

Routt County Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes
July 16, 2024 8:15 am
Mountain Valley Bank Meeting Room

Attending:

Board Members:

Lyn Halliday
Patrick Stanko
Michael Moon
Kent Sandstedt
Tyler Snyder
Cam Kuelthau
Stephen Tyler

Partners and Public:

Erin Gelling, NRCS
Kathy Bedell, GLCI Project Manager

1. Call to order 8:20 by Tyler
2. Welcome and Introductions
3. Approval of the June 18th 2024 minutes – minutes not available yet
4. Treasurer's Report
 - \$256,000 hit account from GLCI (2 payment requests from Kathy)
 - No other news to report
5. Business

GLCI Vence Update and Discussion

Kathy requested an extension on the grant and received paperwork from Barbara which she sent to Tyler. Tyler will review and sign and follow up with Barbara, and will send the correspondence to the Board. The extension cannot exceed 12 months and specifies a no cost increase.

Cam and Lyn requested that important communications from NRCS such as this should be forwarded to the full Board in the future.

Vence status: Kathy has been in touch with Vence and they are still trying to rectify the problem with the collars. She plans to move forward as soon as participants are selected. Windler has signed the letter of agreement, waiting for Coberly. Kathy will get with Knott if no Coberly.

The Board directed Kathy not to pay for stations until we get an answer on collars. There is other technology available if Vence does not come through. The Board discussed other options – one is Halter out of Australia. This technology may need cell reception everywhere, whereas Vence does not. Halter

has solar which is also an advantage. Kathy will reach out and get more information and will look into if potential participants have cell service. She will also explore cost.

It was suggested that maybe we try both. May need to apply for more funding.

Michael spoke with his contact at Vence and apparently technology is not the issue, but that the collars were made wrong, i.e. it was a manufacturer error. May have collars this fall. Vence found 110 old collars and Michael put them on his cows at Clark ranch.

Michael spoke with Coberly and will meet with them regarding the agreement. If they do not sign he will need to revisit where to put towers with Vence.

Tyler picked up stations from the Forest Service and is storing them in his equipment shed. Cam increased equipment insurance to cover cost of base stations. Tyler would like to be released from liability.

Patrick has been concerned that Vence now requires 200 collars be ordered in order to purchase. Michael thinks they may make exceptions. Tyler indicated that practicality is not there with small pastures, need more than 400 acres. Michael has training pastures 150 acres and they work ok, but the collars are really for bigger country. There has been success in keeping cows out of small areas such as riparian areas (exclosures). Hogue and Marabou may not have not large enough pastures. Based on what we learned, a different technology might be better for smaller ranches.

Lyn reminded that the grant application needs the project to consider soil health and grazing management (regenerative ag). She asked about baseline soil and vegetation monitoring. Sharon will do baseline monitoring once selections are made (this fall hopefully).

Michael indicated that next year will be smoother potentially, if we are ready to go in spring 2025.

Board member roles

Tyler opened a discussion on Board member roles and appointment of officials. We need long range plan on who will do what going forward. Cam indicated his and Lyn's board terms are up next year. If for example, he decides to not re-up, who will fill his treasurer position? It would also be ideal to have a lawyer on the board. Also Jeremy will be gone next year and someone will need to take over the weed sprayer rental program. Lyn was asked about her duties which she listed. Tyler reminded the board that she had sent a detailed list to the board awhile back. It will need to be updated then resent to the Board for assignment discussions.

Lyn emphasized again that Board recruitment is needed. She suggested inviting other partner agency heads to come to our meeting to help with getting our word out as well as recruitment. Also having staff would be nice. She brought up the subject of going for a mill levy for sustainable funding which has been discussed in the past.

Erin asked about qualifications for future board members. 66% need to be ag producers. There is an application form on our website.

Michael stated it would be helpful to have job descriptions for president, treasurer, secretary, etc.

Cam suggested the creation of terms for board positions, and then to have rotation.

Lyn reminded board members they should go through Supervisor training on CSCB website. Cam suggested having a work session dedicated to that in the winter.

STAR Program Update

Lyn reported as follows:

- Free soil health testing was offered, Mary Beth and Colby picked up kits, waiting to hear from lab
- Reece Melton new CDA soil health initiative hire, will help with NW CO
- STAR technical assistance which has been a void, will be filled with Reece and John Rizza
- Per John Miller (their boss at CDA) they will help with the soil health field day and with producers
- Future recruitment was also discussed as something Reece and John can assist

Board Member Reports

Lyn

Mentioned our next Steamboat Pilot article is due August 19th. Cam suggested GLCI be the focus of the article and Michael volunteered to prepare it.

Lyn reported on the Upper Yampa Watershed Group projects:

- Moving forward with filling data gaps as outlined by our consultant LRE Water
- Watershed wide water quality sampling in the Bear River basin started early July
- In-reservoir water quality sampling started this past week
- Bathymetry study in Stagecoach reservoir – hired Lotic Hydrological to do work, will start next week
- Isotopic analysis underway

She also reported on the UYWCD Dashboard status which will be a great tool, Patrick elaborated.

The Headwaters project is on hold with the recent resignation of the executive director due to a family tragedy.

Kent

Discussed candidates for Michelle's job who has taken a job with the state. Farewell party for Michelle will be 5-7pm at 35 11th Street on the 25th. Michelle Petix will serve in the interim.

Next weed board meeting 8am in Hayden on the 25th.

Wildfire council is offering a free chipping program.

Patrick

Patrick mentioned he updated the calendar on our website.

He submitted a WaterSmart grant for irrigation improvements (Bear river 5 headgates to be automated).

He has signed up for the youth festival on September 25th (RCCD and CAA) to have a display (5th graders). RCCD volunteers welcome. Hayden fairgrounds 8am -2pm. Erin will also have an NRCS table. The idea of having a coloring page from RCCD was suggested. Our River trailer is usually there as well.

Yampatika fall fest coming up. Set up is on the 22nd if there is an interest.

Patrick mentioned Jo Stanko, the regional ag rep for the western slope, is asking if RCCD Board is interested in working with the wolf depredation program. Routt County will get \$20,000 from the government for non-lethal deterrents. She needs a fiscal agent to dole out the money and is suggesting either RCCD or Cattlemen's. Someone will need to prioritize who gets money and what non-lethal deterrents the money can be spent on. Patrick suggested we send a letter if we are interested.

Discussion: Tyler mentioned this would not be too hard to administer. Michael suggested we be backup to Cattlemen's. Cam suggested it would be ok if we could help but not be the flashpoint for people who are angry. Kent thought it would be a service to our constituency, but we don't want to get bad PR. Tyler stated that 3 cattle so far have been hit, all in South Routt.

Board consensus is that Cattlemens is better suited to performing this function, that it is more in keeping with their mission than ours. But if they can't do it we could help.

6. NRCS Report

Erin reported for Kara and NRCS. Kara's acting position is up on August 9th, she is talking with Chad about what will happen next.

The local NRCS lead position still not filled has been expanded to all government employees (not just NRCS). Lyn mentioned getting the job description so we can do an announcement locally. Erin will check. Erin also reported that the civil engineer technician position was announced, 3 applied but then declined.

Ian and Erin have been doing initial site visits for projects such as weed control, irrigation ditches, grazing plans, brush management. Still getting trained on NRCS range inventory assessments. Have a meeting with producers and is optimistic for projects this fall.

7. Public Forum - no public in attendance

8. Adjournment 10:50 am on a motion by Kent.