

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2020, at 7:30 AM via Zoom**

Attendees:

Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed Director
Gary Thrash, Director - San Juan Basin Watershed /CO Representative to NACD
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
Jim Cecil, Director - Republican River Watershed Director
Mike Cleary – Director-Gunnison Dolores Watershed
Steve McEndree, Director – Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Brett Moore, CACD Lobbyist
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director

Absent:

Tyler Neely - CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Charlie Carnahan, Director - Upper South Platte Watershed

Guests:

Les Owen, CDA
Gene Backhaus, NRCS
Cindy Lair, CSCB
Noah McCord, CSCB
Steve Martini, CFB-Guest Speaker

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 August 2020 minutes. **Director George Fosha** 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 August 2020 minutes was **passed**.

Legislative Update – Brett Moore:

Brett Moore reported that 80+ of the State Senators are running for office and 65 State House seats are up for election. Six or seven of the senate seats are competitive. He has prepared a political document that will show what the state of play is for Colorado. There will be 11 ballot initiatives on the ballot. Sean Martini will be presenting opposition to the Gray Wolf Introduction Bill that is on the ballot.

The Severance Tax Operation Funds projection has been received. For the Tier II Severance Tax Funds programs, it looks like The Soil Conservation Grant Fund August 2020 distribution was \$179,838. out of a potential \$450,000. They are estimating zero dollars for the next couple of fiscal years. This is based on the economic downturn forced by government closures earlier this year. Brett reported that he had a conversation with Les Owen, CDA about CACD and agriculture. Out of that conversation he did get some information on the current drought programs and he will send this information to CACD with the bill tracking sheet and the legislative review.

He was pleased to report that there has been progress on resolutions from years past (2017-2019). This will keep the legislative committee up to speed on what we have made progress on and what we have not. We need to have better communication with the Districts that brought the resolution forward. We are now set up in a better way to take what comes out of the 2020 meeting and have a process for addressing the legislative matters.

CDA Update-Les Owen:

Les Owen reported that he was pleased to receive the Severance Tax funds that were mentioned by Brett Moore. The next two years do not look good for additional funding.

Les mentioned the new process for releasing CRP for emergency haying and grazing that is tied to the drought monitoring. He has heard there are issues with this. He asked if anyone on the Board has experienced those issues. There was a provision that the grazing must stop 30 days prior to the first freeze date. The freeze date restriction is making it almost unusable this time of year because of fencing and water.

Director Nick Charchalis stated that the release of CRP is not helping at all and is a disappointment. Les stated that people in other Western States recognize the problem and it has made it not especially useful. They are working with the DC office on how to fix the program, but it is too late for this year. **Director Bob Warner** stated that he is using the grazing but could not use it until he was signed up and he has to have the livestock out by the 14th then he can come back in the middle of October. He does not feel it was very well-managed. Les will relay this information to the Ag Impact Task Force. **Director Jim Cecil** stated that he too is using the CRP emergency grazing and wanted to thank the NRCS staff for getting the paperwork to them in a timely manner. They will be going off the grazing next week but will be allowed back on if the grass is sufficient.

Les also noted that in the Federal Register, there is a proposal from the Fish and Wildlife Service to talk about critical habitat designation. This allows the **Secretary of the Interior** to exclude certain areas from critical habitat designation if it has been official to exclude it. Les feels it provides more clarity about what they consider when they perform an exclusion analysis. They look at areas and consider economic impacts. He will send the Federal Register Notice to Bobbi for CACD review.

CSCB Update:

Cindy Lair reported that she has been attending as many Watershed Meetings as she can.

Her team attended a meeting with **CDOT** to see how they can work together. They learned that CDOT has been making a greater emphasis on working on State highways in rural parts of the State with better paving and widening shoulders where they can. This allows drivers to pass farm equipment more safely. CDOT has been reaching out to people in rural areas. They see Conservation Districts as a great way to talk about the State highways throughout the rural areas. They would like to talk more about what they have been doing and get feedback on what still needs to be done. They had hoped to use Watershed meetings as a means of communication but were too late to get on agendas for this year. CDOT hopes to give updates next year at the Watershed meetings.

CDOT also wants to reinvigorate the living snow fence program. The State Forest Service, CSCB, NRCS and the Conservation Districts have always been active with this program. Cindy has phone meetings with CDOT later this week to find out what they have in mind and get the State Forest Service on board. She wants details before she approaches the specific Districts that would be involved.

The Soil Health program continues to move forward despite lack of funding. They have been applying for grants through private foundations including the Gates Foundation. This would help bring in the STAR program that she previously discussed. The STAR program must be adapted from the Illinois water quality program to the Colorado soil health program. We have diverse cropping systems in Colorado. There is still work to be done on the necessary form(s). There will be a **Colorado Collaborative for Healthy Soils**. It will be

separate from the Dept. of Ag, however Cindy will be working closely with Max Newmeier and Helen Silver on the work that is to be done. She has a meeting with them tomorrow. If any of the CACD Directors would be interested in attending the meeting, please let Cindy know.

There will be an emergency meeting for the **State Conservation Board** today at 11:00. It is an open meeting, and she thinks it will be a short meeting. CSCB has \$809,000 they have accumulated from severance tax. The meeting will address these funds and how to use them.

CSCB discussed the way matching grants are ranked, revisit how the review panel is made up, how the grants themselves are reviewed and how they distribute between educational projects and on the ground conservation. Some Board members questioned allowing Districts with mill levies to apply for these grants. Cindy is checking into the legalities of this question. **Directors George Fosha and Nick Charchalis** are currently serving on the CSCB matching grant panel.

Cindy mentioned there are 3 positions coming up for election on the State Conservation Board. They are the Upper Arkansas, Rio Grande, and North Platt-White-Yampa. CSCB runs the election, and each District gets one vote, which is a mail-in vote. The election will be held this fall and nominations end on Sept. 25.

Cindy noted that they are in the process of getting their partners gathered to apply for an RCPP grant in October. This is for an Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA). It will be about a \$4M project. Half of that will be match. Currently they have a good amount of match lined out. They are interested in entities that would be willing to be partners on this AFA. The goal will be to bring the Soil Health Partnership through the National Corn Growers, Bayer Chemical, Nature Conservancy, and a few others. She would like CACD to be a partner, who would not require bringing money to the table but rather support. CACD's partnership can be discussed later.

NRCS Update-Gene Backhaus:

Acting NCS State Conservationist Gene Backhaus noted that the CRP program has been a mess this year due to FSA's National office not getting the policy out. NRCS was blindsided as well. His guess is that they wanted to protect the CRP ground from being overgrazed and not giving the grass enough time to recover before going into that frost period.

A lot of people wanted grazing as their contract management activity for CRP. Up until Friday they could not do that, but now FSA's National HQ has come out with a policy that allows grazing to be part of the contract management activity. If people want to have that as part of their contract but have already signed their contract, they can change the plan to grazing.

About 93% of the EQIP funds are obligated. That means for the \$38M available, about \$36 M is obligated.

The State now has EWP dollars available for two of the fires, Grizzly Creek and Pine Gulch. It is considered seed money to start moving things forward. NRCS has \$3.7M for the two fires. They hope to have more funds as they move forward and can identify needs. The Cameron Pass fire and Williams Fork fire have not been looked at yet.

In the past on irrigation contracts, irrigation pipe was put in as pounds of pipe. Converting pounds of pipe to linear feet of pipe was next to impossible to calculate. They now have a tool that NRCS offices will use next year. Staff will be going over this new tool as producers sign their contracts, so they know how many feet of pipe are needed versus how many pounds of pipe they are getting paid for. There will be the conversion of dollars paid in pounds of pipe and how much will be paid on dollars per foot.

NRCS is doing quite well with getting staff in the last 8 months. Right now, staffing is at 203. Final job offers are out for another 7 people. Hopefully by the start of the fiscal year, October 1, staff will be at 210. Cap for

Colorado is 219. The tool used for staffing is called OPO, optimally productive office. If they are below average, they cannot add staff until that is turned around.

Gene provided a Covid-19 update. He stated that most offices in the state are at a Phase 1 right now. There are offices that are in Phase 2 and some offices in Phase 3. Once you get to Phase 3, the next step is going back to business as usual. They have been told by the Department Liaison that no offices are going to go to business as usual until the National trend for covid-19 cases gets down to what they consider an acceptable level. Offices will function at Phase 3 as much as they can. In Phase 3, appointments can come into the office if they are masked. No meetings can be held in the Field Office.

As of this Friday, he will no longer be the Acting State Conservationist for Colorado. Randy Randall will take the position on Monday. **President Scott Jones** thanked Gene for his 120 days as the State Conservationist.

NACD Updates – Gary Thrash & Bob Warner:

Director Gary Thrash reported the following: 10 Conservation Districts in Colorado received funds from the CARES Act.

Directors Bob Warner and Gary Thrash both are on the **NACD Stewardship Committee** and they had a meeting yesterday. The Educational highlight this year was on pollinators. Next year it will be on **Healthy Forests Equal Healthy Communities**. NACD is asking Conservation Districts to submit successful stories about forest education projects.

The **NACD Market Place** will have face masks on their website next week. This is for the covid response and the masks will have the conservation logo on them. They will also have a special this fall on Cabela's baseball caps. Districts can have their logo printed on the caps.

Department of the Interior is hosting public meetings for comment on a draft invasive species plan. They will be accepting comments on the plan until 10-9-2020. This is something we should keep up with to see how they will address invasive species on federal lands.

NACD Summer edition of the **Resource** is now available online. It features updates on various programs run by NACD as well as recaps of virtual meetings that have been held. The annual meeting scheduled for February may also be virtual. NACD will decide by the 1st of November on the format to be used for this meeting. He also noted that a couple of years ago at the annual NACD meeting they started a Conservation Careers Workshop. This year they plan on 20 undergrad students with funding by the Forest Service, NRCS and other partners. The Forest Service would like the workshop to become a conference type event instead of just a workshop and have 75+ students involved by the year 2022.

The 75th Annual meeting webpage is available. The title will be **NACD 75th Anniversary, A Diamond Cut Out of the Dust**.

NACD is now accepting submissions for their 2020 auxiliary poster and photo contest. Student posters for NACD are due by December 1, 2020. The subject is "**Where Would be BEE without Pollinators?**"

Guest Speaker:

Sean Martini, Vice President for Advocacy with the Colorado Farm Bureau. They are the lead organization for Coloradoans Protecting Wildlife. The group is a registered issue committee pulled together along with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Safari Club, Colorado Wool Growers and Colorado Cattleman's to push back against **Prop 114** which would mandate a forced reintroduction of wolves in Colorado. Prop 114 requires wolves be released on designated lands west of the continental divide. Livestock owners would be compensated for losses. This has not worked out well in the past for livestock producers in other States. It would be paid for through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife budget. It will be on the November ballot. It is statutory measure and not constitutional. They oppose this from the agricultural side because it is not a good

situation for livestock producers and farmers/ranchers. This is the first time a species will be introduced via the ballot box as opposed to going through the typical scientific process of going through Colorado Parks and Wildlife, or a state wildlife agency. CPW has spent over \$1M and rejected the idea of introducing wolves four separate times. Wolves have been introduced in other states and have not been introduced into Colorado because of opposition from CPW. Wolves are already in Colorado. CPW has had reports of finding wolf pups. They are drifting into Colorado from Wyoming naturally. We should not force nature's hand through a political process. We do not know what the impacts of that will be. The wolf being introduced to the State is not a native of this State.

This campaign has been active for the last few months. Due to covid, it is mostly being done digitally on-line. They have been doing polling and there has been a shift. People are starting to understand the message on why the introduction is not a good idea. He is encouraged that the Proposition will fail. There have been many organizations that are now on board against Prop 114. They would like the support of the CACD and Conservation Districts with cash or in-kind assistance.

President Scott Jones asked Mr. Martini if the group will be doing more campaign ads. Mr. Martini replied that it will depend on how they are resourced. There are 3 different campaigns ready to be implemented depending on the fund-raising dollars. Any funds coming in now will be dedicated to campaigning on the front range with radio and television.

Director George Fosha asked if there is anything that CACD should or could be doing to help get the message out on the front range. Mr. Martini said funds would be welcome and helpful. Help getting the message out is also helpful.

Director Nick Charchalis thanked Mr. Martini for his work. He noted that the forest fires have destroyed a lot of wildlife habitat and will open up wildlife to open range and that will introduce wolves.

Director Gary Thrash stated that the **High-Country News** had a pro and con opinion piece in their paper. The woman against the reintroduction brought up the increase in Colorado human population and rapid urbanization. People will not want wolves roaming through residential areas.

Brett Moore asked Mr. Martini to send an email to Bobbi stating how to donate to the campaign, face book link, twitter account, etc.

Monthly Financial Update-Bobbi Ketels:

CACD FINANCIALS: 08-31-2020

Beginning Balance in checking on Aug 3, 2020, \$123,864.91

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$129,048.01, Deposits & Credits Cleared \$130,335.50
(dep=UARRP \$126,010.50, Advertising \$125.00, district dues \$4,200.00)
(Total Cleared Transactions -\$1,287.49)

Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of Aug 31st \$ 125,152.40

Total Uncleared Transactions = -\$4,441.65 (Checks/Payments -\$4,441.65 - Deposits \$0)
Ending Register Balance as of Aug 31st \$120,710.75

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (remaining payback due to reserve total \$15K)

Funds designated for Envirothon 2020/2021 \$9,806.16 (minus admin \$573.87 = \$9,232.29)

NOI as of 08/31/2020 \$85,403.31

New Transactions as of 09/06/2020

Checks and Payments -\$2,522.06

Deposits \$0 (breakdown of deposits=0)

Total New Transactions -\$2,522.06

Ending Register Balance as of 09-06-2020 \$118,188.69

Reserve remains at \$26,075.15 (remaining payback due to reserve total \$15K)

Funds designated for Envirothon 2020/2021 **\$9,806.16** (minus admin \$573.87 = **\$9,232.29**)

NOI as of 09/06/2020 \$82,881.25

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 09/07/2020 \$0

Total District Dues Paid as of 08/31/2020 **\$48,550.00** (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)

Total District Dues Paid as of 08/31/2019 \$52,100.00 (down by \$3,550.00)

Grand Total District Dues PD in 2019 \$61,300.00

UARRP Activity 08-31-20 YTD:

Total pass-through income \$128,475.95

Total pass-through expenses -\$128,475.95

Total CACD Income Earned YTD 8-31-20 \$7,161.79

(Includes 5% Admin \$6,441.79 & Payroll Reimb \$720.00)

Balance of UARRP Federal Funds Available \$15,159.35

Mod #2 (additional funds \$120K) will be added in **September** for additional expenses, including...

Lake County has a set of culverts that they need to replace on the Arkansas river. The UARRP has agreed to help with the replacement cost & has been approved by US Fish & Wildlife to pay out of the UARRP lawsuit settlement. The UARRP portion is \$163,250. *Only \$120K being added now. A Mod #3 will get processed in 2020, or in 2021. The original renewal contract was for \$500K. Renewal contract dates

9-1-2017 thru 12-31-2022

NRCS Programs:

Education Outreach Workshops YTD 8-31-2020: No New Activity in August

Workshop Approved, Pending Completion (1) \$5,000.00 (Mesa CD)

Educational Video Approved, Pending Completion \$2500 (Bookcliff Video)

Education Workshops (2) Completed & Reimb to CD in July \$3,974.00

Total CACD Income Earned YTD 8-31-20 \$953.70 (10% admin & salary)

Total District Workshops YTD 8-31-2020 (4) \$8,974.00

Speakership Programs YTD 8-31-2020: *No New Activity in August

Speakership Meetings Approved, Pending Completion \$0

Speakership Meetings Completed & Reimb to CD in July \$0

Total CACD Income Earned YTD 08-31-2020 \$220.15 (10% admin)

Total Speakership Meetings YTD 8-31-2020 (1) \$1,920.00

Watershed Speakership Meeting – ED Payroll \$112.59

OPEN INVOICES

NRCS (12) 2020 YTD *\$18,509.52

*NRCS Reimb Report-Bulked all Invoices, report submitted, approved, and pending ACH Deposit

UARRP (1) 2020 YTD *\$1,335.00

Total \$19,844.52

P&L July 2020 -\$5,662.34 – P&L YTD \$15,309.07 (minus reserve \$26075.15= **-\$10,766.08 YTD**)

Balance Sheet = *Accts Receivable \$19,844.52 – *Undeposited Funds \$7,400.00

(\$2400 District dues recorded, pending deposit (2) CKS & *\$5K Warner Ranch Journal entry adj needed)

\$11,257.50 (SDA PPP Pmt -CARES Act) – (Forgivable SDA Loan) – Forgiveness App Still Delayed/Not Available due to pending government changes in the program as of 9/5/20.

Director Nick Charchalis moves to approve the Financial Report. **Gary Thrash** seconds the motion. **Motion passes.**

CACD Programs:

Annual Meeting Update: Bobbi reported that they are about finished with confirming the speakers for the meeting. Nothing has been changed on the agenda since the last call. Cindy will be working on a couple of speakers CACD has requested. Scott is to follow-up with Les Owen, Bobbi has confirmed with Clint Evans. Clint asked if they want to have someone from Regional or National to join him. Who would they like to hear from and on what talking points? Bobbie asked the Board to think about that and send her ideas via email.

Rachel Theler produced a flyer for the meeting. The first draft agenda is about ready to go out. It gives topics and speakers. Pheasants Forever will join and speak one evening. She would like feedback on their topic suggestions.

Bobbi thanked the CSCB staff for all their help getting the behind scenes work accomplished. Nikki, Rachel, and Alyssa worked to help Bobbi on the Conservator. Bobbi and Noah worked on the website facelift. Noah is working on allowing registration for the meeting over the website. It is close to being ready. CACD can use their Square merchant account or use PayPal. She would like to know how the Board feels about using PayPal.

The next step is sponsorships. What can we do or offer our sponsors? Some ideas include longer videos (90 sec), shorter videos, slides, running them at breaks and we can also get creative with throwing them on face book and email blasts and on the website with a page devoted to sponsors. The challenge is coming up with a fair price for sponsorship. She asked the CACD directors to focus on getting one sponsor each.

Director George Fosha moves to use PayPal for registration but keep other options open. **Director Steve McEndree** seconds the motion. **Motion Passes**

Scott asked about the previous sponsorship rates. Bobbi provided those numbers. She would like the Board to make suggestion for this year's sponsor fees. They are also looking for a main sponsor. A registration packet will also be sent out that would include the newest Conservator, which would be done in a magazine style format. Deadline for the Conservator is in two weeks, but Bobbi would like it to be closer to one week.

Discussion continued about the meeting format, sponsorship level pricing ideas, what to offer the sponsors for their money, contacting past contributors, include sponsor advertising in Conservator, etc. Noah added that he and Bobbi have been looking at other virtual meetings and how they are charging for sponsorships. There will be a page on the CACD website designated specifically for sponsors. This sponsor page will have its own tab and be up all year long. Bobbi will send out the list of last year's sponsors to the Board.

Other:

Bobbi added that CSCB will have a coffee hour on the 16th and CACD has been invited to present details about the annual meeting.

Noah McCord will have an Envirothon meeting next Wednesday the 16th. He invited Board members to attend the Zoom meeting. The plan is to continue with planning a virtual Envirothon due to school districts not willing to discuss out of County travel this school year.

Director Steve McEndree informed the Board that he will not seek re-election and the LowerArk will have a new representative. He will bring up the vacancy at the Watershed meeting. Bobbi and Board members thanked Steve for his service on the board. He will stay on the Board until the end of the year.

*Bobbi added that **Alex Funk** from CWCB will be a guest speaker at the October meeting. He will also be a speaker at the annual meeting. The next Legislative Committee call will Oct. 7 at 7:30 the guest speaker will be Helen Silver from Colorado Collaborative for Healthy Soils.*

President Misc. Discussion and Updates-Scott Jones:

President Scott Jones reported that at the last CAWA meeting regarding Reg. 85, they came up with 5 goals. These were sent to the Board for comments. No comments were received. Scott will notify CAWA that CACD agrees with those goals.

*Scott confirmed the next CACD BOD call will be **Oct. 14, 7:30 AM**. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 AM*

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director