



Colorado State Conservation Board  
Meeting Minutes  
22 January 2015  
Video Teleconference

Meeting was called to order by President Unwin at 9:04 a.m., January 22, 2015. At the request of President Unwin, those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

**Harold Unwin:** Lower Arkansas River Watershed  
**Karen Salapich:** Upper Arkansas River Watershed  
**Vernon Lurette:** San Juan River Watershed  
**Karin Utterback-Normann:** North Platte, Yampa, White River Watersheds  
**Larry Sweeney:** Colorado River & Gunnison-Dolores River Watersheds  
**Margaret Lenz:** Member-at-Large  
**Chester Zwirn:** Republican River & Lower South Platte River Watersheds  
**Danny Neufeld:** Rio Grande River Watershed

**Excused Absence**

**Joe Lindsay:** Upper South Platte River Watershed

**Other Attendees**

**Cindy Lair:** State Conservation Board Program Manager  
**Tammra Straub:** Conservation Specialist  
**Jim Currier:** Conservation Specialist  
**Robin Reilley:** Conservation Specialist  
**Kyli Kehler:** Conservation Specialist  
**Mark Cronquist:** Conservation Specialist  
**Natalie Macsalka:** Conservation Specialist

**Vernon Lurette** moved to excuse Joe Lindsay. **Karen Salapich** seconded; motion carried.

**Approval of Agenda**

**President Unwin** requested additions to the agenda. **Cindy Lair** added discussions of Mesa and Double EL conservation districts in place of the direct assistance item under the CSCB discussion section.



**Vernon Lurette** moved to accept the agenda with these additions. **Chester Zwirn** seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Larry Sweeney** moved to approve the November meeting minutes. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Partner Updates**

There was no CACD Board representation at the meeting, so there was no update provided.

There was no representative from the USDA-NRCS so **Cindy Lair** provided an update of NRCS activities. The State Conservationist position appointment will be announced Friday 23 January 2015, with an expected start date of February 2015. She was informed of the districts' opportunity to develop Micro Hydro Electric Generating Projects through RCPP. Interested districts should contact Sam Anderson, Energy Specialist for the ACRE program at the Colorado Dept. of Agriculture. Also an RCPP on the Lower Gunnison funded at \$8M was brought to the Board's attention.

### **Discussion of Joint CSCB/CACD Board Meeting Format**

The CSC Board agreed that the format was good, the discussion items were captured correctly and that the November 2014 joint meeting was the best ever conducted.

### **CSCB Discussion**

**Cindy Lair** provided an update on staff changes. **Wayne East** accepted a position with CDA's Animal Division, **Robin Reilley** decided to assume the CSC Board Liaison position that **Wayne** vacated and **Cindy** introduced **Kyli Kehler** as the new conservation specialist for the SE and San Louis Valley Districts. **Kyli** will be working out of the Pueblo NRCS office as of February.

E-mail and open meeting laws were discussed. **Margaret** made the point that making big decisions and voting by e-mail should be avoided. The importance of staying current with email correspondence was mentioned, as important information for consideration is sent to our geographically dispersed members and partners. Due to inconsistency in the receipt of e-mails, following up by using the "read receipt" option was encouraged. Using that option would make it easier for the sender to follow up on an unreturned "read receipt".



**Cindy Lair** spoke about the Dept. of Agriculture's new video capabilities, extending the invitation to utilize **James Amos**, CDA Digital Media & Outreach Specialist, to film and report on field activities taking place across the State's conservation districts with the goal of having conservation well represented in the video library. Capturing thoughts and history from long-time district Board supervisors would be a good start. Perhaps also capturing district "field days" and other programs could be included.

**Cindy Lair** provided a brief history of the PL 566 watershed dams, their purpose, funding challenges and life cycle. She has been working with NRCS Conservation Engineer (**John Anderson**), the State Chief Dam Engineer (**Bill McCormick**) and **Mark Cronquist** on a funding resolution for the Upper South Platte to help Kiowa Conservation District perform the necessary maintenance and upkeep on their 60-plus dams. The estimated cost of the needed maintenance in Kiowa CD is \$750K. The plan is to request \$75K per year until the dams are brought up to required standards dealing with the highest priority dams first. There is no match required with this potential funding source. **Margaret Lenz** brought up the need for educating various landowners and land use entities on the topic. **Mark Cronquist** pointed out his educational activities focused on addressing the issue with respect to land use and demographic changes.

The CSCB staff has been developing water quality partnership opportunities with the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The CDPHE has two funding streams consisting of \$50K and approximately \$200K available for water quality implementation and outreach activities in the Lower Arkansas watershed. The NRCS is partnering in this opportunity and the CACD has the opportunity to partner, as well. CACD has the potential to receive some non-match funds to help with administration for the CACD and district efforts.

**Action Item:** *CSCB staff will keep the Board informed of new developments as opportunities move forward.*

A great deal of thoughtful and beneficial discussion focused around the situation with Mesa CD being in good standing and having the opportunity to take advantage of Direct Assistance funding. Recognizing the district's recent accomplishments, its inclusion in the bootstrap program and the Board's desire to provide needed short-term financial assistance while maintaining a level playing field for all districts, comprised the majority of discussion. **Vernon Lurette** suggested the new Mesa Board members complete the CSCB Board Certification



Program before any monies are disbursed. **Larry Sweeney** suggested the Mesa Board construct a “skeleton” APW addressing the district’s reorganization and how they plan to meet fiduciary responsibilities. Ultimately, the Board, in an effort not to be punitive and while needing the district to demonstrate appropriate management and leadership, passed two motions.

**Vernon Lerette** moved to provide Mesa CD a \$1,000 loan re-payable over a three-year period beginning in calendar 2016. **Margaret Lenz** seconded. The motion carried with seven yeas votes and **Larry Sweeney** abstaining.

Tammra noted that supporting documentation (i.e., an excerpt from these unapproved meeting minutes) to grant a loan to Mesa CD would most likely suffice as the needed documentation for getting the loan payment processed through the State’s CORE financial system.

**Action Item:** *Cindy Lair will send excerpt to CSC Board for their consideration.*

**Danny Neufeld** moved to allow Mesa to request Direct Assistance for FY 2016 on the basis of their 2014 work as described in their letter and use the letter as an APW application. **Karen Salapich** seconded. The motion carried with four yeas votes, two nay votes and **Larry Sweeney** abstaining.

The CSCB requests a letter from Mesa CD as an update on the district’s activities to be presented at the next CSCB meeting in July 2015. The letter may be sent to President **Harold Unwin** for presentation at the meeting & should provide details by month of what was accomplished to show progress.

**Action Item:** *CSCB staff will contact the Mesa Board to ensure the letter is prepared for the July 2015 meeting.*

The dollar amount available in the Bootstrap program was discussed relative to the fact that in November 2014, the Mesa CD was offered Bootstrap funding of \$2,500. Initially, Bootstrap funding was set at \$2,000 per district. To be fair to all districts offered Bootstrap funding, discussion continued that each district should receive the same amount, thus requiring the Bootstrap reserve to be increased from \$6,000 to \$7,500.

**Larry Sweeney** moved to increase 2014 Bootstrap funding from \$2000 per district to \$2500 per district. **Karin Utterback-Normann** seconded; motion carried.



A letter from Double E conservation district was received the afternoon before the Board meeting expressing concerns over the Matching Grant application reviewers and scoring process. These concerns were discussed and were duly noted by Board and staff as was the fact that the Matching Grant award is based on a competitive process with no guarantee of receiving funding.

**Action Item:** CSCB president **Harold Unwin** and **Cindy Lair**, CSCB Program Manager, will draft a response to Double E's letter.

**Mark Cronquist** discussed the changes to the Envirothon program in terms of sponsorship and leadership. He announced a new steering committee made up of himself, **Judy Lopez**, **Brenda Anderson**, **Anthony Lobato**, all of Center CD, and **Sharon Pattee**, CACD Executive Director. The 2015 event will be held at one of the Community Colleges in the Denver Metro Area on the topic of Urban Forestry. The Board discussed transferring the Matching Grant application for Envirothon from West Greeley CD to Center CD.

**Larry Sweeney** moved to provide a clear paper/decision trail for Matching Grant funding, the CSCB requests the Center Conservation District to use the basic information contained in the 2015 West Greeley Conservation District Matching Grant application (who withdrew their application after it was approved), modifying appropriate data for Contacts, Key Personnel, Resources, etc.; then formally submitting said application for 2015 funding. **Karen Salapich** seconded; motion carried. (Approval of \$3,500 for the Envirothon Mini-Grant is evidenced in the August 2014 Board minutes so this revised application allows the CSCB staff to move forward with funding Center for the Envirothon project.)

### **Matching Grants Update**

**Tammra Straub** compiled a Matching Grant summary sheet for discussion.

**Tammra Straub** discussed the spending status report and brought the Morgan CD situation to everyone's attention. Evidently, the Morgan CD authorized \$19K in landowner expenditures before the contract start date, making these expenditures unavailable for cost share due to State contracting rules. **Tammra** and **Mark Cronquist** are working with the district manager and Board to garner more engagement and provide contract guidance. **Tammra** explained that contract activities must be recorded in the calendar year timeline and that the CFO signature establishes the effective date of any contract.

Due to unspent funds from calendar 2014, it became possible to fund Matching Grants for Fremont, Middle Park and San Juan CD's. **Harold Unwin** asked if there was any knowledge



among the meeting participants as to potential decreases in oil and gas severance tax revenues as a result of the recent sharp drop in oil prices. **Cindy Lair** stated that DNR is preparing for a decrease in funds and that specifics have yet to be released.

**Action Item:** *At Margaret's request, Tammra will resend the 2015 Matching Grant approvals and Final 2014 DCT/MG Spending Status to the Board via email and postal mail.*

**Tammra** updated the group on the upcoming Grant Management software implementation rollout for State government. Incoming grants will be affected as soon as August 2015. Outgoing grants will not be impacted until Feb 2016. Because of the new software, it is expected that the Matching Grant cycle for 2017 will experience significant change. The DCT program may be affected sooner.

#### **Direct Assistance**

**Cindy Lair** provided an overview of the upcoming Direct Assistance process alerting the Board to expect to receive a jump drive with the necessary forms and documents for Direct Assistance review. Securing a larger pool of reviewers was discussed and CACD was invited to participate. Once staff knows of CACD's availability (Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>), additional participation in the review process may be sought. Discussion also touched on the difficulty districts have with budgeting, as Direct Assistance can vary greatly from year to year. Cindy Lair suggested the CSCB provide each district a base amount, with additional funding to be granted on the basis of their application and demonstrated conservation accomplishments. Board members, to allay their concerns about feeling comfortable with the process, expressed interest in a webinar and additional education or orientation on the Direct Assistance review process and scoring.

#### **Action Items:**

- *CSCB Staff develops educational content and delivery mechanism (i.e., webinar) on this topic for interested board members available sometime in March.*
- *CSCB Staff develops for Board consideration, a recommendation of appropriate base level conservation district funding founded on an analysis of the lowest amount received above the Bootstrap level by districts in past years.*

#### **CSCB Staff**

**Cindy** developed a needs assessment for a funding request dedicated to conservation activities of the CSCB Staff for the next Commissioner's consideration.



### **Salinity Update**

**Jim Currier** updated the board on a new position for the Gunnison watershed based on recommendations from the Bureau of Reclamation to provide dedicated staff for working with landowners, implementing projects and acting as liaison with the Bureau of Reclamation. The position will be a two-year position with funding from the Bureau of Reclamation.

### **Next Meeting**

Two upcoming meetings were scheduled as follows:

1. Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup> and Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> in Canon City
2. Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> in Broomfield.

### **Closing Comment**

**Cindy** thanked Board members and staff for their professionalism in their respective roles, and patience in implementing new technologies. She is looking forward to a year of great work and happy to have a full staff to meet the year's challenges and opportunities.

Meeting adjourned at 12:28 P.M.