

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2021, via Zoom Meeting**

Attendees:

Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed
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
Nancy Berges, CACD Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison

Absent:

Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative
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

Guests:

Clint Evans, NRCS
Randy Randall, NRCS
Les Owen, CDA
Cindy Lair, 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 **May 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 **May, 2021** minutes was **passed**.

NRCS Update-Randy Randall & Clint Evans:

Clint provided an update on the news release he sent out about Colorado serving as one of four pilot states for the Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC) for drought priority funding. Colorado will receive \$9M to address drought related concerns under this pilot program. Colorado will have fund pools for the Ogalala region, cropland, soil health, grazing lands, forest lands and two American Indian tribes (Mountain Ute and Southern Ute in SW Colorado). These funds are different from the standard EQIP. They are remnants from the 2018 Farm Bill when the Farm Bill legislation was changed and combined CSP and EQIP into one program under EQIP. At the last minute CSP was put back in as a stand-alone program, but no one took out the Conservation Incentive Contracts component of EQIP, so it remained in the statute. Under the CIC, the primary difference is that when producers enroll in an EQIP CIC contact they will have the option to choose regular conservation practices and management incentive payments that they normally received under EQIP but are required to adopt at least one enhancement activity. They are the same conservation enhancement activities offered under CSP. They will be 5-year contracts

with the ability to get 3 years of management incentive payments through EQIP plus up to 2 years, or all 5 years of enhancement activity payments. Final guidance will be coming from National. It opened on June 10 and will close July 12. The 2021 CSP sign up will be closing on July 23. NRCS CSP sign up will be cut off on July 23. The CRP sign up will run July 12 through Aug. 20. There are ongoing CRP sign ups during that time. They have asked that all Conservation Plans be delivered to FSA by Sept. 20. There are between 200 and 400 anticipated sign-ups along the Kansas border and NE Colorado. If all EQIP/CIC funds are obligated, plus the additional funds, Colorado will have \$4.3-\$4.4M in EQIP this year. EWP has seen obligations upwards of \$35M for fire recovery projects.

Colorado NRCS has just under 218 staff on board as of today. They were up to 222 but have lost staff. A year ago, they were at 164 employees.

NRCS met yesterday to discuss the monies coming into the State. Some Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) dollars have been freed up. Randy will be reaching out to Bobbi to discuss a new agreement with regards to the demonstration projects, with 75% NRCS funding with 25% match for Districts, to do a variety of demonstration projects.

They would like CACD input on the type projects the Districts might like to do. CTA allows some flexibility on the type of projects. Initially they have \$50K to get things started. It will be a five-year contract with CACD. In 2022 they can amend and add monies once they see the level of interest from the Districts. Clint asked CACD what kind of ceiling they would like to put on these contracts. Clint feels that to be effective they should be around \$5K to \$10K to really get something accomplished. He also asked for suggested types of projects CACD would like to see funded. An example would be the radio collars on cattle that Scott mentioned earlier.

Clint noted that wolves have been documented in Jackson County, around Walden, who came down from Yellowstone.

Randy shared that there will be a shortened timeline for the agreement completion. It will need to be submitted by July 15. High point in the agreement will be the \$50,000 of CTA funding and a 75%/25% split. He will be in touch with Bobbi to get things moving.

Director Jim Cecil asked if a producer is enrolled in the grasslands CRP, they are not eligible for EQIP/CSP. Clint believes this to be correct and will get back to him.

Director George Fosha told Clint that he took a ride through the East Troublesome Fire area and noted what a mess it was. He expressed appreciation for all the work NRCS and the BLM, working together, addressed with the reseeding. Flooding is a big concern now too. NRCS recognizes the flood challenges with this burn area.

Bobbi asked the Board if there were any questions about the video project Petra and Christi were working on. Bobbi sent the video proposal, for three videos, around for comment. Bobbi asked Clint and Randy if CACD can take part of that from education funds that are in the current contract under the 50/50 match.

One video would be around \$8-\$10K. Petra thought between one & three videos this year but with covid they could end up with money out of CACD funds. CACD has about \$50k and Bobbi does not want to take funds from youth programs, the Conservator nor the annual meeting. The contract ends in April 2022.

Randy noted that, with reference to the videos, the Board might consider one video in the Jan/Feb period knowing it would be a 50/50 match. Other activities, like Camp Rocky, are higher on the priority list. Bobbi wonders if stimulus funds could help with the 50% match. Clint noted that the funds for the video can be placed on hold. The Board will take the time to review this and get back to others involved. Bobbi would like to see the project work. Bobbi will forward the information to Cindy.

Clint asked **Director Mike Cleary** if he heard from Sen. Bennett's office or from BLM on his piping project. Mike stated that they did not hear directly from them but were able to move ahead. Mike thanked Clint for his assistance. Mike said that another project was put on hold due to SHPO requirements.

CSCB Update – Cindy Lair:

Cindy reported that the Drought Resiliency Bill 234 included the \$15,000 to each District. The Bill says it will be allocated by July 1. They have been in contact with the State Controllers Office to see how this can be accomplished. They stated that it will be completed as quickly as possible but might not be by July 1. There are accounting procedures that must be followed. These funds will not be sent out with the direct assistance funds. Direct assistance will follow the \$15,000. in the normal time frame.

There are dates set for the Bob Warner legacy video. It will be the 29th and 30th. If the CACD Board is aware of anyone that would like to say a few words, please contact her. Bob has been involved with numerous NRCS and conservation practices and projects that are noteworthy. Bobbi told Cindy that **Directors Gary Thrash and Jim Cecil** would like to help and say a few words.

CDA/CSCB sent a letter to CACD, with a template letter, requesting support for CDAs application for a Conservation Innovation Grant for Soil Health through NRCS. The goal of the grant is to get 100 additional producers working on the STAR program through the Conservation Districts. They are currently finalizing the grant budget. She would appreciate CACD's support for this application. The application is due this Monday.

CSCB is also scheduling a stakeholder listening session for the different stimulus bills and how the CDA is going to distribute those funds. She, Les Owen, and Sam Anderson will be a large part of those listening sessions. They will be on the 24th of June at 6:00 pm. She will be sending out the registration information. She feels it is important to have Conservation District input in these sessions.

She received a request from Greg Peterson asking for CSCB to collaborate with them on rehabilitating older reservoirs throughout Colorado. Greg asked Cindy for the NRCS contact person. She gave him John Andrew's contact information.

She also reported on the two staff vacancies. Both positions are currently posted.

President Scott Jones informed Cindy that they will discuss the support letter and have an answer for her today.

Legislative Update - Brett Moore:

Brett reported that the 2021 Legislative Session ended last Tuesday. CACD followed forty-eight pieces of legislation this session with a focus on: **HB1181**, Agricultural Soil Health Program (CACD and CSCB both have two voting members on the advisory committee); **SB235** Stimulus Funding, Department of Agriculture Efficiency Programs. This is the accompanying stimulus Bill on the Soil Health side. \$1M will be spent on soil health grants to the Conservation Districts.

HB1242, Create Agricultural Drought and Climate Resilience Office, CSCB will be involved in the Stakeholder group that participates in the rule making for the grants that go out; **SB234** was the stimulus Bill accompanying HB1242. CACD proposed amendments that gave Conservation Districts \$15,000 each. These two Bills should give the Districts \$2M over the next two years to make improvements.

SB87, Agricultural Workers Rights, which eliminated long-standing working exemptions for ag and ag workers. There will be stakeholder input to the Department of Labor for the numerous groups with unique issues.

There are additional Bills that CACD supported. All Bills are waiting on the Governor's signature. Several Severance tax funded programs will now be funded by General funds for the net couple of years.

Brett feels that CACD should be immensely proud of what they accomplished for Districts during this Legislative Session. *Brett added they he is feeling particularly good about where we are with CACD's Legislative program. He complimented and thanked the Legislative Committee and Bobbi for all their work this year and for tracking District Resolutions. They are working on Resolutions that go back to 2017.*

CDA Update - Les Owen:

*Les asked if the virtual fencing project is being worked on with the Forest Service. Scott said they are working with BLM and the Forest Service. They are working on grants before they move forward with the study. He will send an email that explains the project to Les. Les asked what the time frame is because there may be some funds available for a virtual fencing study. Scott said there is a late July deadline for the grant. Scott will contact Les about their status. **Director Mike Cleary** told the board about the Gunnison CD virtual fencing project. Scott will contact them.*

Les added that they are looking for proposals for good projects to fund, like virtual fencing, CSU CoAgNet weather stations, soil moisture probes with a data portal, etc. The Bill had four components 1) \$15,000 to each CD; 2) Water projects; 3) Grazing lands recovering from wildfires; and 4) Provide TA to producers. These funds must be spent by Sept. 2022. He reminded the Board about the listening session on the 24th of June.

Director Mike Cleary noted that fencing is always an issue. He said that for years he has asked to use drones to monitor his cattle on his grazing permits. This would help in many ways. There are restrictions about flying drones over Forest Service land. Mike would like to have this discussion. Les said he would bring this up at the next meeting with the Forest Service.

Brett asked about the qualifications for the CDA grants. Les said they are currently working on the required applications, grant types, qualifications, etc. There are no sideboards on this money. He is open to suggestions for project proposals. Les noted that, through all the stimulus bills, the CDA will receive \$76M, \$8M in the Conservation Division.

The Wolf Stakeholder Advisory and Technical Advisor Groups have CDA representatives. There will be monthly meetings for each of those groups. They will be developing a management plan. There will be several public outreach opportunities throughout the State. The Lesser Prairie Chicken has a proposed listing on the Nation Registry, separated into two distinct population segments. New Mexico and West Texas would be listed as endangered, and the SE Colorado/Kansas population will be listed as threatened. Improper grazing is listed as threatening to the bird. Proper grazing is not being exempted by the 4D Rule.

The new administration is looking at the rules for Waters of the US (WOTUS). They have reviewed the navigable waters protection rule that went through in 2020 and determined that significant environmental damage is happening because of the old Rule. The timeframe is unknown. There will be public outreach. They have a problem with the exclusions as they apply to converted croplands. The State Dredge and Fill Bill version of WOTUS did not go anywhere this year. There are current projects that are considered dredge and fill and are in violation of the State's Water Quality Act. There is uncertainty on how this will affect Ag water projects. There will be more Stakeholder meetings on this before next year's Legislative Session.

Les also reported that Eastern Colorado's BLM Resource Management Plan amendment will be worked on again.

CACD Programs & Executive Director Update-Bobbi Ketels:

Bobbi asked the Board to review the letter from Helen Silver for any questions they might have. **Director Jim Cecil** suggested they read the letter and have Bobbi obtain a phone vote from each Board member later today. **President Scott Jones** agreed.

Director Mike Cleary commented on the letter stating that water quality is as much an issue as soil health. Water pH is an issue and should be addressed as a modification or an additional funded item. Soil health is multi-faceted. Cindy commented that that conversation will be addressed, and they would ask NRCS for their expertise on the subject.

Bobbi verified that **President Scott Jones and Brett Moore** will join Bobbi for the CSCB Board meeting tomorrow at 8:00 am.

Bobbi reported that she has asked each Director to have a District in their Watershed have a feature in the Conservator on soil health and get one advertiser for a quarter page in the Conservator.

After meeting with Randy Randall, Bobbi will send out an email detailing the cooperative agreement updates. She provided a breakdown in the financial summary that addresses the ideas that she had for the videos. Districts have been requesting assistance with educational workshops. In reviewing the requests, COVID hot spots must be considered in the various areas of the State.

CACD partners with CSCB, CDA and NRCS on the Conservation Planning for the State. They continue to work with NACD on their NCPP training. They have two more coming up this month. Through Facebook, and radio, Bobbi has been promoting the program. Bobbi reminded Board members that she would like to know if any, as producers, have a conservation plan with NRCS.

The Technical Advisory Committee meeting will be July 13. She will represent CACD and invited any board members that would like to attend with her.

The Ag Council is looking at new voting members. They have laid over approving new members until the summer meeting. If you know of anyone that would like to become a voting member, please let Bobbi know.

CACD continues to attend CAWA meetings and will be helping to promote the CAWA Summit coming up in December. CACD is also visiting again with the Colorado Watershed Assembly (CWA); looking for ways to become more involved with their organization and all roundtables.

Bobbi continues to work on ways that provide opportunity for the districts to obtain health insurance. There are three large insurance companies that might be options, but it would require Districts to join and work under the same EIN. It might also be able to be done by working under the Watersheds.

Envirothon is still having challenges. There were no CO teams registered for the testing to qualify for the National competition.

Camp Rocky is scheduled for July 10-16. All instructors are in place and the plan for activities has been, as required, shortened by one day. There were thirteen signed up, two cancelled. There needs to be twenty-four to make the Camp worthwhile. There are additional requirements for background checks for instructors. Noah has addressed this issue.

Bobbi has started to work on the Annual meeting scheduled for November 15-17 in Colorado Springs. She would like to have the Board vote on a theme by the 25th of June so it can be included in the Conservator in July. She has

started working on sponsors and the Resource Committee members. NRCS has requested a breakout session on Local Work Groups. It would be great if someone could help the Districts with grant writing. She asked for ideas for additional speakers.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner:

Executive Director Bobbi Ketels gave the report for this month. She reported that NACD is working diligently on the 2022 Farm Bill. They are working on the ag sector portion of the Administrations 3030 Plan.

Upcoming meetings include a Regional meeting for the SW coming up in about week. The 2021 Summer Conservation Forum and Tour will be July 24-27 in Chicago. 2022 CACD Annual meeting will be Feb. 12-16 in Florida and they are looking for breakout ideas and speakers.

The partnership (NACD/NRCS) Technical Assistance program had CO renewals this year. Renewals were Longmont, Boulder Valley, and San Juan.

As a reminder, the CACD/NACD Poster contest information & forms were sent to all CO districts in April. The theme is **Health Forest, Health Communities**.

CACD FINANCIAL SUMMARY: 05-31-2021

Beginning Balance in checking on 5-1-21, \$169,326.04

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$8,564.99, Deposits & Credits Cleared \$12,802.81

Statement Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of 5-31-21 \$173,563.86

Total Uncleared Transactions = -\$2,931.48

Ending Register Balance as of 5-31-21 \$170,632.38

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (June payback to reserve total \$15K-Moving to savings in June)

Funds designated for Youth Programs **\$9,232.29** – Breakdown to be reported in July

Funds designated for 2021 Partner Video Project **\$4,700.00 (PD in June)**

NOI as of 5-31-21 \$115,624.94

Cleared transactions after 05/31/2021 \$0.00

Uncleared transactions after 05/31/2021 -\$6,815.67

Register balance as of 06/13/2021 \$163,816.71

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (June payback to reserve total \$15K-Moving to savings in June)

Funds designated for Youth Programs **\$9,232.29** – Breakdown to be reported in July

Funds designated for 2021 Partner Video Project **\$4,700.00 (PD in June)**

NOI as of 5-31-21 \$108,809.27

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 6/04/21 \$1,209.65

Total District Dues Paid as of 06/13/2021 **\$43,100.00** (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)

Total District Dues Paid as of 06/13/2020 **\$40,550.00** (up by \$2,550.00)

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

UARRP Activity 05-31-21 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 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

NRCS Funds to be Reimbursed 1-1-21 through 5-31-21

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 – This is not a definite at all.

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)

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

Open Invoices: (2) Total \$250.00 As of 5/31/21

P&L May 2021 -\$3,328.00 - P&L YTD 5-31-21 \$16,472.22

Balance Sheet = *Accts Receivable \$250.00 – Undeposited Funds \$250.00

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.

President Misc. Discussion and Updates:

President Scott Jones would like to schedule a meeting for the Annual Meeting Committee. A CACD Board face-to-face meeting in August or September is open for suggestion. Bobbi will send out an email with this information. The next CACD BOD zoom meeting will be **July 21, 2021, starting at 7:30 AM**

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels

CACD Executive Director