

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2023, Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Jim Cecil, CACD President - Republican River Watershed
George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed
Mike Cleary, CACD Secretary/Treasurer - Gunnison Dolores Watershed
Charlie Carnahan, CACD Director - Upper South Platte Watershed
Dale Parker, CACD Director - Lower South Platte Watershed
Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Bobbi Ketels, Executive Director (Emergency)
Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison

Absent:

Bob Warner, CACD Alternate Director - CO NACD Representative - NCF Trustee
Scott Jones, CACD Director - Colorado River Watershed

Guests:

Les Owen, CDA
Clint Evans, NRCS
Margaret Lenz - CSCB

Call to Order:

*The meeting was called to order by **President Jim Cecil** at 7:45 AM after establishing a quorum. **Director Dale Parker** moves to approve the consent agenda. **Director Gary Thrash** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.***

Prior Meeting Minutes:

President Jim Cecil** asked for a motion to approve the February 2023 and June 2022 minutes (housekeeping item), and **Director Charlie Carnahan** moved to approve the February 2023 and June 2022 minutes. **Director Tyler Neely** gives the second. **Director Dale Parker** noted that she is listed as “Interim” Director in the February minutes and is now a Director. This will be corrected. **Motion Passes.

Legislative Update – Brett Moore:

The Legislative Committee met before this meeting.

NRCS Update:

***Clint Evans** stated he is looking forward to the NACD Fly-In with the CACD representatives. The Colorado NRCS Leadership will also meet with the National Leadership team in Washington. Tuesday evening, he will be meeting with Tyler and Charlie. Bobbi noted that the BLM meeting is on the 22nd at 12:30; she has not received notification on the location. She is trying to get the meetings with representatives coordinated. Director Gary Thrash stated that he sent Tyler and Charlie the NACD virtual training session for the visit to DC. He also sent the issue papers to them. Gary will forward the information to Clint.*

*NRCS has rolled out some of its FY23 funding through the **ActNow** policy. It allows NRCS to establish a ranking threshold for a particular funding pool. He used the Ogalala funding pool as an example and explained how the ActNow policy works. It allows for project approval almost immediately, depending on the status of their FSA paperwork was complete. In some cases, applications were turned around within 3-4 business days. There were forestry projects that were approved through the same process. In FY24, they will look at other programs that might fit under this streamlined process.*

NRCS has received its Inflation Reduction Act funds for FY23. It was about \$2.5M in EQIP funds and \$3.2M for CSP financial assistance. They also received \$2.2M for Conservation Technical Assistance. FY 24, 25 & 26, these amounts **might** double for EQIP, CSP, and the Ag Conservation Easement Program. For FY24, EQIP might go from \$37M to \$74 - \$75M. These amounts could change should Congress rescind the IRA funds or change the priorities for the funds. Final budget plans for Colorado are being worked on. He informed Bobbi that they would be reaching out to CACD around early April to discuss amendments to the partnership agreements that include the general agreement that covers the annual meeting, camp rocky, and outreach activities to about \$100,000 in the general agreement and increasing the demonstration project agreement as well. Bobbi asked if she could start the application process for these funds. Clint agreed. Bobbi noted that Envirothon funds would be needed by the end of April. Clint said he would ask about starting that amendment immediately and see if it can be turned around by the end of April. Bobbi also asked if it was possible for NRCS to provide a small amount for the demonstration project, around \$10,000. Clint said he would try to get all the amounts in one amendment as soon as possible.

Clint said that they have been working on several personnel actions to fill some vacancies. NRCS has lost thirty employees in the last year, double the pre-pandemic attrition rate. There are currently sixty-two vacancies. Twenty-nine of these are Pathways recent graduate positions. Thirty-three are existing vacancies, and a couple of technical assistance positions. Some areas of the State are a little more challenging to fill. There might be hiring bonuses for those hard-to-fill locations.

Director George Fosha asked Clint to briefly describe the Ogalala aquifer program. Clint stated that they are working closely with the Republican River Water Conservation District to convert from irrigated crop production to non-irrigated crop production or non-irrigated perennial vegetation. Colorado is required to dry up 25,000 acres in the next 8 – 9 years.

CSCB Update - Cindy Lair:

No Report

CDA Update – Les Owen:

Les Owen reported on a new position in the Conservation Division. This came from legislation a year ago from the Office of Climate Preparedness. The position will be an Assistant Division Director in the Conservation Services Division. The job announcement was released yesterday and is open until the first week of April. The Climate Resilience programs will be under this new position.

The proposed **10J** rule for the wolf is out for comment until April 18th. He encourages the Board to look at the ruling and submit comments. Les feels that overall, it is a good rule and provides fewer restrictions on when take would be allowed. Areas that might need clarification include the area about problems wolves before a shoot-on-sight permit can be issued. The definition of problem wolves is A wolf that has depredated on private land in the last year. Les feels that the words “private lands” should not be there. Comments to this statement would be appreciated. The State management plan will be voted on May 4th. CPW will have to develop several regulations to implement all the pieces of the management plan that will require comments from the public. The details will be in the regulations.

The final rule for Waters of the US (**WOTUS**) was published in January and is set to become final on March 20, 2023. The rule continues the idea of significant nexus and uncertainty about what is and is not considered a jurisdictional waterway. Some changes were made on how converted cropland is determined that are not good. If a producer wants to receive an exclusion from prior converted cropland, the requirement is to have NRCS visit your property to provide a wetlands determination, and the producer will be required to fill out a form allowing NRCS to share the information with EPA and ACE. A case before the Supreme Court will likely impact the scope of authority for WOTUS. It will, most likely, require that part of the rule be rewritten and limit the scope. CDPHE has

convened a group to discuss this with the idea of potentially creating a State permitting program. They will need to ensure the permitting at the State level has the ag exclusions.

Director Mike Cleary asked if the CPW has addressed how to fund the obligations they are taking on with the wolf issue and if they have considered, once funding has been reduced, how they are going to replace that income to function. Les stated that there had been a lot of discussion on that subject. There has been talk of potential legislation this year relating to wolves, but he has yet to learn of anything that has been introduced, only rumors. One rumor was a bill that said the CPW would reintroduce wolves once the 10J rule was in place with associated funding in that bill. This will be a long-term issue in Colorado.

NACD Update – Gary Thrash and Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash stated that **Stewardship Week is from April 30 to May 7, 2023**. On the NACD website, some materials can be shared. The Boulder Valley Longmont Conservation District's Forester, Rob Walker, was recognized nationally by NACD. The **NACD Summer meeting will be held in Bismarck, North Dakota, on July 15 – 19**. The SW region has a new representative from New Mexico, Josh Smith.

Margaret Lenz reported on the NACD Annual Meeting. She stated that the meeting entailed much learning. She was unaware of the \$50M in pass thru grants that NACD administered. There could be funding for local districts if they investigate it. NACD will have a climate smart grant like the CDA grant. The SW Regional meeting will be held in Lake Tahoe in August that will cover wildfire mitigation, forest management, and wild horses. The National Leadership Institute, sponsored by the National Foundation, is essential, and it would be nice to find someone in Colorado interested in attending. The CACD/NACD Resolution was passed without any problems. It amends the current policy with three words needed in the National Policy. The By-Laws were changed so that any supervisor in any district can be on committees, and being an NACD board member is not required. The 2nd Vice President is from Layton, KS, and might be able to attend CACD meetings in Colorado. Margaret sent a written report on the annual meeting to the CACD Board members.

NACD is creating a groundwater task force, and it would be essential to have someone from Colorado on that task force.

Margaret suggested sharing Rachel Theler's emails with all Districts and Supervisors.

CACD Programs:

Camp Rocky:

Noah reported that the new CampRocky.org website is live. This is just the base, and more information will continue to be added to the site. He is comfortable with the staffing for this year. CSU has reached out to interested volunteers from the education program. Finances are looking good if districts step-up with scholarships for the camper. West Greely CD has offered four scholarships for campers. He has not received any opposition to the increase in tuition. He has been in contact with a Family Trust in Littleton that has a mission of outdoor education and is reviewing which of their grants would fit Camp Rocky's funding. The Cabela's/Bass Pro grant does not fund until August, so if it is received, it will roll over to next year's camp.

Envirothon:

Mark reported that the \$4,000 Diversity grant from National Envirothon had been approved. He met with Kathy Reynolds, Dean of Extension, and a few other partners from Extension. They are offering a \$1,000 scholarship to every youth attending Envirothon this year eligible for any CSU degree. This is a pilot program. April 10 is the closing date for registration. There are four teams for sure, and 3-4 interested that still need to register. The second-placed winner will receive an additional \$750 scholarship. Third place will receive an additional \$500 scholarship. All test writers are in place, volunteers are in place, the advisory committee is meeting two times a month, meals and lodging logistics are being worked on, they are working on a career element that involves different natural resource agencies, CACD can have a table with the information available, and CSU will have

career counseling and admissions available. All this will offer information on careers in agriculture. Training over Zoom will be available for teams that would like help. **Director Tyler Neely** is working with a teacher in his area to help recruit a team. Bobbi asked the Board to vote on moving the available funds for the Envirothon to the Colorado State Envirothon 2023 competition in the amount of \$5,342.02. **Director Tyler Neely** moves to designate the amount of \$5,342.02 to the 2023 Envirothon competition. **Director Mike Cleary** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.** Bobbi encouraged the Board members to ask their Watersheds and Districts for any contributions they may be able to make to Envirothon. Tyler stated that the Rocky Mountain Memorabilia provided trophies and medals. He will work on this portion of the awards. Five medals for each winning team. Mark added that each category might receive medals as well if this is how it was done in the past.

Annual Meeting:

Bobbi asked the Board if they would like to hold the Resource Committee meetings before or after the Thanksgiving Holiday. The Annual meeting will be held on December 4-5. The board consensus is to have the resource meetings before Thanksgiving.

CACD Financials:

Bobbi will provide detailed financials for programs that will include her hours. The report will show each program's actual gain/loss and a report with all programs combined. Bobbi requested a motion to move Bob Warner's (Warner Ranch) donation made in 2022 to be designated for the National Western Stock Show for 2023 in the amount of \$4,000. **Director Dale Parker** moves to designate the \$4,000 donation from Bob Warner to the 2023 Western Stock Show. **Director Charlie Carnahan** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.**

Bobbi asked for a motion to move the \$5,000 sponsorship made in 2022 by Bob Warner to the 2023 Annual Meeting. **Director Mike Cleary** so moves as stated. **Director Gary Thrash** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.**

Bobbi asked for a motion to table the January and February 2023 bank statement reconciliation review and hold a special meeting to review the first quarter financials for 2023. The requested date for this meeting is April 7. This will allow the Board to review and vote on the first three months of 2023. **Director Mike Cleary** makes the motion to table approval of the January and February bank statement reconciliation review and hold a special meeting to review the first quarter financials on April 7, 2023. **Director Tyler Neely** makes the second. **Motion Passes.**

Bobbi requested a motion be made to have Suzie move Bobbi from a salaried employee to an hourly employee and set her up with direct deposit starting April 1, 2023, with a minimum of 10 hours per week and a maximum of 40 hours per week. Renewable month to month. **Director Mike Cleary** moves to make Bobbi's employment status a part-time position with a minimum of 10 hrs. per week and a maximum of 40 hrs. per week to be renewable month-to-month. The hourly rate is \$25/hour with direct deposit payroll, and payroll will be reported on a W-2. **Director George Fosha** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.**

Director Mike Cleary stated that he had had conversations with Suzie and Jim to schedule a time for Suzie and Mike to change the signature cards at US Bank in Delta. Mike asked if the automatic credit card charges tied to accounts had been changed from Bobbi's card to Scott's card. Bobbi stated that it is not complete but will be completed by the first of next week.

Bobbi went over the management report. CACD is ending the year with a net loss of \$33,322.64. Mike asked a few questions about moving funds in the accounting fees. Bobbi explained to Mike why the charges were changed. Once the expenses vs. actual financials were reviewed, account postings must be corrected.

Mike would like a narrative of why the accounting numbers have shifted from earlier reports so that it is known what outstanding amounts will be in the 2023 financial numbers. Bobbi will place this information in a summary sheet.

*Bobbi stated the shifting of numbers from program expenses that should have been put in grants and appropriations expenses as they were NRCS-eligible reimbursement expenses and match eligible expenses from 2022. **Director Mike Cleary** makes the motion to approve the 2022 financials, recognizing that the CPA may make corrections in the final audit report that is not yet available. **Director George Fosha** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes.***

Other:

Bobbi has been receiving questions about the Resolution that allowed two districts to combine dues to make one full voting membership. Three of these types of memberships were allowed under the resolution. Mike recommends that one district be shown as a full dues-paying member and the other district as partially paid. It would be flagged as a special membership. These combined memberships will be on a first come, first serve with full payment.

Bobbi asked the Board if the August face-to-face would be at the Embassy Suites in Denver. Mike suggested that this item be discussed at a later meeting.

***President Jim Cecil** asked if there were additional resumes for the ED position. Bobbi stated no. The two she contacted have yet to respond. She has been sorting through the applications and sending the qualified applicants to Mike and Jim. Discussions continued about locations and job requirements. Mike will send accepted resumes to the rest of the Board. He is suggesting that two of the applicants be interviewed.*

The meeting was Adjourned at 10:06 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director