



**Colorado State Conservation Board
Meeting Minutes
June 23, 2011
Lamar, CO Meeting**

Meeting called to order 12:14pm.

Board members present:

Mary Sue Liss, President – Upper South Platte River Watershed
Pat Meakins, Secretary/Treasurer – Member-At-Large
Larry Sweeney, Colorado River, Gunnison-Dolores River Watersheds
Carol Dunn, Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Leroy Brase, Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Jack Burk, San Juan Basin River Watershed
JD Amick, North Platte, White, Yampa Watershed

MEMBERS EXCUSED ABSENT:

Brendon Rockey, Secretary, Rio Grande River Watershed
Bud Mekelburg, Republican, Lower South Platte Watershed

Staff members present:

Cindy Lair, State Conservation Board Program Manager
Jim Currier, Basin States Salinity Program Manager
Mark Cronquist, Conservation Specialist
Pam King, Conservation Specialist
Nicole Reed, Conservation Specialist
Ashley Ross, Conservation Specialist

Other attendees:

John Knapp: Area Conservationist
JD Wright, CACD, Lower Arkansas Valley Watershed

REVIEW AND APPROVE AGENDA

Mary Sue Liss would like to add to New Business the Wild Horse Issue on the Western Slope and to expand the meeting schedule discussion to include next year's activities. **Jack Burk** would like to add some information on the awards committee for CACD. **Cindy Lair** would like to add information about Tim Macklin's detail to the CSCB and Department of Agriculture. **Larry Sweeney** moved to approve, **Pat Meakins** seconded. **All in favor, motion passes.**

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Minutes were reviewed prior to meeting. **Jack Burk** moved approval, **Larry Sweeney** seconded. **All in favor, motion carried, February minutes approved.**

PARTNER UPDATES

CACD – **JD Wright** passed out two handouts, CACD summary of activities.



- Board vacancies at year end: - Bob Warner – Upper South Platte, Vern Vinson – Upper Arkansas, **JD Wright** – Lower Arkansas.
- Other updates included legislative activity, education, district visibility, and state activity.
- Annual meeting: November 14-17, 2011 will be held in Loveland at the Embassy Suites Hotel.
- Short-grass Prairie Partnership handout.
- **Mary Sue Liss** asked JD for input on the joint meeting that CACD wants in September. **Jack Burk** asked if there was a specific agenda that CACD had and if it would be more appropriate then the Annual Meeting? JD prefers the fall meeting. **Mary Sue Liss** mentioned the board will discuss it on the agenda tomorrow and plans will have to be determined with the time.

NRCS – John Knapp provided an update for NRCS. The is Allen Green retiring July 1st. The process for replacement is moving forward, applications are closed and they are hoping to get the position filled quickly. Agreements (with various partners) have strong support from Washington, D.C. and should continue unless there is a drastic unforeseen change.

Tim Macklin was the RC&D coordinator in the Southeast portion of the state. He will be a great asset to the CSCB program. John also mentioned that the other RC&D coordinators are looking for projects. Some other coordinators are working on closing shop/transferring projects to other partners. San Juan is planning on continuing; East Central is continuing with an energy program, Sangre De Cristo are going to try to continue on three of their large projects. San Luis Valley and Colorado Big Country RC&D's are the ones that are unsure of making it right now.

The current drought in this region has really had a hit and a lot of ranchers are moving out since this whole season is lost. There have been 15 fires in this area this season. Emergency grazing designation, you can (for a penalty) graze CRP land. There has been a lot of interest, but not many actually join.

Jack Burk added thanks to Allen for all he has done for Conservation and motioned for staff to write a resolution of thanks to Allen and have the board sign it tomorrow. Leroy Brase seconded the motion, all in favor. Motion passes, staff will write something tonight.

CDA – Cindy Lair mentioned that in the packet there are field reports from the staff for everyone to look through.

Cindy Lair spoke about the full funding for Direct Assistance from the Department. The Ag Management funds back filled the cut from several years ago to “fully” fund the Direct Assistance and the Board. If it weren't for those funds, the Markets division would have been cut. Ag exports in Colorado increased 30% this year and the Commissioner says that the Ag Industry is what is bringing the economy back quicker than other states. The Equine Herpes virus was taken on by the State Vet and it seems to be contained and the quarantine has been lifted.

State Conservation Board: **Cindy Lair** included in the packets a program manager's report. One thing that is a priority is the revamp of the website, the Department also has a Facebook site.



If a district has an employee problem, please let **Cindy Lair** know. So they can see if the AG's office can help the district and save districts liability and money. So please keep that in mind when you come across any of those.

Mark Cronquist and **Cindy Lair** both attended the West Adams Annual Meeting, and with new board members it seems like it is making great progress and becoming stronger.

Last April, our staff met in Beulah and had a work session for three days. Focused our entire meeting on the financial review process and brought in a CPA from Arkansas that works with their State Board on working with Districts to account for funds. Another topic was the District Certification program, which **Ashley Ross** has really been working on the nuts and bolts of. The main point determined was to push the deadline out to 2013 due to the webinars and online testing ability. In addition, we have to redo the online reference manual and make it a study guide to go hand in hand with the certification curriculum.

Also, the Lower South Platte Watershed plan is being wrapped up. **Cindy Lair** mentioned the next step is how to implement it and roles, etc. **Mark Cronquist** brought a copy of the plan for the board to review at their leisure.

A big staff change was that Scott Shirola left CSCB, but gave **Ashley Ross** a great opportunity to move back (home) to Pueblo. Which gives us the opening in Grand Junction again, and hopefully the middle of July it will be advertised.

There have been several discussions with the plant material center in Meeker dealing with agreements, contracts, NRCS, etc. **Cindy Lair** and **Pam King** have offered their time and energy to help them work with communications, **Cindy Lair** is confident that as they work through the process there will be opportunities for growth.

Tim Macklin will be coming on board with staff for temporary employment; **Cindy Lair** has several ideas for him to work on. One big idea is for him to work on insurance (medical) for district employees. If some of Tim's skills could be used to create a proposal how that would be done statutorily and then if CACD would be interested in taking it to the legislature and make that change, depending on if CACD and CSCB support this. JD mentioned that a resolution or motion at the Annual meeting would be needed to do that. Another thought from **Cindy Lair** was what does the board think about really go into the statute and look at it and clean it up? Tim may be a good person to do that.

NRCS and CSCB will send out a survey online to the districts to get input from everyone, the timeframe is July 15-August 15th, for those without internet service – it will also be in the Conservator. If each district brought in a landowner, then NRCS would really get the input they need.

Cindy Lair has been working with Routt County CD for a GOCO (managed through DNR) grant with the city of Steamboat Springs. The staff at DNR threw it out before the board even was able to see it, **Cindy Lair** is working with AG's office on sending letter to GOCO explaining that districts do have the right to apply and hopefully that will assist districts in the future.



Mary Sue Liss mentioned forming a group to be available to discuss possibilities for Conservation Easements to landowners.

Bootstrap Boost Program

Mary Sue Liss mentioned last meeting's minutes on the program as background. **Mark Cronquist** gave an update on the two districts from his region. Platte Valley has not had much success, but hopefully the District Conservationist and **Mark Cronquist** can recruit productive members to the board. Southeast Weld has a supervisor that is really motivated and improving the District's viability, tremendously. Developing new and resurrecting old partnerships and are in the process of updating their policy manual and the district is on the road. **Ashley Ross** gave an update for the Upper Arkansas District, they have three new members that are very interested in learning. **Brendon Rockey** and Danny Neufeld offered to come and speak with them as well. They are on track and should be receiving their first payment of the Bootstrap Program. **Mark Cronquist** mentioned passion on the supervisor part and the working relationships with the district conservationist are important to build and grow a district.

Mark Cronquist brought up the idea to bring up a group for districts that have ties with small acreage and have them meet and discuss areas as an opportunity and not a threat.

Larry Sweeney asked how many times a district can participate in the program? **Mark Cronquist** mentioned that it was originally thought of as a one-time thing for a district. Because if the district doesn't bother the first year to get out of the bottom layer, then why waste the funds and time there again? **Jack Burk** mentioned the spirit was to offer that for the bottom tier districts. Mark, **Cindy Lair** and Nikki clarified that the only district was Upper Arkansas that participated this year and there was not funds set aside. The scenario in the Direct Assistance hand out is only another "option" for the board to review. **Mary Sue Liss** suggested tabling the topic until the Direct Assistance discussion. **Larry Sweeney** and everyone agreed.

LONG RANGE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Cindy Lair reviewed the "process" that we switched to this year which involved the watershed representatives from both CACD and CSCB, as well as the regional field specialist reviewing the plans and providing input/suggestions.

Larry Sweeney liked it and it worked well, **JD Wright** agreed and thinks CACD will like it but he wasn't aware of it. **Pat Meakins** mentioned that this was much better for CSCB representatives to see what their districts are doing and also suggested to include one from another watershed for comparison. **Nicole Reed** did clarify that this year only input from CSCB and the field specialist was received, next year we can clarify the process more to get input back from CACD.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Nicole Reed reviewed the three sample scenarios (as a starting point for discussion) that are in the board packet. **Larry Sweeney** suggested not changing the award system (incremental) since it's the last year of this application system. **Pat Meakins** agrees with **Larry Sweeney**, was there any feedback on how it was done? **Cindy Lair**, no. **Larry Sweeney** mentioned CACD didn't hear anything last year. **Mary Sue Liss**, on the three tier approach the mediocre districts get a little leg up while other income is down (like tree sales). **Larry Sweeney's** issue with the three tier system is getting the same amount, but their



workload and situations are not. **Jack Burk** doesn't like the incremental system. **Carol Dunn** likes adjusting the incremental but also likes the three tier, but does believe that the bootstrap fund should continue. If the bottom districts qualify, they get something. They have to participate the bootstrap program to get more. **Leroy Brase** likes incremental and three tier systems, most of the top districts already have money. **JD Amick** likes the incremental more, but competition is important in the real world and the bootstrap program. **Pat Meakins** likes both as well, but districts need to get their own funding as well and not solely rely on this.

Mary Sue Liss summarize: strictly incremental with adjusting the bottom to 1500 and top of 7500, with the bootstrap program in place.

Larry Sweeney motions that keep incremental plan from starting at 1500 to approximately 7500 with 5000 set aside in bootstrap funds. **Pat Meakins** seconded. **Mary Sue Liss** called for a vote. All in favor: **Larry Sweeney, Mary Sue Liss, Leroy Brase, JD, and Pat Meakins**. All against: **Jack Burk and Carol Dunn**. Motion Passed.

NOTE: Due to the available amount of funds and having to use all dollars within fiscal year, it was not mathematically possible to award \$1500.00 - \$7500.00 with \$391,714.00 available. The board was asked to vote via email from the following two:

1. Keep minimum limit of \$1500.00 (which would make maximum amount near \$9000.00)
2. Cap the maximum amount to \$7500.00 (which increases the minimum to around \$2600.00)

The results were:

Option 1 (min 1500)	One Vote
Option 2 (max 7500)	Five Votes
No Vote	Three Votes

The majority rules with Option Two: Top district will be awarded \$7500 with amounts going down from there until funds are spent (minus the \$5,000 set aside for Bootstrap Boost Program).

DISTRICT CERTIFICATION

Cindy Lair gave background of the idea and the boards input from the last meeting. **Ashley Ross** is working on the technical side. **Julie Boyd** will be working on actual questions and **Jim Currier** is working on the historical. **Ashley Ross** went over that each module would be about 20-30 minutes with use of pictures and video. Each chapter test at the end would be able to go back and cover the important piece. Conveying knowledge and not necessarily "A's and B's". Currently, **Ashley Ross** is at the process of getting together with our IT staff to see what we can/can't do. **Ashley Ross** is considering internet and developing a way to deliver it on a CD as well as a face-to-face class. **Mary Sue Liss**, any thought of offering the face-to-face class at CACD Annual Meeting? **Cindy Lair** mentioned CACD received feedback that they may not want to do that, but it's always an option. **JD Wright** asked what expectations or concept of how many districts want to be certified. **Cindy Lair** said CSCB decided that it would be totally voluntary **Jack Burk** understands that districts don't choose to be certified and offer programs to award those that are, if 75% of the board supervisors are certified then the district is certified, but those numbers have yet to be determined.



NEW BUSINESS

District Financial Review

Nicole Reed mentioned that she (or other staff) will be attending watershed annual meetings to spread the information that the Board will be conducting trainings in the fall for financial reviews to educate everyone about the reviews actually starting next year (2012).

Sidenote: **Jack Burk** mentioned that it would be good to know where districts are getting their money. **Pat Meakins** mentioned it was in 2008 was the last year she did that. **Jack Burk** suggested that the staff do that. **Cindy Lair** mentioned right now it's a heavy load but we can look at it in the future. **Jack Burk** clarified, just want to know where the money is coming from and simple categories of where it was spent (education, employees, etc.).

MATCHING GRANTS

Pam King reviewed the handouts about funding, etc. in the board meeting packet.

Pam King is currently recruiting for the review committee. **Jack Burk** highly recommends serving on the review committee. **Jack Burk** volunteered to serve again. **Cindy Lair** is pleased that CACD was successful in extending it 10 more years.

DISTRICT CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

In April, districts received information that in the future they may need to contribute more match. **Cindy Lair** went over a meeting with Pam, Randy Randall, and Allen Green where they discussed changing the match a little bit, that NRCS pay maybe 45% of an employee instead of 50%, but the discussion is just starting. **Pam King** handed out a spreadsheet of the impact of this potential. Allen felt that a 5% reduction from NRCS would ensure a better commitment and we are here as partners to help with this. **Jack Burk** mentioned the picture is bigger than just changing the percentage. **JD Wright** brought up that Matching Grant programs that aren't Farm Bill that Technicians do. **Jack Burk** if our share of the cost is increased we should then be able to increase the amount they do for the district.

JD Amick motions that 2.5% be State Board and 2.5% come from the district. **Pam King** went over the handout. **Larry Sweeney** seconded. **JD Amick** clarified that this would be effect 2012. **Jack Burk** clarified that **Allen** is going to recommend the 5% change for the next State Conservationist. All in favor, motion carries.

GOVERNOR'S APPOINTEE POSITION

Cindy Lair updated, that **Pat Meakins's** term is expiring this year. Nomination forms are on the website, both ours and the Governor's page and are due to the Governor's office before December 1, 2011.

CACD AWARD COMMITTEE

Concern with all the people that were put into the Hall of Fame last year, **Jack Burk** updated. After the 1st of September the applications will need to be awarded, **Jack Burk** volunteered the board to review and vote.

WILD HORSE PROGRAM



JD Amick asked for the Board's support on their wild horse initiative. **Cindy Lair** doesn't want to write a letter from the State Board without their input. **Mary Sue Liss** clarified that a letter from the board supports their effort. **JD Wright** mentioned that the focus is on the ecosystem, not on the horses and then the districts can file the necessary junctions on some other things. **Jack Burk** mentioned that the letter should not mention horses, it should include ecology, erosion, etc. **Cindy Lair** suggested that the BLM follow their plan. **Mary Sue Liss** brought up resolution 11-40.

Mary Sue Liss volunteers to write the letter with staff editing, Jack Burk moved, Leroy Brase seconded. Pat Meakins asked to see letter before it is sent, Mary Sue Liss agrees. All in favor, motion passed.

4:35 pm break for the evening

8:06 am Meeting came to order.

MEETING PLANNING

September, Salida – September 1st – 2nd. Try for Salida reservations, branch out if none available.

Joint meeting thoughts: **Carol Dunn** mentioned that it would be good to go over the reports but that may be about it. **Jack Burk** brought up maybe an open forum for discussion. **Cindy Lair** suggested an agenda item on how the two boards can collaborate more effectively on statutory issues, specifically with the insurance issue we are working on. **Jack Burk** agrees, this is the perfect topic for this board. **Larry Sweeney** mentioned having a tight agenda may help with productivity in the meeting. JD agreed with the tight agenda. **Jack Burk** mentioned the stock show meeting use to be very good and productive. **Cindy Lair** mentioned that waiting to January may hinder the legislative lobbying the board wanted to bring up. **Larry Sweeney** thought maybe the Annual Meeting may be a place to meet with limited agenda and have open input at the end. **Mary Sue Liss** mentioned a set period at the end would be good, open discussion forum. Everyone liked that process for the November meeting- short agenda, open discussion forum at end. September we can meet with them to discuss January meeting and lobbying efforts. **Mary Sue Liss** brought up meeting at the Ag Forum instead of Stock Show. **Jack Burk** said it was very valuable in the past, it may be best to have the joint meeting in fall and then do Ag Forum for our winter meeting as the best option. **Cindy Lair** suggested coming in on Wednesday, Ag Forum on Thursday, and then our meeting on Friday. There was general consensus about this.

September board meeting: have **Tracee Bently** come and do a report. Have CSCB meeting afternoon of the 1st, that evening meet with CACD socially. 2nd morning have joint meeting with agenda.

November: Joint meeting and then open discussion forum. Invite public to speak to both boards.

February: Meeting the day after the Ag Forum with members coming in for the Forum.

Partner reports: **Jack Burk** mentioned time bound agenda, for partner reports as well as rest of agenda. **Mary Sue Liss** asked why CSU no longer reports anymore. **Cindy Lair** mentioned she can try reaching out again to include them. Board agreed time partner reports would be best for the agenda.



Next year's meetings: **Larry Sweeney** suggested next summer's meeting with Direct Assistance we will need a serious meeting, best suited in person. **Mary Sue Liss** suggested having a board member brainstorming session after the next summer meeting, **Jack Burk** agreed fresh ideas and topics are needed to keep the board from getting stagnant. **Jack Burk** suggested Gunnison. **Mary Sue Liss** mentioned thinking about a location in the middle of the state for next summer's meeting and brainstorming session. **Carol Dunn** suggested Hot Sulphur area, Grand County.

The fall meeting was suggested to be somewhere near Leadville or Ft. Collins.

TIM MACKLIN BRAINSTORMING TOPICS

Cindy Lair gave background on his wide variety of talents and that he will be able to help us until end of September. One area he is starting with is in the leadership class talking about putting action into their talking as well as ethics. **Mary Sue Liss** suggested he review our statutes and bring in fresh ideas, **Cindy Lair** mentioned that we could have him seek input as well. **Cindy Lair** mentioned him working on medical insurance benefits. **Larry Sweeney** clarified the liability resolution that went through. **Cindy Lair** clarified she is talking about voluntary medical insurance for district employees. **Cindy Lair** brought forth, that if the board wants CACD to work on the legislation, then it would be good for a couple of districts bring it forward in the resolution process. **Carol Dunn** mentioned that it would be good that while we have someone to look into it, then do it.

Mary Sue Liss suggested a staff calendar to send out to the board, mail and email a calendar of staff travels for the next month. Next week **Nicole Reed** will email out the revised DA awards to the board.

10:30 am Leroy Brase moved to adjourn. Larry Sweeney seconded, all in favor, motion passes. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia L. Lair".

Cynthia L. Lair

State Conservation Board Program Manager