds the motion. With no discussion, **Motion Passes**.

CDA Update - Les Owen:

Les updated on the SB234 drought stimulus funding. CDA is running behind schedule as they just found out all the spending plans for each of the Bills must get approval through the administration, so there are more hoops to jump through than they thought. Not having an existing program, they must develop a new grant program, and this takes time. Conservation District payments created under that Bill have been sent out.

The GMUG forest plan revision is starting up again. All Federal land planning has been at a standstill. CDA is a cooperating partner on the GMUG, and a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow to get the process moving again. The Eastern CO BLM Resource Management Plan is also ready to start again.

Les thanked **Directors Scott Jones and Nick Charchalis** for their willingness to serve on the livestock focus group on the Wolf plan. The stakeholder advisory group will be meeting in Craig next Tuesday. Les encouraged all livestock producers to participate in any meetings held in their area. All concerns need to be heard and included in a plan as this moves forward.

CACD Programs Update:

Noah McCord reported on Camp Rocky. This year there were ten campers. They were from every corner of the State. It was a small, but mighty group. There were a number of reasons for the low attendance including COVID and teens having more job opportunities than normal this summer. It is hoped that next year it will be a larger group. Noah is starting the advertising for next year now. There were (4) Jr. Leaders along with (19) volunteers and instructors in addition to the campers. They had practicing resource professionals from Federal and State agencies, Municipalities, Counties, NGOs, and the private sector. Kids were given a well-rounded look at careers in conservation and resource management. Noah received thank you emails and phone calls from parents as their children now see conservation career opportunities. Noah also gave a presentation at the Camp on the creation of the conservation movement and the importance of conservation districts.

Noah was able to speak with the instructors about Envirothon. He stated that now they have a new robust team of supporters for Envirothon in forestry and fish and wildlife.

Bobbi thanked Noah for giving the presentation on CACD and the Districts. She added that early on registration was much higher. They lost (7) participants for various reasons. She wants to discuss moving the dates to the July 4 timeframe to see if this possibly had an impact on numbers this year. Bobbi expressed that Noah has great ideas for next year's camp. She noted that in spite of Noah's efforts to put on a virtual Envirothon there were no registrations received, showing any participation from schools in the State. If anyone has any ideas for the future, she and Noah would like to hear them.

Bobbi and Noah will work on a Camp Rocky news release and have a follow up meeting with the Committee and the staff members and wrap up financials by the end of this month.

The education workshop and speakership grant has seen an increase in applications. She has submitted one to Randy that will be in February. She is trying to allocate the remaining funds before the current NRCS contract expires in spring of 2022. Covid may still have an impact on the meetings and workshops between now and then. She is working with NRCS on the demonstration grant program which will be a separate contract from the education and outreach contract. CACD will work with NRCS on a new Education/Outreach contract. There is another proposal for CACD partnering with CCA and NRCS on education outreach that is in the works that will fall under the current NRCS outreach agreement. This would allow CACD to bring education and outreach to the Districts as everyone continues to work with the covid moving target. A call is scheduled for July 27th. She will

give a breakdown of dollars once all the information is available. CACD is also partnering with the Society for Range Management (SRM) for teacher workshops in hopes of adding this to the curriculum for Ag teachers. The first two will be with Routt and Pine River CDs. Other Districts have expressed interested as well.

Bobbi sent Annual Meeting ideas to the Board. Her ideas include themes, speakers, topics, and breakout sessions. The Annual meeting will be held in November. She wants to have things in place in the next 10 days. She would appreciate feedback from the CACD Directors and CSCB as soon as possible.

Director Nick Charchalis offered to be on the Annual Meeting Committee. Bobbi will set up an Annual Committee meeting call. Bobbi reminded everyone that there is always the possibility that the annual meeting will have to be virtual depending on the covid situation. **Director Gary Thrash** informed Bobbi that the location planned, Hotel Elegante, is being converted to apartments after this year. Bobbi will check the status as she was not aware of the renovation. **Director Nick Charchalis** thinks having a combined virtual and in-person meeting is a good idea. It allows Districts easier participation. CSCB, Nikki and Noah, will let Bobbi know what level of participation they will have during the Annual meeting.

Abbey Gray is still looking for two CACD Board members to participate in review of matching grant applications. The review process starts next week so CSCB needs them to sign up soon. **Director Nick Charchalis** volunteered to serve on the Committee. Bobbi will follow up with **Director George Fosha** to see if he still wants to volunteer.

NRCS recently requested a letter for the new contract. She sent a draft of the letter to the Directors. **President Scott Jones** has agreed to sign the letter if the Board agrees to the contents of the letter. NRCS needs this letter today. There were no comments on the letter so Bobbi will obtain Scott's signature and send the letter.

The CAWA group has asked for a sponsorship donation for their annual summit in the amount of \$250.00. **Director Nick Charchalis** moved to provide a sponsorship donation of \$250.00. **Vice President Tyler Neely** seconded the motion. With no discussion, **Motion Passed**.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash reminded everyone that the CACD Annual Meeting will be held this weekend in Chicago. Cindy Lair will be speaking about the Colorado STAR program. The NRCS Chief was scheduled to speak in person but due to covid will be speaking virtually. This year is the 75th anniversary of NACD and the theme is **Diamond Out of the Dust**.

The Southwest Region will be meeting and discussing the 30/30 Plan. Local Legislators are putting together legislation concerning the Initiative the President signed. If anyone has any thoughts on this, Gary would like to hear them. He feels that we have been a leader in conservation for a long time and there are some groups that would like to take the word conservation and equate it with preservation. Gary thinks there is a push to resist that and make sure conservation applies to working lands as well. There are several examples around the country of private lands doing good conservation work.

Their analysis on how they are going to define what acres are included, is the USGS GAP analysis program to evaluate biodiversity. GAP 1 and 2 are National Parks and Wildlife Refuges. GAP 3 & 4 go down to private land efforts like conservation plans for farms. GAP 3 is National Forests and BLM land, which already have land use plans. They will also be discussing Arizona's proposal to pipe Missouri River flood waters to the Colorado River.

Gary also reported that the next week is the virtual National Envirothon competition. August 30th and 31st is the Southwest and Pacific Region meeting in Jackson Hole WY. Gary will be attending the meeting. NACD is asking for ideas for webinars that could be hosted through their website. They have a good program for webinar proposals. The next NACD Annual Meeting will be in Orlando, Florida on Feb. 12-16, 2022.

CACD FINANCIAL SUMMARY: 06-30-2021

Beginning Balance in checking on 6-1-21, \$173,563.86

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$10,259.54, Deposits & Credits Cleared \$0

Statement Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of 6-30-21 \$163,304.32

Total Uncleared Transactions = -\$2902.99

Ending Register Balance as of 6-30-21 \$160,401.33

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (July payback to reserve total \$15K-Opening up Savings in July)

2020 Estimated Funds Rolled Over & Designated for Youth Programs **\$9,232.29**

Final Breakdown to be reported in Aug *after Camp Rocky Final Expenses

NOI as of 6-30-21 \$125,093.89

Cleared transactions after 06/30/2021 \$0.00

Uncleared transactions after 06/30/2021 \$3,876.42

Register balance as of 07/17/2021 \$164,277.75

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (June payback to reserve total \$15K-Opening up Savings in July)

2020 Est. Funds rolled over & designated for Youth Programs **\$9,232.29** – Final breakdown to be reported in Aug after CR Final Expenses

NOI as of 6-30-21 \$128,970.31

Credit Card Beginning Statement Balance as of 6/05/21 \$1,209.65

Credits/CC Payments Cleared \$1,209.65, Purchases Cleared \$3,748.41

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 7/07/21 \$3,748.41

Total District Dues Paid as of 07/18/2021 **\$44,800.00** (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)

Total District Dues Paid as of 07/18/2020 **\$43,150.00** (up by \$1,650.00)

Grand Total District Dues PD in 2020 \$55,900.00

UARRP Activity 06-30-21 YTD: NO ACTIVITY THIS MONTH

Total pass-through income \$0

Total pass-through expenses -\$0

Total CACD Income Earned YTD \$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 Aug-Pending New Proposals):

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 or 4 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

NRCS Funds to be Reimbursed 1-1-21 through 5-31-21 *Need to add June & July, then submit Reimb request.

Conservator: \$956.00 - Leave \$3,544.00 balance in the budget

Youth Programs: \$683.06 - Leave \$15,816.94 balance in the budget

Annual Meeting: \$0 – Leave \$32K balance in the budget

Partners & Districts Education Workshops/Meetings Speakership Programs

Video Projects & Admin: \$4900.00 in progress

Possibly in the works for 2021: \$30K – Negotiations in Progress.

NRCS Video Production ask is \$15K – NRCS Reimb \$7,500.00 – 50% match required \$7,500.00 (we have to find the funds for the match-estimated production January 2021)

This would leave \$6840.00 for early spring 2022 until we are able to get our new NRCS contract in place.

Open Invoices:

(1) Total \$350.00 As of 6/30/21 - Camp Rocky Sponsorship

(7) Total as of 7/17/21 \$2,150.00 *All CR Sponsorships

Profit & Loss / Balance Sheet:

P&L June 2021 **-\$950.59** - P&L YTD 6-30-21 **\$15,996.63**

Balance Sheet = *Accts Receivable \$475.00 1 inv pd in June, deposited in July, making up \$125 difference.

Undeposited Funds \$10,325.00 *checks not deposited until July. * Total July Deposit \$10,550.00, difference is \$125 and \$100 ck rcvd and deposited in same deposit.

US Bank PPP Loans:

2020: \$11,257.50 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – Forgiveness App Submitted, pending SDA approval. Bal shows \$0; Waiting for confirmation letter.

2021: \$11,257.00 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – Application Portal Opened July 16th.

One of the PPP loans has been forgiven but Bobbi is waiting on the official letter. The second loan forgiveness program just opened, and she will be applying for loan forgiveness.

President Misc. Discussion and Updates:

President Scott Jones reminded everyone that the next **CACD BOD** virtual meeting will be **August 18, 2021, starting at 7:30 AM**. The next Legislative meeting will be Aug. 4, 2021, 7:30 AM.

Bobbi asked if the Board wants to have a face-to-face meeting in September. Gary Thrash asked if CSCB and CACD could have a joint meeting in Alamosa. After discussion, it was decided that Bobbi will send a poll around to determine the most convenient location for CACD Board members and partners. The date is set for Sept 15.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels

CACD Executive Director