***Colorado Association of Conservation Districts***

***Board of Directors Meeting Minutes***

***February 16, 2022, via Zoom***

***Attendees:***

*Jim Cecil, CACD President - Republican River Watershed*

*Tyler Neely, CACD Vice President - Rio Grande River Watershed*

*Mike Cleary, CACD Secretary/Treasurer - Gunnison Dolores Watershed*

*Scott Jones, CACD Director - Colorado River Watershed*

*Nick Charchalis, CACD Director – North-Platte/White-Yampa River Watershed*

*George Fosha, CACD Director - Upper Arkansas River Watershed*

*Bobbi Ketels, CACD Executive Director*

*Brett Moore, CACD Legislative Liaison*

***Absent:***

*Gary Thrash, CACD Director - San Juan Basin - CO NACD Alternate Representative*

*Charlie Carnahan, CACD Director - Upper South Platte Watershed*

*Bob Warner, CACD Alternate Director - CO NACD Representative - NCF Trustee*

***Guests:***

*Bronson Smart, NRCS*

*Randy Randall, NRCS*

*Les Owen, CDA*

***Call to Order:***

*The meeting was called to order by* ***President Jim Cecil*** *at 7:35 AM after establishing a quorum.*

***Prior Meeting Minutes:***

***ED, Bobbi Ketels*** *asked the board to table the**January 2022 Face-to-Face minutes.* ***President Jim Cecil*** *asked for a motion.* ***Director Nick Charchalis*** *gave the motion.* ***Director Tyler Neeley*** *gave the second. Motion passes.*

***NRCS Update:***

***Randy Randall****, NRCS ASTC-Partnerships recapped on the CACD face-to-face meeting, stating it was good to meet in person again. He gave an update on COVID Stats and how they will start to see the allowance for employees to start returning to offices and expects that FPAC will send out a revised Safe at work plan soon. Randy introduced Bronson Smart as the new Acting Colorado State Conservationist.*

***Bronson Smart*** *stated that he is looking forward to meeting and working with the Board of Supervisors. He informed the Board that Colorado has lost some Resource Team Leads and are in the process of replacing them. There is a new Area Conservationist in Area 1, the Western Slope. He will be coming to Grand Junction from Hawaii.*

*Bronson reported the following:*

*EQIP continues to be a busy program. Colorado is one of nine states where the cover crop initiative was offered as a pilot program. It has been extremely successful in Colorado. Applications totaled $6M with only $1.5M in funding. Colorado has asked for additional funding due to the popularity of the program.*

*Partnership agreements are being worked on. NRCS continues to work under the continuing resolution until the federal budget is passed.*

*Local Work Group meetings are actively being held in various districts. He is looking forward to receiving input from the local groups so funding can be identified.*

*Randy added that they are optimistic that they will receive an updated office safety program soon. The current program suggests that the process for “return to the office” will soon be underway. He also hopes to establish the funding program that supports Camp Rocky and other grant opportunities. The highest priority is the Technician program through CSCB. Approximately $1.3M is needed for that agreement. Randy is also reviewing the CAP funding increase before he sends it to the National Office.*

*Bronson thanked CACD Board members for their support of NRCS programs.*

***Director Nick Charchalis*** *asked about the NRCS cost share (payment schedule) and if there might be changes due to steep construction and materials cost increases. Bronson replied that with the increases in steel and pipe, National is addressing the issue and looking at what can be done for practices that have experienced these cost increases. National is also making software changes that will allow modifications to contracts and increased payment rates for practices that have been affected. He hopes to hear from National within the next few months. They are looking at a percentage increase. NRCS does not want producers to cancel their contracts due to the increased costs.* ***Director Nick Charchalis*** *offered to send a letter to National in support of an increase in the payment schedule. Bronson thought that would be a good idea.*

***Legislative Update – Brett Moore:***

*Brett reported that today is the 36th day of the Colorado General Assembly. It will run through May 11, 2022. The CACD tracking sheet has 31 Bills that are being monitored. The Legislative Committee meets on the first Wednesday of the month to review bills. While reviewing the bills, the Committee found some that are of interest and Brett is doing research on those bills. The biggest legislative effort right now is the extension of the Conservation Grant funding line, which received some of the severance tax dollars last session. The Bill is sponsored by Senators Donovan and Sonnenberg. He has been checking on this Bill to monitor its progress. For the 10-year funding line, he plans to go after $1.25M, which is the equivalent of $15k for each Colorado conservation district. Brett has been talking to Cindy and Les and would like to put together stories on how Districts used the $15k they received in 2021. He will present those to the Legislators. Senate Bill 281 that was passed last year, guarantees the $450k in severance tax funding for the next two years.*

*The Ag Council will be meeting this afternoon via Zoom. Notes from the meeting will be available in the next couple of days for the Board to review.*

***CDA/CSCB Update:***

*Les Owen first provided an update on covid. Masks are no longer required and CDA is hosing the CAWA meeting in person.*

*Les has been working on the Wolf Plan. He has been attending subcommittee meetings. The Gray Wolf has been restored its Federal protections and that will have an impact on the Colorado law moving forward. The Stakeholder Advisory Group and the Technical Work Group will continue to meet. The Stakeholder Advisory Group continues to discuss the compensation options. Eight or nine options will be going forward, from utilizing the current big game damage compensation fund to one that is used in Wyoming that uses compensation ratios. This will go to the CPW Commission without ratios numbers. Wyoming uses 7:1 ratio. Best available science goes back to the Oakleaf 2003 article that states an 8:1 ratio. The preferred alternative provides producers with a choice of the compensation ratio or one that is based on record keeping where the producer documents missing livestock with shipping weights pre-wolf and post-wolf. None of the options will make a ranch whole with their losses. The statute requires a separate pot of funds to assist with conflict mitigation. The true costs of this are now being realized and it is going to take an enormous amount of funding to pay for range riders, conflict mitigation and conflict measures. Where the funds will come from has not been identified. Several related issues are still outstanding. The next Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting will be held next week in Glenwood Springs.*

*Adam has been involved with the scoping comments that were submitted for the Greater Sage Grouse. The plan amendment is underway. The San Luis Valley BLM is ready to do a Resource Management Amendment and are in the process of outreach for the amendment.*

*Randy Randall asked about the avion influenza spread and if CDA is receiving updates on the status. Les replied that the State Veterinarian’s Office is very engaged and have increased their monitoring. There is a large poultry show schedule in Weld County with Nationwide participants. The influenza has caused additional preplanning and monitoring for the event. Should the flu arrive in Colorado, they will jump on it as soon as possible to contain it. Randy stated that John Andrews is the point of contact for NRCS regarding this issue.*

*Les gave a brief update on the STAR program. Meetings have been held for the participating CDs and in person trainings will be held in March.* ***ED Bobbi Ketels*** *asked if there were any Soil Health Advisory Committee meeting scheduled. Les replied that he is not aware of any. The Committee must meet four times per year and the plan was to meet once per quarter with CSCB. Ryan Taylor will be reaching out with meeting dates.*

***NACD Update – Bobbi Ketels:***

*Bobbi reported that the* ***Spring Fly-In*** *will be virtual again this year. Mary will send out emails to set up appointments with Colorado Legislators. Gary would like to have additional Board members become involved in the meetings. NRCS will be invited to attend as well. Bobbi asked for volunteers to attend. There are usually 4 or 5 Zoom calls over a week. The meetings typically last about 45 minutes. They anticipate the meetings will start March 22, 2022.* *President* *Jim Cecil suggested that a Board member from each region attend the meeting with their elected representative. Brett agreed.*

*The 2022 Technical Assistance Grants will be open for applications from the District already enrolled in the program. This is expected to happen in March.*

*The 2022 Friends of NACD district grant awardees will be announced this week. Gary will have an update next meeting.*

*The 2022 Next Generation Leadership Institute grant was awarded to Josh Smith of New Mexico. He will represent the SW Region.*

*April 22 through May 1 is the 67th Annual Stewardship Week. CACD posts all the NACD information about Stewardship Week on the CACD website. Bobbi emails all the literature to the Districts as well. CACD encourages districts to use this material for educational presentations at their local schools.*

*The NACD Summer meeting will be held July 15 – 17 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Fall meeting will be in September in Hawaii.*

*The CACD Resolutions submitted to NACD were defeated. The double death tax on family farms, as CACD called it, was defeated because NACD already has a policy on it. The 30x30 resolutions were voluntarily pulled by all States. Gary will give* *the reasons either in an email to the Board or at the next CACD monthly meeting.*

*The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding information can be found on the NACD website under government affairs as well as in the E-resource newsletters.*

*Two officers of the Employees Association, Vanessa McCracken, and Gretchen Rank are attending the NACD meeting in Florida. Cindy Lair, Bob Warner, Gary Thrash and Patrick O’Neill are also attending the meeting. Gretchen has asked if the Employee Association could attend the monthly CACD meetings. CACD meetings are open. The Association is welcome to attend.*

*Ducks Unlimited would like to share a movie about conservation partnerships. Bobbi has reached out to them for the information. Pheasants Forever is working on a partnership with NACD. Gary thought the eastern plains CDs might be interested in a partnership with them and could follow up with NACD.*

***CACD Programs Update:***

***Envirothon – Tyler Neely*** *Tyler reported that he and Bobbi met with three of the topic experts that have been CACD’s biggest supporters for Envirothon. They wanted an update on CACD’s position for Envirothon. The feeling was that if the Envirothon went virtual again, it would be difficult to get participation. They discussed spreading the word to get more schools involved. Getting the teams together is the biggest hurdle. Losing Noah’s help took steam out of the program.*

*Discussion continued about the challenges for the program. The program requires a manager that can spend the necessary time to produce a successful competition. How do we get the rural schools and the urban schools interested?* ***Director Nick Charchalis*** *suggested reaching out to the State Board of Education for assistance. Bobbi will speak with Randy Randall about funds to educate teachers about Envirothon. Les Owen stated that CSCB wants to continue supporting the program with assistance from a Field Specialist. Finding out the number of schools that would be interested is key to know how the program should move forward. Bobbi and Tyler will be meeting with Rose Banzhaf from the Woodland Park Schools, to discuss a campaign for the 2023 competition.*

*Bobbi addressed Camp Rocky. She asked Les if there are employees at CSCB that might be interested in helping for a week at the Camp. The Camp is tentatively scheduled for the week after the 4th of July. Ami has resigned as co-director of the Camp. Scott has suggested changing the location of the camp to the Walking Mountain Camp in Avon. He would like to schedule a Zoom meeting with Walking Mountain and any Board members that would like to be involved. Walking Mountain might take the current Camp Rocky programs and integrate them into their current programs. It may be possible to have Camp Rocky at Walking Mountain this year. Additional discussion about the Camp structure will need to take place.*

*Bobbi will start working on the Annual meeting and shop for a new venue. Dates were discussed and it was decided that Bobbi will find out what venues are available around the November timeframe. Scott recommended the hotel where they stayed during the WSS in Denver. Mike Cleary suggested the Crested Butte area.*

*Bobbi was invited to attend the pilot District Leadership Training by the Employees Association. CSCB gave the Association $20,000 to help pay for the teachers. Districts will be responsible for their travel expenses. The Association will have grants available. The Association has also asked CACD to provide financial support for the training.* ***Director Jim Cecil*** *suggested that Bobbi speak with Randy about any funds that might be available through their agreement with CACD.*

***CACD Financials:***

***Checking Account Summary:***

*Statement beginning balance $120,891.05, Checks and payments cleared (8) -$7,123.91, Deposits and other credits cleared (2) $14,208.95. Statement ending balance $127,976.09, Uncleared transactions as of 01/31/2022 -$9,969.49, Register balance as of 01/31/2022 $118,006.60, Cleared transactions after 01/31/2022 $0.00. Uncleared transactions after 01/31/2022 -$2,852.52, Register balance as of 02/16/2022 $115,154.08*

***Credit Card Account Summary:***

*Statement beginning balance $3,797.96, Charges and cash advances cleared (13) $10,848.24, Payments and credits cleared (2) -$4,665.64, Statement ending balance $9,980.56, Register balance as of 02/04/20229, $980.56 Cleared transactions after 02/04/2022 $0.00, Uncleared transactions after 02/04/2022, $42.98. Register balance as of 02/16/2022 $10,023.54.*

*Bobbi explained that QB online does not allow her to break out her time into classes. Currently her payroll is going into the general payroll account. This throws off P&Ls for things like the Annual Meeting. She has worked with QB but has not found a solution. NRCS requires that her time be broken down for their agreements.*

*Bobbi will turn over QB to the CPA by March 15 for tax preparation. They will commit to having the CSCB taxes complete by May 15.*

***President Misc. Discussion and Updates:***

*Bobbi informed the Board that Session 5 of the Annual Meeting Series will be on the 24th at noon with CAWA, NRCS State Conservation Engineer and CWA. This will wrap up the Annual Meeting Series. The last webinar under the CCA contract will the 22nd. Bobbi will send the links to the series, and they will also be posted on the website.*

***The next legislative call will be March 2, 2022 (it will be the same link used previously)***

***The next Board meeting will be March 16, 2022, via Zoom.***

***Meeting Adjourned 9:38 AM.***

*Respectfully Submitted,*

***Bobbi Ketels***

***CACD Executive Director***