



Colorado State Conservation Board
January 31st – February 1st, 2013
Greeley, CO

Meeting called to order: 2:18pm

ROLL CALL:

Danny Neufeld, Rio Grande Watershed
Vernon Lurette, San Juan Basin Watershed
Mary Sue Liss, Upper South Platte River Watershed
Margaret Lenz, Member-At-Large
Larry Sweeney, Colorado River, Gunnison-Dolores River Watersheds
Harold Unwin, Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Bud Mekelburg, Republican, Lower South Platte Watershed
Karen Salapich, Upper Arkansas River Watershed

ABSENT:

Karin Utterback-Normann, North Platte, White, Yampa Watershed

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Cindy Lair, State Conservation Board Program Manager
Nicole Reed, Conservation Specialist
Ashley Ross, Conservation Specialist
Jim Currier, Conservation Specialist
Natalie Macsalka, Conservation Specialist
Tammra Straub, Conservation Specialist
Phyllis Phillips, NRCS State Conservationist

Board introductions around the table.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Larry Sweeney moved to approve, **Vernon Lurette** seconded. All in favor, motion passes.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES:

Mary Sue Liss would like to table the approval of the minutes until the end of this meeting.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE:

Larry Sweeney moved to nominate **Margaret Lenz** and **Harold Unwin** to the nomination committee. **Harold Unwin** seconds. All in favor, motion passed. **Margaret Lenz** and **Harold Unwin** are the nomination committee.

OFFICER ELECTIONS:

The nomination committee (represented by **Margaret Lenz**) presented the slate of candidates, **Larry Sweeney** for President, **Harold Unwin** for VP and **Vernon Lurette** for Secretary. **Margaret Lenz** moved to put this slate forward. The Chair asked for any other nominations from the floor. Seeing none, **Harold**

Unwin seconded the motion. **Margaret Lenz** and **Cindy Lair** clarified the positions and the email communication requirement. All parties understood. All in favor, motion carried.

DEFINE ROLES OF CSCB (DISCUSSION):

Mary Sue Liss mentioned that **Larry Sweeney's** orientation covered a lot of what we do. **Margaret Lenz** had a couple of discussion items, philosophical discussion, looking into the future, etc. **Larry Sweeney** mentioned the comparison in the old vs. new system in Direct Assistance and the review process. It is much better, but it would be good to have an education process of how to fill out the Direct Assistance piece and work on APWs. **Margaret Lenz** asked to clarify the funding between the top districts and the lower scoring districts. **Danny Neufeld** provided a brief history on the legislative side (how the JBC required more accountability for Direct Assistance funds compelling the CSCB created a competitive application process to demonstrate the merits gained) and the improvement of helping lower scoring districts. **Cindy Lair** gave the historical perspective of funding in tiers and how the past two years have been incremental, and the question has been raised (that staff hears repeatedly) as to whether it is appropriate to have the districts compete against each other for funding. **Vernon Lurette** spoke of this "forced" competition that the CSCB has created and asked, "How do small districts compete against ones with mill levies and full time staff? The districts should be scored to be rated at a point of efficiency." **Larry Sweeney** said that this new application was built for that. "On the application, the district explains 'Here is what we want to do and here is what we did.'" **Natalie Macsalka** talked about the ranking criteria; "Does the conservation district leverage its funds to bring in local, state, federal? Does the conservation district hold an annual meeting that is well attended by its cooperators?"

Larry Sweeney explained that the education piece is key (on how to fill it out). **Ashley Ross** brought up concern with "Bootstrap" districts as an example: "How do we keep them motivated when they continue to score low after substantially increasing their participation." **Danny Neufeld** explained that at some point it goes back to the supervisors' input and that each district will have setbacks but they need to keep going, learn from their failure and try again or try another path. **Vernon Lurette** brought up that for the scores that get posted/sent out should not include the rank. There was discussion about honoring the top district in each watershed. **Mary Sue Liss** recapped, pick out top district by watershed or top 5, do not rank in order but rank in tier categories, possibly using some sort of webpage to share successful applications. **Harold Unwin** brought up technology concerns (emailing the applications) and **Nicole Reed** clarified that she is quickly reviewing each application to make sure each page is completed (not into the details, but that they did fill out the DA application pages). **Mary Sue Liss** suggested that each meeting we have this open discussion time and what else the state board can do.

MATCHING GRANTS PROPOSED CHANGES 2014

Tammra Straub passed out handout of the proposed changes.

- **Larry Sweeney** moved to accept the same language, delete the "Board" since it is repetitive, Seconded by **Danny Neufeld**. All in favor, motion carries. (in both administration and application process)

Tammra Straub reviewed the rest of the suggestions on the administration section.

- Offer two levels of grant participation (one for <\$5,000 and another for the larger ones). **Larry Sweeney** moved to allow two grant participation levels as **Tammra Straub** has outlined. **Harold Unwin** moved to amend it for the level be moved to \$7,000, **Karen Salapich** seconded. All in favor, motion passes.
- The board agreed to limit photos to 3 for applications.
- Breaking out the application into smaller requests, no more than two per district, to encourage a more focused approach – board discussion about the flexibility piece. **Mary Sue Liss** and

Margaret Lenz support the variety - **Larry Sweeney** likes a more direct specific approach. **Mary Sue Liss** likes the limit of two per district. Board approved in consensus.

- The CSCB encourages more partnering with other districts, educational components, and committed partners/landowners for possible higher scoring – discussion.
- The suggestion was made to request landowner cost-share ranking criteria sheets – two districts did that last year and it helped those districts score a bit higher as it helped the reviewers see a clearer picture. **Larry Sweeney** said that his county requires cost-share criteria for each grant application and they audit them. **Larry Sweeney** believes that they probably don't need to require it, that it can go to the encourage part of the instructions.
- **Larry Sweeney** moved to do a blanket approval, as discussed, **Harold Unwin** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

MINED LAND RECLAMATION BOARD

Cindy Lair gave the background on the CSCB Mined Land Reclamation Board and that position was formerly held by **Jim Amick** for many years, and since he was term limited last year we now need new representative. **Larry Sweeney** nominated **Mary Sue Liss** to serve as the CSCB representative. **Harold Unwin** seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Larry Sweeney went over a slide show presentation on Leaders and leadership.

NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES:

Margaret Lenz moved to approve the amended meeting minutes, **Larry Sweeney** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

Break for the evening, starting tomorrow at 8.

Harold Unwin moved to adjourn for tonight at 5:04 pm, **Margaret Lenz** seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

8:00 am MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

STATE STATUTE AND BYLAWS

Cindy Lair asked for a committee to look at the State Statute if the Board would like to review. **Mary Sue Liss** questioned whether to update the bylaws (that haven't been updated since 2000), some are easy to change and other areas just need clarification. **Larry Sweeney** voiced interest that the Commissioner's signature is not on there. Current ex-officio members are assigned by office in the State Statute.

Margaret Lenz suggested that the committee look at the bylaws and the statute and **Larry Sweeney** stated that we can then publish a phone call vote time and information to discuss this. **Larry Sweeney** volunteered to work on that committee and that others who want to attend our meetings are welcome, it is an open meeting. **Margaret Lenz**, **Harold Unwin**, and **Mary Sue Liss** also volunteered to work on it. Any others, not on the committee, can email ideas/suggestions/comments to **Larry Sweeney**. He will collect it and discuss with the board, all in favor by consensus. **Cindy Lair** suggested keeping a list of items that come up in the Statute; it would be good for the board to have a list of those ideas/thoughts/etc.

ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK – CSCB

Larry Sweeney spoke of annual plans of work and that this board should have one. It doesn't have to be long or involved, but it would be good to have a plan of work and follow it at the meetings. **Larry**

Sweeney asked if State Board Staff (**Cindy Lair**, **Nicole Reed**, and **Tammra Straub**) could do a first draft and send it around, **Cindy Lair** agreed. Board and staff agreed.

LONG RANGE PLANS

Margaret Lenz volunteered to look at Long Range Plans. **Nicole Reed** explained that the instructions are in the meeting packets as well as they will be emailed out to each board member along with their respective watershed districts that have new plans. The reviews and recommendations are due back to **Nicole Reed**, by February 28th.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Nicole Reed explained that staff would review out of territory (into a mix of each other's regions). **Nicole Reed** has redone the review process so that each reviewer is not looking at all 76. They will be looking at a variety across the state but not more than 30 (meaning each district will have at least 3 different reviewers, one a CSCB staff from another region, one from a nearby watershed (but not their own) and the 3rd reviewer will be random).

Vernon Lurette suggested that it almost needs to be a requirement that each board member needs to review these, so that we can present to the districts that our board reviewed and scored and voted on funding approval. **Vernon Lurette** moves that all board members share in the review process. **Margaret Lenz** suggested that there needs to be some allowable certain circumstances, **Karen Salapich** said it can be on an individual basis. **Bud Mekelburg** called for the question, all in favor. Motion carried. **Cindy Lair** said that CACD supported this and that **Sharon Pettee** volunteered to review. **Larry Sweeney** agreed that we need to get CACD involved. **Nicole Reed** will get those mailed out in the next two weeks and needs the score sheets back by May 1st.

MATCHING GRANTS

Tammra Straub went over the review committee for Matching Grants (2 CSCB, 2 CACD, etc.). **Tammra Straub** stated there will be about 12-15 applications per reviewer. **Harold Unwin** asked for two committees, one for the less than \$7000 applications and one for the over \$7000. **Margaret Lenz** stated that in the June meeting the board would be better prepared (because applications would be in) to vote on how much money for the lower end and the upper end. **Larry Sweeney** stated that we should call them mini grants. **Mary Sue Liss** suggested making the applications due date June 15, **Tammra Straub** said they can bump up the due date. **Larry Sweeney** stated to table the financial piece until June. **Cindy Lair** clarified that the board wants to wait until they have a better idea of how much money the board will have for matching grants, and how many of the two grant levels are sent in. **Cindy Lair** suggested that it would be more objective for the board to decide the split now, so that no district could come back or be concerned about preferential treatment. **Larry Sweeney** and **Harold Unwin** suggested a percentage split (70/30), **Harold Unwin** moves to accept the 70/30 percentage for the large/small grant, **Bud Mekelburg** seconded. All in favor, motion passed. **Harold Unwin** would volunteer on the large grant committee, **Larry Sweeney** and **Margaret Lenz** will work where needed. **Mary Sue Liss** volunteered on the small grants, **Karen Salapich** volunteered wherever needed as well.

NRCS REPORT

Phyllis Phillips reported – sequestration was delayed until the end of February, and we are still not clear how that will affect NRCS. They did get \$9 million more for EQIP and the reason they were awarded that was for the targeted conservation proposals. If we took an 8% hit, it would come out of the conservation technical funds – cars, gas, rent, employee, etc. For this fiscal year (ending in September) we could take that hit and not impact any agreements at this time. With that said, we are trying to control the number of vacancies; there are 21 current vacancies, if we can hold that it will get us by. Explored the idea of combining Area 1 and Area 4, and the feedback of staff came back 50/50, the main drawback is the

distance. By combining that it would have 18 offices, we are not combining the east side because of the extreme workload. This will save that GS13 position and we will also not fill two other positions in the area staff which will save money to use to fill the field staff. Mike Collins is in Alamosa, but if he vacated then Grand Junction would be the office to house that position after that. The DCT agreement is fine.

Section 16, 19 was added in the 2008 Farm Bill which protects the farmers' privacy, it was put in statute. That if we share that information with districts or employees of districts we need to be sure that our MOU with districts need better language that districts and employees would adhere to the privacy act. There are serious penalties – 5 yrs. jail and a \$50,000 fine. We would like to add that language and have district employees sign off and know about this law as well. The board asked for some clarification and how boards could share information with DCs. **Cindy Lair** stated that this is huge and that our staff stress the need for privacy with and for district and district employees. **Phyllis Phillips** states that it also opens up a level of liability. **Cindy Lair** said we can offer to open up a level of training to district supervisors and managers and be sure that every person signs off on this. **Margaret Lenz** said it needs to be in the certification process but we also need to send it out to the boards as well, **Larry Sweeney** suggested that CACD could have a break out session about it.

Phyllis Phillips stated that in addition to the privacy language, to update the ethical standards of conduct in the MOUs. As well as being added, the DC needs to have the discussions about it with the boards.

Phyllis Phillips talked about combining the Greeley office and the Greeley service center and in area 3 talked about combining Rocky Ford and La Junta but moving it to Pueblo. Hire the current vacancies in Pueblo and as La Junta people leave or retire then rehire them out of Pueblo. **Ashley Ross** asked about the two DCs out East, they will currently use acting conservationists for now. **Phyllis Phillips** talked about the silent offices out East and they are trying to figure out how to deal with that hiring. **Bud Mekelburg** and **Phyllis Phillips** discussed the details of the priority planning of EQIP. **Phyllis Phillips** said that there will be new guidance going out to DCs next week.

15 MINUTE BREAK

LEADERSHIP CLASS

Larry Sweeney spoke of the success and great impact the Leadership Class had on him personally. The last class involved DMs, District supervisors and NRCS employees. The class was supposed to start again in August 2012 but was not able to. And field staff and **Larry Sweeney** have been asked when the class will be offered again. **Larry Sweeney** would like to get the class going again; there are 3 classes across the state (one in Denver to get in the legislature), another elsewhere and then one at the Annual Meeting. **Larry Sweeney** would like to encourage this board to have **Cindy Lair** or **Larry Sweeney** approach CACD to get it started. **Phyllis Phillips** agreed and would like to partner again. **Larry Sweeney** said we need to start the applications in the next month. **Larry Sweeney** mentioned that there is a fair number of District Managers that can be in the class. The Watersheds pay \$500 whether they send someone or not. **Margaret Lenz** asked if it was a requirement to start in August, maybe would be better to start at this Annual Meeting and go to the next one. **Vernon Lerette** moves to have the **Larry Sweeney** and whoever can help him to work on getting the class together without commitment. **Cindy Lair** mentioned plenty of time to advertise it. **Danny Neufeld** likes the idea of starting it at CACD. **Larry Sweeney** will get the information together and bring it to the June meeting. **Danny Neufeld** seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

CDA REPORT

Cindy Lair talked about CDA looking to move their office into one central location. It's going to be a few years, but they are looking at a place at 120th and I-25.

The idea of Ag Certainty program, like Michigan and lot of other states, it's an agricultural environmental assurance program. Usually the Department of Ag runs the program, the idea is that there is water quality and air quality and for the most part CAFOs, There are different types of requirements coming up and the ag industry is supposed to be showing improvements on and we have to have something in place by 2012. The assurance program helps do that, a lot of states are using conservation districts that hire technicians to help local producers develop a plan. NRCS could help partner with some financial assistance through EQIP Department of Ag would verify it. The producer gets to advertise that they are participating in the program and providing environmental benefits to the community. NASCA and NACD are discussing it a lot. We try to take the federal standards and weave them into the state without the regulatory piece. It is a great way for Conservation Districts to serve their landowners to promote conservation. **Cindy Lair** just wanted to bring this up to get feedback from the board or individually. **Phyllis Phillips** mentioned that one of the benefits is that for the producer that gets this certification, they can use it for labels and there is a certainty to protect them as long as they keep to their plan. **Larry Sweeney** clarified that **Cindy Lair** is just asking for input and discussion that as a group here the board can discuss and ask in your watershed areas. **Larry Sweeney** suggested a conference call meeting or local to Denver and would like to talk to the Commissioner about it.

Staff has been having regional meetings with employees and that Staff sees value in the whole partnerships with district managers and staff is getting together with them and also working on training abilities, etc. **Cindy Lair** has been working with Employee's Association on how to grow and support their structure, and has been talking with Bethleen (current Chairman) and suggested a proposal could be presented to our board to devise a training opportunity that would benefit the employees as well as the association. **Margaret Lenz** suggested maybe the direction we can help them is to help direct them what they can do as a growing association to be more functional: bylaws, dues, membership, goals, etc. And then ask us for help in those specific areas, but they have to have the basic groundwork done. **Mary Sue Liss** asked if they identified specifically what training or needs they want and it seems that staff has really been working hard to do that – what do they really want to see done? And have a specific list. **Cindy Lair** said that's why she asked for a proposal. **Phyllis Phillips** said they don't have to reinvent the wheel, there are surrounding states that have the structure set up (i.e. Montana). **Cindy Lair** talked to the current and past President of the National Conservation Districts' Employee's Association and they really want to help Colorado and are willing to share. **Larry Sweeney** said that we will continue this discussion in the future, but advised the Board to check with your districts. **Cindy Lair** brought up that there is the potential for a request for an Ex-Officio member on our board and that our board is set up by statute. Any citizen can attend the meeting; they are open to the public. But the board was in agreement that employees who attend the meetings are welcome as a citizen to these meetings which are public, but the statute lists the ex-officio members very clearly.

DISTRICT CERTIFICATION

Cindy Lair updated the board that the USBs are done. We are going to distribute as people request it. **Ashley Ross** is going to start burning them so that staff can distribute.

BRIEF SPECIALIST UPDATE

Natalie: working on meeting with district supervisors, welcome video, and webinars on QuickBooks.

Ashley Ross: phase II of the certification modules and work on certification modules for district managers, Bootstrap District, district manager meetings.

Jim Currier: Salinity focus to look at each district program and make sure we aren't missing something. Facilitate a planning study in the lower part of the Gunnison watershed.

MEETING DATES

June 25-26th in Alamosa

September 5-6th in Gateway

Larry Sweeney thanked **Mary Sue Liss** for her past two years serving as President on CSCB.

Margaret Lenz asked if field staff could get a list of what some districts do to collect information on what other districts do and then we can share it with all districts (cost share, education, workshops, etc.).

Harold Unwin moved to adjourn 11:25am, **Larry Sweeney** seconded, all in favor, motion passed.