



Colorado State Conservation Board  
Meeting Minutes  
Broomfield, CO

Meeting was called to order by President Unwin September 1, 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 Lerette:** 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

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

**Other Attendees**

**Cindy Lair:** State Conservation Board Program Manager

**Tammra Straub:** Conservation Specialist

**Nikki Reed:** Conservation Specialist

**Mark Cronquist:** Conservation Specialist

**Karen Wolf:** Conservation Specialist

**Clint Evans:** State Conservationist, NRCS Representative

**Jeff Steiner:** CSU Associate Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences

**Sharon Pattee:** Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD)

**Gary Moyer:** Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

**Meeting Summary of Motions**



**AGENDA: Vernon Lurette** moved to add the West Greeley letter before the Mosca Hooper Appeal, **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**MEETING MINUTES: Larry Sweeney** moved to approve the minutes of the July 1-2, 2015 meeting as presented, **Karin Utterback-Normann** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**DOLORES CONSERVATION DISTRICT NAME CHANGE: Larry Sweeney** moved to affirm the name change from Dolores to High Desert. **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**WEST GREELEY LETTER TO SUBMIT ALTERNATE PROGRESS REPORT TO THE BOARD: Danny Neufeld** moved to disallow this exemption. **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**MOSCA HOOPER APPEAL FOR DA FUNDING: Margaret Lenz** moved to add this item to tomorrow's agenda before partner updates. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. Motion passed. **Danny Neufeld** moved to deny the appeal, **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed. **Danny Neufeld** moved to allow Mosca-Hooper to apply for the Bootstrap program, **Larry Sweeney** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**DCT AND CORE ISSUES ABOUT LATE PAYMENTS: Larry Sweeney** moved that this board directs staff to reach out to CFO regarding Severance Tax work around and potential options to pay DCT reimbursements (current and past due). **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**Larry Sweeney** moved to direct staff to provide goodwill payments to the district impacted by the lack of reimbursements as they deem appropriate. **Chester** seconded. **Larry Sweeney** amended that districts impacted by Fiscal Year 2015 be eligible for this. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. 1st amendment voted, all in favor, motion passed. Original motion voted on for payment, all in favor, motion passed.

**Margaret Lenz** moved that CSCB asks CACD to use their lobbying efforts to escalate this issue. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.



**COMPUTER MATCH PROGRAM:** Larry Sweeney moved to set a maximum limit at \$5,000 of Matching Grant funds and include software as an option, Vernon Lurette seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### Approval of Agenda

President Unwin requested additions to the agenda. Vernon Lurette moved to add the West Greeley letter before the Mosca Hooper Appeal, Joe Lindsay seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### Approval of Meeting Minutes

Larry Sweeney moved to approve the minutes of the July 1-2, 2015 meeting as presented, Karin Utterback-Normann seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### NRCS Update

Clint Evans provided updates on NRCS and the upcoming budget constraints. Clint Evans discussed the local work group meetings and that around 72/76 districts did provide feedback based on local meetings and surveys. A bit of information/outreach work to do to grow this and make it more of an annual item for districts. At the CACD annual conference, he would like to present the input feedback and the 2016 priorities; as well as address concerns that were submitted. Currently there are 20 vacancies, 12 retirements coming up and NRCS is probably going to back-fill about half of the vacated positions until budget numbers are finalized. There is potential to expand DCT program.

### Mined Land Reclamation Board

Karin Utterback-Normann provided updates to the CSC Board. The MLR Board is very busy and dealing with a wide variety of issues and focusing on reclamation. Karin Utterback-Normann provided the CSC Board some background on the process of investigation, meetings, review, etc. A lot more mines are going to be coming up in the future. It's a large ongoing process. Karin Utterback-Normann is constantly providing comments and she welcomes the CSC Board to either attend with her or ask her any questions.

### Commissioner Meeting Update

Harold Unwin discussed our budget situation. The last 5 years have not had a budget increase and voiced concerns about operating and Severance Tax funds to manage increasing operating expenses and to get conservation on the ground. The Commissioner is going to look at other energy (solar, wind, etc.) sources and where that funding goes. Harold Unwin presented a proposal/list to the Commissioner for a budget request. Commissioner supported face to face meetings and the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) project to improve customer



service. The other issue is delayed DCT (District Conservation Technician) payments from FY 2015 due to CORE issues. Direct Assistance payments will also be late. The Commissioner could not guarantee anything but he was going to look into it. The Commissioner's focus was on partnership. **Harold Unwin** felt the meeting went well. **Danny Neufeld** mentioned that late payments affect employees and employees having to leave the district if they cannot be paid. **Tammra Straub** shared the status on the current DCT payment situation. There are at least 7 districts that are 'stuck' in our financial system. The late payments are due to fiscal year end, 100% accounting/business operations employee turnover, and the State Controller's Office staff mandating controls in the software that are severely limiting. Just before this meeting, **Tammra Straub** shared an update on Severance Tax and she can pay some Matching Grants. But DCT is still stuck due to how that program is set up in the new system. **Cindy Lair** mentioned **Tammra Straub** will be presenting more on various ideas on how to help compensate the districts and the Board can decide on it tomorrow. **Gary Moyer** asked **Harold Unwin** if the contracts with districts and NRCS are implemented. **Cindy Lair** clarified that we are out of compliance right now with NRCS requirements. **Margaret Lenz** asked if the Board members should talk to State Senators and Representatives. **Tammra Straub** said that is certainly an option. **Harold Unwin** mentioned that the Commissioner said several districts contacted their Representatives, **Harold Unwin** confirmed that board members can contact their Representatives as well. **Harold Unwin** submitted a pre-budget proposal to the Commissioner of about \$36,000 to increase the CSCB staff operating budget.

### **CSCB Update**

#### *Staff Update-*

**Cindy Lair** mentioned **Karen Wolf** is meeting districts in her region and **Rachel Theler** is starting September 8th as the SE field specialist. **Jim Currier** has retired and we will be hiring his replacement.

#### *CSCB Nomination Committee –*

Discussion about the three officers in place now and confirmed they are open to staying in their current positions; those are the ones the Nomination committee would like to nominate. First, elections for CSCB need to be completed to re-elect **Harold Unwin** and **Vernon Lurette** to stay on for their second terms, the due date is 9/15/15. **Nikki Reed** reviewed that nomination information is emailed and snail mailed to conservation districts in watersheds that are up for CSCB Representative Elections. Each district can (and at least one must) send in a nomination form for representation. This is followed by ballots and biographies of candidates sent out and each district votes. This is different than CACD, as CACD votes at the watershed meetings for their representation.

#### *Dolores CD Name Change - High Desert*



**Larry Sweeney** moved to affirm the name change from Dolores to High Desert. **Joe Lindsay** seconded. **Harold Unwin** questioned any Matching Grant impact. **Tammra Straub** clarified the name change could impact contracts and state payments. Impact will be staff and delayed payments, but the district is aware of potential impacts. **All in favor, motion passed.** **Sharon Pattee** mentioned a district wants to put soil back in the name and return all the district's names to include "soil". **Danny Neufeld** mentioned Center wants to change their name back to include "soil". **Nikki Reed** clarified that the term "soil" was statutorily removed from our Board and all the districts, therefore; it would have to be added back to the statute.

#### *Innovation Award-*

Pioneer award is the suggested name change to separate it from the NRCS Innovation Grant program. **Mark Cronquist** reviewed the idea behind the award and presented the proposal document. **Margaret Lenz** suggested the deadline for nominations match the APW (Annual Plan of Work) review. **Nikki Reed** and **Mark Cronquist** will finalize the process and next year will be the first year of full implementation.

#### *West Greeley Letter to the Board-*

**Mark Cronquist** explained the personnel changes at the district. The West Greeley Board and the new District Manager (DM) are requesting the opportunity to submit an alternate progress review for this upcoming year (alternate completed APW) since the one previously submitted by the old DM is inaccurate. **Larry Sweeney** mentioned support of this request. **Cindy Lair** cautioned that we have done this only one other time. **Karin Utterback-Normann** asked why cannot they do another plan of work and use the same format? **Mark Cronquist** cannot speak on behalf of the district, but trying to rebuild partnerships and the district in general should be priority to redoing an APW. **Mark Cronquist** explained that in the coming year they would go back to the same format. **Mark Cronquist** mentioned their Board wants to submit a narrative annual plan of work rather than the standard form, for next years' APW as it can be usable in other ways (publication, legislature, etc.). There was much discussion on the pros and cons for not only this district, but others. **Danny Neufeld** moved to disallow this exemption. **Joe Lindsay** seconded. **Larry Sweeney** clarified, as did **Vernon Lurette**, that they didn't see the exemption piece (thought it was 'in addition to'). **All in favor, motion passed.** **Cindy Lair** asked if the CSC Board would consider allowing a late submission in the correct format? More discussion commenced. **Larry Sweeney** suggested staff clarify with the West Greeley district and to amend the plan that was submitted. General Board discussion favored **Larry Sweeney's suggestion.** **Larry Sweeney** said staff should draft a letter for **Harold Unwin** to respond to West Greeley. **Harold Unwin** wants to mention in the letter that CACD meeting will have a session on this very topic.

#### *Mosca-Hooper Appeal-*



**Danny Neufeld** provided some insight about the Mosca-Hooper Board. **Danny Neufeld** clarified that the watershed discussed due dates with plenty of warning. **Nikki Reed** provided background from when she came back and correspondence with the district from previous people in her position. **Joe Lindsay** reiterated that their letter states they were not funded due to missing due dates, which is not the reason they were denied funding. **Karin Utterback-Normann** suggested tabling this discussion and thinking about it overnight. The Board asked for clarification on other statutory requirements and **Nikki Reed** said Mosca-Hooper is in compliance. **Cindy Lair** mentioned Mosca-Hooper has a new district manager, and we had our own staff turnover, making an unfortunate situation. **Larry Sweeney** brought up that bootstrap is an option if the CSC Board wanted to vote for that. The board spent quite a bit of time in discussion on the Bootstrap topic. **Margaret Lenz** moved to add this item to tomorrow's agenda before partner updates. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. Motion passed.

#### *Middle Park Letter-*

There has not been a draft written yet and **Harold Unwin** mentioned that the response would be the same as last year. **Larry Sweeney** offered to draft a response for **Harold Unwin** to send to the Middle Park district.

#### **Bootstrap**

**Nikki Reed** provided an update that as of today, there is one district that has expressed interest. The deadline is September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015. One district in each region will continue with their specialist in the program should there be interest shown.

#### **Direct Assistance White Paper Proposal**

**Nikki Reed** presented the proposal and **Cindy Lair** clarified this is a suggestion only and staff are asking for input from the Board on any ideas on how to mitigate and improve. There was much discussion. **Danny Neufeld** suggested a work group at our next meeting. The Board's general support is of keeping the Direct Assistance current process. **Karin Utterback-Normann** said we should look at this option, that staff should research and come back with what they've found. This is worth a try. **Larry Sweeney** voiced concern that consistency is key. **Larry Sweeney's** main concern about this proposal is that peers would no longer be reviewing. **Harold Unwin** mentioned this proposal would clarify the truth of what districts are doing, based on board members working with their watersheds and field staff to provide this insight.

**Harold Unwin** suggested staff present rank changes, data, etc. at the next Board meeting. **Margaret Lenz** asked if there were 7 reviewers how many more would the Board have to review (**Nikki Reed** will provide the information tomorrow). **Larry Sweeney** requested we continue this discussion tomorrow. Discussion postponed.



Meeting adjourned for tonight at 4:45pm and many Board members conducted a tour of the new Department of Agriculture office building.

Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>

Meeting called to order 8:15

**Harold Unwin** introduced our new SE Region - Rachel Theler. Introductions around the room were made.

Direct assistance discussion will be before partner updates.

### DCT Program

**Tammra Straub** reviewed the packet update and reviewed the deadlines for this upcoming year. There have been no payments since the July meeting, hence the reason why the spending status in the meeting packet has not changed since the July meeting. A potential work around, if allowed by the CDA CFO and the Commissioner, is to use existing Severance Tax money that is unencumbered to pay all of these payments and then internally transfer once Farm Bill money can be moved. **Gary Moyer** asked for clarification on the process and can CACD meet with someone to discuss the issues with the contracts. Would CSCB support CACD helping in this way? **Gary Moyer** discussed the importance of this program and its impact on districts. **Tammra Straub** said 22 districts could be affected by this lack of being able to pay the districts and potentially 30 district staff. **Harold Unwin** supported using Severance Tax funds to pay the delayed invoices now, the board discussed and concurred. **Margaret Lenz** suggested CACD go to Don Brown, the governor's office, legislators, etc. **Gary Moyer** suggested bringing **Margaret Lenz** in with CACD to meet with Governor's office staff. **Gary Moyer** asked for the detailed information, dollar amount of federal/state/contracts/etc. **Tammra Straub** can get the information ready for **Gary Moyer** and **Cindy Lair** - including a timeframe and details. **Gary Moyer's** going to ask if the Commissioner would like to come to the downtown meeting as well. **Tammra Straub** asked for them to clarify - priority to pay districts (using Severance Tax funds) and also work on a permanent fix. **Cindy Lair** said this same delay could come up with the Salinity Program as well in the new budget changes.

**Harold Unwin** summarized that CACD will put in a CORA request, and jointly will set up a meeting to discuss the dire straits that CORE puts on programs into because of how CORE operates and the significant impact on the customers (districts). **Cindy Lair** brought up the Board may want to consider if paying compensation for this delay should be an option. **Tammra Straub** said IRS rate is 4-5%, which could be a goodwill compensation for the delay. **Margaret**



**Lenz** suggested that one of the talking points for the Governor's meeting is that a district could get sued from an employee for not getting paid.

**Larry Sweeney** moved that this board directs staff to reach out to CFO regarding Severance Tax work around and potential options to pay DCT reimbursements (current and past due). **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**Larry Sweeney** moved to direct staff to provide goodwill payments to the district impacted by the lack of reimbursements as they deem appropriate. **Chester** seconded. **Larry Sweeney** amended that districts impacted by Fiscal Year 2015 be eligible for this. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. 1st amendment voted, all in favor, motion passed. Original motion voted on for payment, all in favor, motion passed.

**Margaret Lenz** moved that CSCB asks CACD to use their lobbying efforts to escalate this issue. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### **Matching Grant**

**Tammra Straub** presented the funding situation. Projections are looking similar to past fiscal years. The handout was reviewed on Matching Grant Review Committee Funding Recommendations. This year is missing the available funding line, since we cannot really tell the Board yet what the funding maximum is. Our CFO is requesting that we do not encumber up to our spending authority but use the cash on hand number instead for Severance Tax. Currently it is about \$164,000 meaning the contracts would be staggered throughout the year which is a different operational situation than the past. Funding for Matching Grants could potentially be around \$500,000, as \$245,000 was already accounted for the DCT program.

**Tammra Straub** clarified that the Board can break up the vote by order, rank, and based on amount or any other option. Board discussed education and Watershed coordinator options and the current guidelines. Input from CSCB staff on what is known about the situation was discussed. **Tammra Straub** brought up that the Board can change guidelines to the grant process in our next winter meeting. **Karin Utterback-Normann** recommends that Routt stay where it sits for now, but all projects along these lines should ensure accuracy in the program. Sustainability of the position proposed by Routt's application may resolve itself.

**Karin Utterback-Normann** brought up another issue of not having a training program for district managers. **Mark Cronquist** agreed and did mention that field staff has a performance measure of new-hire orientation. CSCB staff can look into this and are starting to standardize the process.



Break for 5 minutes.

There was much discussion about various applications.

**Harold Unwin** suggested reviewing the guidelines of the matching grant program and the process.

**Danny Neufeld** moved to move Routt down below to Olney Boone in the ranking and that they be audited at mid-year should they receive the funding. **Vernon Lurette** seconded. There was discussion on the option of reducing funding across the board of applicants to fund more projects. **Karin Utterback-Normann** called the question. 8 in favor, 2 against. **Danny Neufeld's** original motion voted on – the entire board voted against, motion failed.

**Vernon Lurette** moved to drop Routt from matching grant funding completely, recommending they submit their proposal to other grant funders. **Larry Sweeney** second. **Larry Sweeney** suggested possible funding options as CWCB (Colorado Water Conservation Board) or the Colorado Water Conservation District.

All in favor, motion passed.

**Margaret Lenz** moved that the 5 mini grants be funded. **Karin Utterback-Normann** seconded. **Tammra Straub** shared concerns from the review committee on funding mini grants that rank low on the list and the Board may want to consider the impact of funding lower ranked projects just because they are mini grants. All in favor, motion passed.

**Karen Wolf** suggested requiring letters of support as part of the Matching Grant application process. **Vernon Lurette** discussed support of **Joe Lindsay** and **Karen Wolf** comments on percentage of funding. **Tammra Straub** clarified that currently districts are notified if there is a reduction in the amount awarded and are asked if they want to move forward with the lower amount. There was much discussion. **Larry Sweeney** suggested splitting out education applications from project applications in future years. **Margaret Lenz** suggested that **Tammra Straub** send all the MG info out to the board and the Board will review and agree to come to the winter meeting with notes to discuss.

**Danny Neufeld** moved to fund as the Matching Grant Review Committee ranked applications as money is available, given that Routt is moved down and mini grants are separately, fully funded. **Larry Sweeney** seconded. Motion passed.

#### **Computer match program**

**Tammra Straub** reviewed the \$500 match was voted on last meeting. She asked the Board to set a maximum aside for the overall project and suggested \$5,000 to allocate software and



hardware requests. This is still considered a matching grant, up to \$500. **Larry Sweeney** moved to set a maximum limit at \$5,000 and include software as an option, **Vernon Lurette** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### **Matching Grant Information on a 2015 Grant**

**Tammra Straub** brought to the Board's attention that a district is working with a county to provide windbreaks. On the CSCB cost-share form there is a place for a landowner to sign, stating they are the landowner and they will maintain the practice installed. On this particular grant, it is the county representative's signature on what appears to be county land, should she require the district landowner adjacent signature? **Danny Neufeld** thinks if the County Commissioner's approve this person to sign, then the county is required to keep up the maintenance. We need to know if it's county land or private land. The Board agrees to further clarify. **Margaret Lenz** asked for clarification if matching grants requires private landowners only. **Tammra Straub** will research and report back in November on the current guidelines and to check into this specific issue.

### **Mosca Hooper**

There was much discussion on the confusing issues around submitting the correct paperwork; with repeated staff help and that the issue was not the due date.

**Danny Neufeld** moved to deny the appeal, **Joe Lindsay** seconded. All in favor, motion passed. **Danny Neufeld** moved to allow Mosca-Hooper to apply for the Bootstrap program, **Larry Sweeney** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

### **Direct Assistance White Paper Proposal**

Continued discussion on increasing amount reviewed by each board member. Board was in general consensus to review more direct assistance applications to spread out the review process. CSCB requested staff review process, application and procedure to present at next meeting.

### **CACD**

They recently completed their summer meeting face to face and appreciated the partners that were able to attend. **Sharon Pattee** is busy attending watershed meetings. The annual meeting is being worked on and they asked for input on break-out sessions. Almost all of the responses have been on district administrative pieces - having **Nikki Reed** and **Tammra Straub** doing a breakout session on important topics. The other option requested is QuickBooks, which **Sharon Pattee** may address as another possibility. There is also a *new* annual report by NRCS, CACD, and CSCB to share success stories and highlight partnerships of districts in Colorado. The Annual meeting is November 16-19, 2015. CACD will host the joint CACD/CSCB meeting at the Park Hyatt in Beaver Creek.



**Gary Moyer** voiced that a large accomplishment of CACD is to hire an Executive Director, which **Sharon Pattee** has done a good job representing the association and therefore the districts. CACD was successful in increasing Direct Assistance funding for this year, an additional \$92,000. The biggest frustration is doing what members have asked, but dues collections continue to go down. Please remind your districts that CACD works on behalf of the districts to increase funding for them through CSCB. There is a drastic need to clarify the roles of lobbying and administering funds between the two boards, CACD and CSCB. This is the end of the last year for **Gary Moyer's** Presidency of CACD. The joint work of these two boards has been substantial.

### CSU

**Jeff Steiner** reported that there is a new Dean of Ag Sciences and some changes with a new administration. There are 3 new administration management professionals – including **Jan Leech** replacing **Jeff Steiner**. **Tom Hosler** is the now the Deputy Director, for one year.

**Blake Osborn** is the new State Water Extension Specialist, out of Pueblo. **Perry Cabit** is the new State Water Specialist located in Grand Junction and **Joel Schnekloff** is another one. This Board has an opportunity for more connection with extension and would be a great place to further relationships.

**Vernon Lurette** wanted to take a moment to thank CSCB staff for continuing their diligent (though frustrating) work with technology issues and helping all involved.

Ideas for future meetings: Steamboat, Durango in the summertime and keep brainstorming. **Margaret Lenz** suggested a face to face meeting for Matching Grant Guidelines review work session. We can finalize this at the November meeting.

NACD will be in Reno 2016 and in Denver in 2017. This is a great potential for local tours and getting districts there would be nice.

**Cindy Lair** thanked this Board for being such a great group and working so well to help the districts in Colorado. We are honored to work with you all.

Meeting adjourned 11:40am.