

**Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 19th, 2020, at 7:30 AM via Teleconference**

Attendees:

Scott Jones, CACD President - Colorado River Watershed Director
Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed
Mike Cleary, Director - Gunnison/Dolores River Watershed Director
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
Steve McEndree, Director – Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Nancy Berges, Director – Lower South Platte Watershed
Bob Warner, CO Alternate Representative to NACD
Brett Moore, CACD Lobbyist
Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director

Absent:

None

Guests:

Les Owen, CDA
Clint Evans, NRCS
Randy Randall, NRCS
Cindy Lair, CSCB
Nikki Brinson, CSCB
Mark Cronquist, Envirothon Program Manager

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by **President Scott Jones** at 7:33 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 January 2020 minutes. **Bobbi** noted that she needs to add **Tyler Neely's** name to the attendance and **Bob Warner** sent a couple of corrections. **Gary Thrash** noted he was not able to attend the meeting. **Director George Fosha** made the motion to approve the minutes with the corrections noted by **Bobbi** and **Director Charlie Carnahan** gave the second. Without any further discussion, the motion to approve the CACD BOD's January 2020 minutes was passed unanimously.

Legislative Update – Brett Moore:

Brett reported that the fencing tax exemption bill is coming up on March 24 with the Finance Committee. All the state districts have been asked for input. If passed this is a lowering of state revenue. Delta CD is planning to have a representative to speak at the hearing. CACD will write a letter of support and **Director Jim Cecil** will present the letter. Colorado Counties Incorporated is also supporting and **Commissioner Pelton**

from Cheyenne County will also be there to testify. A link for the hearing will be sent to the Board so the testimony can be heard in real time. He asked the Dept. of Ag liaison and folks in the Governor's office to take a position on the bill but has not received any answer. This is going to be an uphill battle getting it passed through the Finance Committee, but we'll do our best. Brett thanked Bobbi and board members that have contributed to the process.

The Department of Agriculture figure setting of the Joint Budget Committee occurred on February 6, but our funding levels remain static. There were several additional requests made by the Department that were denied, including the soil health funding that CACD supported, and the ACRE3 funding. Our standard severance tax general fund remained static but still in the budget. In addition, please feel free to check out the bill tracking sheet. The legislative committee has met a couple of times and sorted through the bills and there are several water bills that are secondary to our policy priorities. Brett encouraged everyone to check out the bill tracking link to see if there is anything popping up in their area so we can watch closely at the Capital. Water bill actions will be compiled and forwarded to the Water Resource Committee.

Director Gary Thrash informed Brett that he and **VP Tyler Neely** would be attending the Washington DC fly-in and asked if Brett would contact the Colorado Delegation and set up appointments. Gary informed Brett that he would be there on the 25th of March and thinks he would have time to have 4 or 5 meetings. Brett will set up meetings for them with the delegates.

Director George Fosha stated that CACD was trying to determine if the State Finance Committee has good numbers on the taxes related to fencing. Stockyard Supply in Denver (they sell a lot of fencing materials) spends between \$6 and \$7 million annually on fencing materials. He will double check the numbers, but Brett should be aware of the large dollar number. That is not a surprise because other farm supply stores buy from Stockyard Supply.

Cindy Lair asked what the breakdown between farm fencing and residential fencing might be. George stated that in his experience, most material purchased at Stockyard Supply is steel posts, wood brace posts and barbed wire. When he asked for their numbers, he told them he was not interested in corral fencing.

Brett noted that part of the challenge with the fiscal note is that right now there is a list of sales tax exemptions, at the State and local levels for fencing materials, which run A through S with one of those being farm equipment. In some cases, fencing materials are already being exempted from tax. Exemptions A through S are not tracked through the Department of Revenue individually. The fiscal note writer was adamant that people from all over the state were contacted and the numbers are the best available. The main fact will be that this is a benefit for rural Colorado, and this is also about forest fires and climate change burning down fencing.

NRCS Update-Clint Evans & Randy Randall:

Clint Evans gave an update on the NACD Conference in Las Vegas. He visited with Frank Krentz from the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts and Keisha Tatum, Clint's counterpart from Arizona. The Arizona Association is looking at revamping their intern agreement. They ran into issues the first summer when they on-boarded some of their junior and senior high school students to work at the offices. They had issues with their liability insurance since the students were under 18 years of age. They are considering college freshmen and sophomores or junior college level students rather than high school for one or two reasons. The first issue was the insurance and liability concerns. Secondly, what they realized was since they had structured their agreement to transition kids from high school and offer a small scholarship fund (\$2,500) trying to develop a mechanism for them to get into the NRCS or USDA Pathways Intern program their junior and senior years of college. They realized there is a gap between their high school years and their junior and senior years of college. Their Arizona ED wasn't at the conference. She has had more of the day-to-day experience with the

program and Frank suggested that they all talk when she can be a part of the conversation. Clint thanked Bobbi for reaching out to AACD. There is a tentative teleconference next Thursday the 27th or Friday the 28th. He asked that he be notified when the date and time is confirmed.

NRCS thinks they can work to flex up the general agreement with CACD and then build a separate agreement for the intern program if the CACD Board of Directors are interested in pursuing the program once information from the Arizona Association is available. Clint feels we can learn from their experience and build a successful program for Colorado.

Clint also said he would send Bobbi Arizona's agreement. It appears it was originally 100% funded by NRCS. There's language in there about building interns for NRCS that Clint does not like. When Clint spoke to CACD in January, he had suggested that the split be 75% NRCS with a 25% match. He would like the agreement built in such a way that it highlights NRCS, CACD and the Conservation Districts. That way the kids can be brought on board, get an intern opportunity that is not just focused on NRCS and their technical assistance programs, but on the relationship between NRCS, the Districts, the State Association and the State Conservation Board, etc. He would rather give them the experiences of what a partnership is, what it means to our ag producers and how it helps all of us be more successful. Clint then asked if there were further questions about the intern program. The CACD Board of Directors would like to discuss this further after speaking with the AACD.

Clint then turned the conversation over to **Randy Randall**. Randy addressed the existing agreement with CACD. The agreement is for \$75,000 and covers everything from the Annual Meeting, Envirothon, Camp Rocky and the small grant program. One of their thoughts was to go through and look at flexing up the CACD agreement. It looks like there has been success with the \$2,500 match opportunity for Districts to hold workshops and outreach. The thought there was to increase that amount to \$3,000, as an option and/or add another \$10,000 to \$20,000 to that opportunity so we can have even further outreach going into 2020 and partially into 2021. He then asked for questions on these suggestions. Bobbi asked Randy to confirm the deadline of March 31 for the 3-year agreement. Randy confirmed that date. Randy reiterated that they would be looking at flexing up the CACD agreement that goes to helping support the annual meeting, Envirothon, Camp Rocky, etc. and looking at taking that agreement from \$75,000.00 to \$90,000.00.

Randy thanked **Cindy Lair**, **Nikki Brinson** and **Les Owen** for allowing them to host their staff meeting on March 3rd at CDA offices in Broomfield. He stated that a lot of information will be shared including the new Farm Bill; it's roll-out and impact ranging from EQIP to CRP. The Farm Service Agency will be coming to the meeting to assist with that topic. He will try to get call-in information. The meeting will run from 8:00 am till 4:00 pm.

Randy also noted that they are gaining a little in staffing. Last month they had 3 people take positions out of state and are in the process of on-boarding 7 positions that will be in place by the end of the month. There are several Soil Con Technicians, Civil Engineering Technicians and entry level Soil Con positions that have been advertised and are waiting for panels. There is a strong probability that they will be at having 10 to 12 new employees on-board by mid to late March.

He went on to say that the current NRCS budget is in pretty good shape. There are several items they will be looking at because they've been able to earn a fair amount of lapse due to inadequate staffing. They have been down about 40 employees. As they staff back up, they need to go back to some of their agreements in areas where they would have purchased other items such as equipment or computers, etc.

CDA Update-Les Owen:

Les Owen reported on CDA's legislative items. He did not know if the Department of Ag was given the authority to take a position on the fencing Bill. He will ask and let CACD know. He noted that the JBC denied the Soil Health and ACRE3 funding ask. They will submit a comeback request for that and see if they will reconsider. That will happen sometime around the first of March.

Les sent out information regarding the changes to NEPA regulations at CEQ that's out for comment. Comments are due by March 10. The State of Colorado will be submitting comments. There are changes in the regulations that modernize NEPA regulations that were written in the 1970s, before email and the internet, and didn't allow for electronic notification. It seems everyone is behind these modernization changes. There are other things like consideration of impact analysis, whether cumulative effects are required. The proposal is to take that requirement out of the regulations. That item has a tremendous amount of case law that has happened over the years since NEPA has been implemented, that speaks specifically to that, and do require it. They restate some page limits, but that has been in there since 1978. There are some time limits; one year for an EA and two years for an EIS unless more time is needed, in which case a written justification from the responsible agency official can extend that time. There has been some push back on this change.

BLM sent out a scoping notice for revising their Form 4100 for grazing regulations. They are asking what folks would like to see. The overall idea is to allow for more flexibility in grazing permit renewals. Current regulations state a hard date for moving livestock around. This decreases flexibility and doesn't work very well. This will be an ongoing issue that CDA will be working on.

Les stated that GMUG will be coming out with a draft forest plan in the coming months. He will stay in touch with CACD on that issue.

CSCB Update-Cindy Lair:

Cindy Lair reported that they had 6 candidates to interview for **Mark Cronquist's** former job. In the face-to-face meeting **Rachel Theler** was able to join CACD and talk about changes to her position; making her the outreach person that will work for the partnership in relation to getting the word out about conservation and the work that districts and all partners do for landowners and agriculture in Colorado. The new person will cover more of eastern Colorado. Rachel will still cover the Upper Arkansas and districts that are west of I-25 as well as the San Luis Valley districts.

Cindy stated that they are working on having more staff in the Broomfield office. She is working on building capacity to hire an administrative assistant in their office. That would free up their time to do more work with districts along the front range that are closer to their office.

She noted that she has become aware that more people in the Ag and conservation sectors are recognizing the value that conservation districts bring and they're inviting participation. They are recognizing that conservation districts are the only entities out there that have access to landowners and that are looking out for the landowner's interests. They want CDs at their meetings, and they want more participation. The more they know who you are the more the demands on your time.

Cindy thanked **CACD Director Jim Cecil** for helping to review the applications and he has also expressed interest in helping them interview as well.

She reported that the districts should have received the new 3-way agreement between NRCS, CSCB and the districts. Signed copies should be sent back to CSCB. Once received, she will sign and send them to Clint Evans

for his signature. In this new agreement, there is a 2nd agreement to indicate the non-monetary benefits, like the use of the computer, office space, vehicles, etc., that are no charge.

Cindy also stated that it is disappointing that the JBC rejected the request for the soil health program as well as the ACRE3 funding. The Colorado Collaborative for Healthy Soils has been working hard to prepare information for the committee. They're still meeting and would appreciate any participation from CACD and conservation districts in general and producers in general. She thinks the next meeting is going to be an evening meeting because they are trying to make it easier for producers to participate. The meeting will be sometime in March.

She reported that the next Governor's appointee to the State Conservation Board is Emmitt Jordan. He is a rancher from the Briggsdale area in Weld County. Due to scheduling conflicts he was unable to attend their January meeting. The next State Conservation Board meeting is June 1st and 2nd in Montrose.

Cindy attended the NACD meeting along with Gretchen Rank in Las Vegas. Gretchen is the Southwest rep for the National Conservation District Employee Association. They discussed ideas where CSCB could participate. One of the ideas was to have a monthly call-in for district managers to get questions answered. This could be sponsored by the District Managers' Association as well as by the CSCB staff.

CSCB is planning a district manager's meeting in May. The date has not been set yet. It's a great opportunity to build relationships, network and have their questions answered.

Cindy asked if there were any questions for her or Nikki. **Randy Randall** thanked Cindy for getting out the 3-way agreements. Randy explained that other states have had issues with districts not following the agreements. He is happy to answer any questions that district boards might have.

NACD Updates – Gary Thrash & Bob Warner:

CACD Director Gary Thrash and Bob Warner attended the 74th NACD Annual meeting in Las Vegas with over 1000 conservation district representatives, partners, and conservation leaders. Many states and territories were represented. They had a parade of states and territories in the opening session and there is a photo of everyone with the Warner Ranch flag waving in the background.

The meeting theme this year was **“Conservation Innovation; Working from the Roots Up”** There is an annual meeting hub with pictures and daily speaker information. Gary highlighted that NACD increased their grants to \$18.6M and they get about \$1.2M from membership dues and they have other funding accounts they use as well. NACD has a planned meeting on June 22-25; Wildfire Summit, which will be in Denver and they will be asking for potential invitees. Both Bob and Gary serve on the Stewardship and Education Committee. The 2020 education topic will be **“Where would we be without pollinators?”** They have free material for students and teachers. There is a pollinator guide that is worth a look. It's a well-done publication and is currently on the marketplace online. It will soon be on the conservationlearn.org website. This is the subject for the poster contest this year. The 2021 theme will be **“Healthy Forest, Healthy Communities.”** They will soon be designing education material on that topic.

Resolutions of note that passed: Arizona wants to see the feasibility of taking flood waters from the Mississippi and Missouri and piping it to the Colorado River Drainage. Huge numbers of people are involved in that. It would be a partial solution for water in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. This resolution would affect those of us on the Colorado River. It's not clear how you would keep the front range water users from tapping into that line for water. Another resolution passed is the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium, which deals with carbon credit funding. In this resolution they have General Mills and Land of Lakes involved and

agricultural marketing folks. The Global Research Institute is heavily involved in that as well. It might be worth looking at our state and where we might fit in.

Urban Conservation Grants were given to 21 districts last year. Colorado did not have one. Each year Friends of NACD have offered four grants of \$2,500 each to districts. NACD has signed an agreement with the National Wild Turkey Foundation. That's an agreement states are encouraged to tap into and look at funding for projects where we have turkey habitat. Ducks Unlimited is also a big partner along with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (their working land initiative). The Walton Foundation was well represented as well. There was a presentation by My Farms (website is welcomemyfarms.com). They're in partnership with Tyson funds to measure nitrogen balance in corn fields. They pay .35 per acre to provide data on the nitrogen balance coming across the field.

Gary also spoke about the Next Generation Leadership Institute. They launched their first-year class and had people from around the country getting the training from that.

Meetings coming up include the Spring Fly-In on March 25th that he and **CACD VP Tyler Neely** will be attending. There will be a summer meeting in Bismarck, ND and then the Southwest Pacific Regional meeting in September in Maui. The Envirothon competition will be in Lincoln, NB this year and then the 75th Annual Meeting (next year) will be in New Orleans one week prior to Marti Gras.

NACD Alternate Representative to Colorado Bob Warner reported on the Conservation Foundation and the National Envirothon event. With increased activity for Envirothon, the National Conservation Foundation is taking over. It's great that **Gary Thrash** can be our NACD Colorado Representative because they had National Conservation Foundation meetings Monday and Tuesday afternoon which coincided with the NACD Director meetings. **Mark Cronquist** and **Bob Warner** feel that since the Envirothon is in Nebraska this year, it might be a good idea to rent a van and drive up rather than fly. Bob has offered to contribute to the cost of renting a van or their transportation in a van. Mark is looking at the possibility for rentals.

The Next Generation Leadership Institute is trying to increase from 7 members to 14 members and they keep increasing each year as it seems to be very successful.

Randy Randall asked Bob if the Envirothon would be a place where the NRCS agreement could be flexed up to take the pressure off CACD. Bob thought it was a good idea and would fit well. Next year the Envirothon competition will be in Nova Scotia and expenses will be greater and the assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Envirothon Update-Mark Cronquist:

Mark Cronquist reported that they are on the home stretch planning Envirothon. It's a new venue this year and there are some changes. They have lost the people providing food for the event because the kids cannot get the day off school, but an approved vendor for the Colorado State Fair has indicated interest. There is a strict policy in place that kids need to be involved. He is still working on the aquatic ecology topic specialist. Mark has reached out to **Greg Peterson** from CAWA but has not received a call back. He has also reached out to a CPW ecologist that was recommended but has not heard back from him either. Because of the concentration on water resources, the aquatic ecology section is extremely important for us. This will be his focus for the next week.

Mark thanked Bob for his commitment to the State Envirothon, his generous offer for transportation and his work with NCF. It will depend on what team wins the Envirothon this year as to whether they take a van or fly. He thinks the team that has been dominant the last few years would want to drive and take the opportunity to train while driving. If it's a team from another area, they may want to fly.

Volunteer positions for this year's event, which will be the 21st and 22nd of April in Pueblo, have been identified and he is finishing outlining the duties as he sees them. **Alyssa Clairda** has agreed to help oversee the volunteer effort. This year they will have responsibility for set-up. In the past this has been taken care of beforehand. It will take a team of 6 or 7 people to set up the table and chairs. Anyone that would like to help is welcome to do so. One thing they are waiting on is the final decision by National Envirothon on what the oral presentations are going to look like. The National rules still indicate a hard copy or a poster board kind of presentation.

They had been informed that the National competition in Nebraska is going to use a digital type format and it's causing some issues in finding the infrastructure to do the presentations if it is a power point piece because those will be done before the kids get to Pueblo. They hope to have that part of the competition finalized in the next week to 10 days. The written test will be requested to be in their hands by the 1st of April so they can be proofed and edited and have those ready to be copied by the end of the first week in April. Mark asked for questions. There was some discussion about the aquatic specialist and tracking one down. Mark can be reached at 970-590-6596.

Monthly Financial Update-Bobbi Ketels:

Before giving the financials, Bobbi thanked Randy and stated that she would be working on the 3-year contract and getting the Envirothon and Camp Rocky redefined in that agreement. She will contact Randy about the intern project via email. She also thanked Bob for his Envirothon support.

CACD FINANCIALS: 01-31-2020

Beginning Balance in checking on January 1, 2020, \$115,101.81

Checks/Payments Cleared -\$16,081.89, Deposits Cleared \$0.00

(Total Cleared Transactions -\$16,081.89)

Ending/Cleared Balance in Checking as of January 31st, \$99,019.92

Total Uncleared Transactions= -\$6,076.64 Checks/Payments - Deposits \$0

Ending Register Balance as of January 31st, \$92,943.28

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

NOI as of 01/31/2020 \$66,868.13

*Total Open Invoices A/R summary \$25,478.61

Credit Card Ending Statement Balance as of 02/06/2020 \$29.99

Total District Dues Paid as of 01/31/2020 \$1,200.00 (membership invoiced (75) \$90,000.00)

UARRP Activity: No Activity in January

NRCS Programs:

Education Outreach Workshops:

1/27/2020: \$2500.00 paid out to CACD Education Workshop Reimb Program-EPCD Ag Expo

NRCS Reimbursement invoiced for \$2500 + \$250.00 Admin Fee *Projected to receive in March

Total NRCS Open Invoices (3) \$25,478.61 *Projected to receive in March

Director Steve McEndree made a motion to approve the July financials. **Director George Fosha** gave the second. Motion passes.

Camp Rocky-Bobbi Ketels:

CACD ED Bobbi Ketels reported that she and Amy have started working together. All the registration forms are updated. Bobbi and **Mary Johnson** have started a Facebook campaign and the website is also updated.

Bobbi will be sending out all the forms to districts today. The annual ask from the districts for volunteers and anyone interested in sponsoring has been sent out. She would like to piggyback on the Envirothon contact list as well. The goal is to have 30 campers and they are still looking for a forestry instructor. For the last two years they have not had a dedicated person for forestry, so if anyone has ideas for that, please contact her. Amy will reach out to the Fish and Wildlife instructors. Marina and Ciara will not be able to help this year. Amy is looking for more volunteers for both Forestry & Fish and Wildlife.

Camp Rocky will be held July 5th thru 11th. Amy, Bobbi and the Jr. Leaders will arrive on July 4th to prepare for the campers. Bobbi and Amy are also looking for guest speakers each evening so if anyone has ideas please pass them along. There is some funding available to start camp planning but they're still looking for corporate sponsors. Districts quite often provide sponsorships for the campers.

Annual Meeting-Scott Jones & Bobbi Ketels:

Bobbi Ketels reminded the Board that the annual meeting committee consists of **Tyler Neely** as chairman, **Scott Jones** and **Nick Charchalis**. She will send the information to everyone and see who else wants to be on the committee. Bobbi will be working on the forms and updates for the poster contest and award nominations forms to make sure they are available for spring watershed meetings. When she sends out the email for the annual meeting committee, she will include date suggestions for the first committee call. Scott suggested the first of the month. Nick confirmed that he will be on the annual meeting committee and will await the call. He then signed off from this meeting.

Fundraising-Mike Cleary:

Scott asked for any comments or updates for fundraising. Mike Cleary had to get off the call and was not available for an update.

Other CACD Programs-Bobbi Ketels:

Bobbi referred to the updates given by Clint and Randy. She had no further comments.

President Misc. Discussion and Updates-Scott Jones:

George asked about the status of the administrative assistant position. Bobbi stated that they will need to change the QuickBooks program to QB Enterprise Gold or QB on-line, which is her preference, and what each offer. She would like to see the new assistant have access as well as having access for two board members that could log on the account at any time. However, the cost will be much higher than the current charge which is about \$800 annually. The cost for QB on-line would be \$2340/year. If they go with QB Enterprise Gold, the cost would be \$5,280 per year. She asked if they would like to vote and give her the go ahead to move forward. **President Scott Jones** felt the QB on-line version would be best and asked for a motion. **CACD Director Jim Cecil** moved to approve moving forward with the QB on-line software program purchase. **CACD Director Gary Thrash** gave the second. Motion passed. Bobbi was asked to outline what the QB on-line programs will do for CACD and send the outline in an email to the Board so that everyone is informed.

President Scott Jones reminded everyone the next CACD BOD call will be March 11, 7:30 AM.

Scott asked for a motion to adjourn. **Director George Fosha** made the motion. The recording did not pick up who gave the second.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 AM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bobbi Ketels
CACD Executive Director