



Colorado State Conservation Board
Meeting Minutes
July 1 – 2, 2014
Trinidad, CO

Meeting was called to order by President Sweeney at 1:00 p.m., July 1.

ROLL CALL:

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

EXCUSED ABSENCE:

Chester Zwirn, Republican, Lower South Platte Watersheds

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Sherman Liechty, Area 3 Conservationist, NRCS
Gene Kelly, Colorado State University Extension/Experiment Station
Sharon Pattee, Executive Dir., CACD
Patty York, EDRR Specialist, State Noxious Weeds Program
Cindy Lair, State Conservation Board Program Manager
Tammra Straub, Conservation Specialist
Jim Currier, Conservation Specialist
Ashley Ross, Conservation Specialist
Natalie Macsalka, Conservation Specialist
Mark Cronquist, Conservation Specialist

Introductions and roll call were completed.

ACTION - Harold Unwin moved to excuse Chester Zwirn from the meeting, Vernon Lurette seconded, all in favor, MOTION PASSED.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Additional agenda items added: Appointment of a nominating committee added.

ACTION - Harold Unwin moved to approve the revised agenda, Margaret Lenz seconded, all in favor, MOTION PASSED.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes were reviewed by the board.



ACTION - Margaret Lenz moved to approve the minutes, Karen Salapich seconded. Following a unanimous affirmative vote, MOTION PASSED.

AFRICAN RUE OVERVIEW:

Patty York, Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR) Specialist, Colorado Noxious Weed Management Program, presented an overview of the EDRR program she coordinates and passed out a handout titled, "The Watch List" and requested help from conservation districts in monitoring for these extremely invasive weeds in our state. She gave a program on the different noxious weed lists in Colorado, explained the Noxious Weed Species Fact Sheets produced by the Noxious Weed Mgt. Program, and provided information on African Rue, an A-list weed occurring in dispersed stands in Southeast Colorado. She explained how citizens could download and submit the "Spotter Form" from the CO Dept. of Ag website if people think they have located a noxious weed.

PARTNER UPDATES:

NRCS – Sherman Liechty, new Area 3 Conservationist, reported on behalf of **Acting State Conservationist Maria Collazo**. There were over 1,000 EQIP applications totaling \$50 million, with \$30 million available in CO. A total of 107 CSP applications were processed for a little over \$2 million, while \$21 million were requested through 21 applications for conservation easement programs.

President Sweeney stated a concern that RCPP allocations appeared to be moving funding further away from conservation districts, causing additional hardships for lower functioning districts.

CACD – The president introduced **Sharon Pattee** in her new role as **Executive Director** for CACD. Sharon thanked CSCB and its staff for their ongoing support for CACD and its programs.

- The Spring 2014 "The Conservator" Newsletter was just distributed to the membership and partners.
- The association website has been updated, including a calendar that districts can submit events and programs to have posted.
- Camp Rocky – instituted a \$75 fee payable by each camper to encourage "ownership" of her/his participation at camp.
- Payment of dues by all districts is still a concern for the CACD board. Working to provide communication to the districts on what the association is doing on their behalf. CSCB thought Sharon's Update Letters were valuable in this effort.
- Brett Moore, CACD Lobbyist, concluded the legislative session.

President Sweeney encouraged Pattee to continue communicating the differences in responsibilities and the partnerships developed between CACD and CSCB. Karin Utterback-Normann requested information from Program Manager Lair and Exec. Director Pattee be provided to board members to help each organization relate the differences in their responsibilities to their membership and partners. Pattee is continuing to work on the District Outreach Program to implement this training and communication program with the Field Offices and districts selected to participate.

CSU:

Gene Kelly, Department Head, Soils and Crop Science, gave an update on the changes in administration of the College of Agriculture Sciences. Dr. Craig Beyrouthy will continue as the Dean while a national search is conducted to fill that position and Dr. Beyrouthy will transition to a faculty position



within the college. Kelly has been asked to stay engaged with groups having partnerships with CSU. Numbers are way up in the College of Ag. Sciences, with Organic Agriculture and Livestock disciplines leading the way in enrollment increases.

Program Manager Lair asked how districts could help CSU? Kelly indicated being able to learn what districts are doing is extremely helpful. Kelly requested being able to put website links for districts on CSU's website to provide information.

Conservation Specialist Ross indicated districts are interested in obtaining interns from CSU to assist with projects in the conservation districts. Kelly said he would take this information back to CSU.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE:

President Sweeney gave an overview of the Direct Assistance (DA) process and its importance to districts and conservation in Colorado as a whole. **Program Manager Lair** acknowledged CACD for their continued efforts in supporting the value of DA funds in discussions with the Colorado legislature each year. She also explained the "incremental funding" process versus the "tier funding" method for DA funding. Other information from the DA discussion:

- One Colorado district was not eligible for DA funding in FY2015 because they did not meet the "District in Good Standing" criteria.
- **President Sweeney** requested the board to consider withholding \$5000 from DA funds to continue the "Bootstrap Boost" program for the coming year.
- **Unwin** pointed out some inconsistencies in awarding the same DA funding amount to districts that were tied in scoring. **Conservation Specialist Straub** indicated this was an error and the funding levels would be adjusted accordingly.

Additional suggestions for evaluating DA applications included:

- Checking the DA application page first to determine the district's "good standing" before moving forward with the evaluation.
- Scan for complete columns and cells within the columns for overall completeness of the application.
- Lots of narrative does not mean "measurable reporting".

A general question from the board was how can CSCB help districts improve in their completion of the APW Progress Report (DA application)? **Program Manager Lair** indicated the Regional Conservation Specialists are skilled in helping the districts improve their reporting, but it is helpful if the districts are working on this throughout the year since it is difficult to compile all the necessary statistics at the end of the program year.

ACTION - Danny Neufeld moved to use incremental funding and the DA evaluation scores and rankings as presented, Joe Lindsay seconded the motion. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

ACTION - Margaret Lenz moved to encumber \$6000 from DA funds for the Bootstrap Boost program in the coming year, with Karen Salapich seconding the motion. With 4 votes FOR the motion and 3 votes AGAINST the motion, MOTION PASSED.



There was a brief discussion on how the Bootstrap Boost program operates and is administered by the CSCB staff. It was reiterated that any district could go through the planning and goal setting with the Conservation Specialist who works with their board and employees without being a "Bootstrap" district.

ACTION – Harold Unwin moved to keep the upper limit for DA funding at \$7500. Vernon Lurette seconded the motion. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

DISTRICT CONSERVATION INNOVATION AWARD:

Specialist Cronquist reviewed a written proposal made to CSCB to establish an award to recognize a district or group of districts that "looks outside the box" of more traditional CD programs to address emerging or unconventional issues in a unique way (new partnerships, innovative practices or fund raising, educational programs, etc.). This would be a financial award with recognition at the annual CACD meeting and program materials developed to show other districts how the effort was accomplished. It was the consensus of the board that Cronquist continue to work on the concept with additional board discussion of the proposal to be scheduled at upcoming board meetings.

MATCHING GRANTS (MG) UPDATE:

Specialist Straub reviewed the spreadsheet used to record grant use for 2014. There was discussion on how the districts submit their reimbursement requests and report on their project accomplishments. Communication from some districts having MG contracts with Tammra was mentioned as a concern.

For 2015, 31 MG applications were submitted requesting more than \$635,000. Six of those requests were for minigrants. Some districts applied who have not applied in recent years. Five of the MG applications were more education-based. The MG applications were also broken out by drought area in case of special needs.

Board members **Salapich** and **Unwin** volunteered to serve as CSCB representatives on the MG Review Committee.

Straub asked if specific funding would be set aside to fund MG mini-grants? Almost \$29,000 was requested in six mini-grants for 2015.

ACTION – Harold Unwin moved to allocate 70% of available Matching Grant funds to conventional grants and 30% of funds to minigrants. Vernon Lurette seconded the motion. MOTION PASSED.

Straub showed the board the newly developed Matching Grant Project Highlight Sheets which will be posted to the web and can be shared with citizens and decision-makers.

Straub asked **Area Conservationist Liechty** about the need to conduct Cultural Resources Surveys before moving forward on MG projects. **Unwin** explained how cultural resources cannot be disturbed for conservation practices. **Liechty** indicated the state is exempt from the Cultural Resources regulations. However, if there is a known historic site, it cannot be disturbed. Documentation is required, but this should not hold up MG project planning.

MATCHING GRANTS – EMERGENCY FUNDING



Specialist Straub shared draft suggestions on how proposed CSCB Emergency/Natural Disaster MGs might be administered. Board members raised concerns on how this program would work in light of other funds being available in declared emergencies. Colorado statutes provide for CSCB to legally deal with emergency funding.

Board consensus was that emergency funding for districts should not come from existing MG funds. **Lenz** felt the intent of this proposal was to deal with small local emergencies rather than federally declared emergencies.

President Sweeney suspended discussion on this business item until 10:30 a.m. tomorrow to allow for completion of the day's approved agenda.

COLORADO ENVIROTHON

Specialist Cronquist reported on the 2014 Colorado Envirothon competition held in Greeley on May 4. There was a 40% increase in teams from the contest's inaugural year in 2013, with seven teams competing in 2014. Due to contractual problems, the 2014 North America Envirothon scheduled for Athens, Georgia was cancelled. To expand the planning committee and involve additional partners in programming and fund-raising, a planning meeting is being scheduled in late July to expand the program throughout Colorado.

CAMP ROCKY

Exec. Director Pattee gave an update on the camp program sponsored by CACD. The camp director hired to help oversee the planning and implementation of the camp is working out well. CACD is still accepting applications. If funding is an issue for a camper, please contact **Pattee** for assistance.

The meeting went into recess at 4:30 p.m.

The board and staff participated in a field tour of African Rue management east of Trinidad.

President Sweeney reconvened the meeting at 8:11 a.m. The president requested a schedule change, limiting the educational presentations later in the meeting to 15 minutes each, rather than the 20 minutes per presentation listed on the agenda.

DISTRICT MANAGER (DM) CERTIFICATION and MEETINGS:

Specialist Ross reported that she had completed seven modules to use in training DMs in their job responsibilities and in board relations. She has gotten good response back from the DMs who have reviewed the materials or taken the training. She had good meetings with DMs in her region to introduce the materials.

Specialist Macsalka stated it was difficult to help districts when they transition to a new DM. Most districts do not document the responsibilities and work of their employee. She proposed developing a template "process" manual for DMs to help them acclimate to their new positions. She will work with DMs around the state to get their review of materials written and to get copies of materials they use in their districts. **Ross** indicated some DMs in her region were working on process manuals for their individual districts.



Macsalka will work with the contact in Kansas to develop a QuickBooks Manual for use by Colorado districts. **Exec. Director Pattee**, because of her extensive accounting background, offered to assist DMs or districts with QuickBook questions they may have.

Program Manager Lair mentioned discussion within the District Employees association and the goal of the CSCB staff to help the Employees Association to recognize their role in furthering the mission of the districts. As political subdivisions of the State of Colorado, supervisors are charged with making the decisions that direct the district (i.e., district funds are public funds and state statute requires the district's elected secretary/treasurer to handle those funds).

CONSERVATION DISTRICT CERTIFICATION:

Program Manager Lair reported that following the roll-out of the program, there was a backlog due to the grading of tests due to Nicole Reed's workload. When Nicole left her position, the administrative position in Grand Junction, held by **Gail Gnirk**, assumed the task of grading and certifying the tests.

REQUEST - President Sweeney requested CSCB staff be as current as possible with the certification records for the CSCB report at the CACD Annual Meeting in November.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:

RCPD came out with the new Farm Bill in April 2014. **Program Manager Lair** reported that for groups to take advantage of the available funding, six-page pre-proposals must be submitted by July 14. These proposals need to address the contributions to the project from other partners, natural resource impacts, and document the geographic area impacted by the proposed project. There are five or six pre-proposals being developed currently. Critical Conservation Area funds have been designated for specific areas. **Lair** is working on the RCPD pre-proposal for the Ogallala Aquifer involving Colorado and Kansas. A total of \$400 million in technical and financial assistance is available for RCPD projects.

She encouraged districts to be involved in this process so other groups and organizations do not assume the conservation district's role of representing landowners in these natural resource management processes. A brief discussion followed on how to encourage districts to be involved in these large collaborations.

BOARD DIRECTIVES, INITIATIVES, CONCERNS:

President Sweeney asked about progress in establishing the Continuity of Operations processes in the districts. Per requests, Natalie will forward the document to **Sweeney** and **Pattee** for their information. When the new Conservation Specialist in the state office comes on board, a reminder should be sent to the districts about developing the Continuity of Operations information.

Lerette requested a mini-training prior to the next DA evaluation process to again remind the board and staff about the specific criteria to be reviewed in establishing scores for each district. A rubric will be developed and distributed to evaluators for the review of 2014 APW Progress Reports/DA applications. Samples will be provided for this training.

Unwin expressed the feeling districts losing their "voice" in conservation work. **Program Manager Lair** suggested having more participation at State Technical Committee meetings by CSCB members would help this situation. Conservation districts can step up and provide leadership in NRCS Field Offices as



well. CSCB should have a meeting with the new State Conservationist when he or she arrives and share a list of specific concerns. Neufeld felt it was critical for districts to assume their statutory role to provide advice and leadership in dealing with citizens and partners. CSCB members suggested reinstating training for new NRCS employees by CACD and CSCB on how NRCS can partner with districts.

The **Colorado Conservation Leadership Class** was brought up for discussion. Can enough participation be recruited to make the class a "go"? CSCB was asked to check with districts as to their interest in the leadership class and check through the watershed association meetings. Board members indicated it can be difficult to raise funds for the program in small communities. As an alternative, **Lenz** proposed providing scholarships to the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program through CSCB, with funds potentially coming from the Matching Grants program. The board will promote the conservation leadership program through 2014 with the intent of starting the program again in Nov. 2015.

REQUEST – Lenz requested a proposed budget for the Colorado Conservation Leadership class for review at the August CSCB meeting.

REQUEST – Send out emails through CACD and CSCB to survey the districts regarding their interest in participating in CCL class.

At joint face-to-face meetings between CSCB and CACD, it was **strongly recommended** that only board members should be seated around the table. Staff for the organizations and guests will be seated around the perimeter of the room or in the public seating area. This minimizes the interference with board business by guests at the meeting.

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Program Manager Lair reported FY2015 started yesterday. CSCB's operating budget is \$54,000, which includes board meeting expenses and conservation specialist travel to assist districts. The budget has been the same since **Lair** arrived in her position, 9 years ago. She works hard to keep budget use "lean". If the budget increased, CSCB members could be more involved in partner meetings around the state.

REQUEST – President Sweeney asked Cindy to develop a draft letter from CSCB to Commissioner Salazar addressing the need for an increase in the CSCB budget for review at the August board meeting. Edits will be discussed by the board. The letter will then be approved and signed by the board members.

To preserve the budget, **Lair** recommended a teleconference meeting in January or February to avoid travel issues. The board felt it was important to have a quality face-to-face meeting with CACD in November. It was suggested CACD could report on legislative direction as the new legislative session is poised to begin.

MATCHING GRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS:

Montezuma School to Farm Project – Sarah Syverson, MSTFP Director, reported on the program and partnerships that took the program from reaching 40 students in 2010 to impacting more than 1600 students in 2013. Total student educational hours increased from 160 hours (2010) to 10,388 (2013). The program, sponsored by the Mancos CD, Dolores CD and CSCB aims to involve students, teachers, local producers and parents in a dynamic approach to sustainable food production and conservation. 2014 saw the program expand to three school districts.



According to Syverson, keys to the success of the program include:

- MSTFP promotes a higher quality of learning.
- When students learn to grow sustainably, they teach their parents.
- Paid garden coordinators promote continuity.
- Collaborations are critical – over 100 collaborators in this program.
- Funding – CSCB grant = conservation focus.

Rio Grande Education Program – Judy Lopez, Education Specialist, Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative – This broad-based program was started 25 years ago. The various programs and projects including camps, field trips, teacher workshops, and other activities have reached 10,000 students, 5,000 families, and 2,500 college students. Teacher workshops have graduated 172 educators from a variety of locations.

WATERSHED ASSOCIATION UPDATES

No. Platte, Yampa, White – K. Utterback-Normann

- Routt Co. CD is working with water entities to manage projects for administrative fees to help maintain the district viability.
- Requested clarification of CACD resource committee functions and roles, since there was confusion about resolution process at last year's meeting.

Upper San Juan – V. Lurette

- It's been some time since the association's last meeting.

Lower Arkansas – H. Unwin

- Sept. 12 – next watershed association meeting in Las Animas
- Having problems with Targeted Conservation programs. In trying to complete brush control efforts, environmental standards indicate trees cannot be "pushed" due to bird nesting Mar. 1 – July 15. More than 5,000 acres need to be pushed.

Gunnison, Dolores – L. Sweeney

- No communication with the CSCB representative.
- From other reports, this is a fairly active watershed association.

Colorado – L. Sweeney

- Association had its first spring meeting in five years.
- Districts do not see the benefit of the watershed association.
- New leadership in Eagle CD is helping move the district forward.

Upper Arkansas – K. Salapich

- A lot of discussion about continuing tumbleweed problems.
- Topics of discussion include fire mitigation, Upper Arkansas Restoration Project in Leadville, Fountain Creek Watershed project.
- The association's next meeting will be Sept. 11, Pueblo West.

Rio Grande – Danny Neufeld

- Provided a brief history on the educational specialist position for the watershed.
- The association is emphasizing soil health efforts.



Upper So. Platte – J. Lindsay

- West Greeley CD hosted the last association meeting in June.
- Next meeting will be in Agate.
- The three conservation districts and the NRCS staff in the Byers Field Office are working with Specialist Cronquist to develop a Local Operational Agreement.
- Schools in Deer Trail and East Adams CDs are converting vacant land to production. More information to follow at future meetings.

MATCHING GRANT EMERGENCY FUNDING – discussion resumed

Districts could be involved in administering emergency monies. **President Sweeney** indicated CSCB should be able to use MGs for emergency situations, but how does the board do that equitably?

Lerette suggested spending time improving state board and DA funding rather than looking at Emergency Funding protocol for MG funds. **Lenz** doesn't see CSCB having the funds for natural disaster emergency funding, but through the region's conservation specialist, encourage districts to apply for MG mini-grants to provide education for district citizens so future disasters can be prevented.

REQUEST – Sweeney asked for board members and staff interested in working on a process for presentation at the August board meeting with the intent of proceeding with this concept or killing it.

The committee that volunteered to work on this effort includes **Neufeld, Lerette, and Specialist Straub**.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of CSCB will be August 27 and 28 in Wray. The Republican River Watershed Association will meet in Wray in the morning with a joint watershed/CSCB tour of Lenz Potatoes and a joint lunch.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE:

The following committee will meet by phone to provide nominees for CSCB offices –

- **Harold Unwin**
- **Margaret Lenz**
- **Karin Utterback-Normann**

REQUEST – Karin Utterback-Normann requested a report from Mary Sue Liss on her participation on the State Mine Reclamation Board as the CSCB representative at the next CSCB meeting.

President Sweeney thanked **Specialist Ross** for her service as she announced her pending resignation from the CSCB staff.

President Sweeney adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.