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BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

January 13, 2026

YCCD Supervisors Present: Margaret Lenz, Ron Richards, Sonya Shaw, & Darrell Smith

Supervisors Absent: Chester Zwirn

Ex officio Members: Daniel Palic, NRCS

Staff Present: Tanya Fell, Shirley Deason, and Rafael Trejo

Call to Order:

President Lenz declared a quorum present and convened the meeting of the Yuma County Conservation District at 10:00 a.m. at the Wray NRCS Conference Room.

Update to Mileage Calendar:

Updates were made by each board member to the mileage calendar.

Approval of Agenda:

After adding the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Press Release on Tree Watering, Joint Board Meeting – Department of Agriculture, NACD Conference and additional bills paid of Sam Meisner, Kaitlyn Meisner, and Jenna Wieser, approval of the agenda was made on a motion by Supervisor Richards. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Shaw and carried unanimously.

Approval of Previous Month's Minutes:

Supervisor Richards moved to approve the December 3, 2025, regular meeting minutes and the December 3, 2025, budget hearing meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report:

Board Mileage: District Manager Fell presented a spreadsheet detailing approximate mileage for board members to attend board meetings and other Conservation District events. After revisions, a motion was made by Supervisor Shaw to approve paying mileage to board members. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously.

Financial Statement and Pay Bills: District Manager Fell presented the monthly financials. Supervisor Richards moved to accept the financial report and pay the January bills. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously. The current bills paid are:

- Employee Payroll
- Cliff Theater-Security Deposit
- Cliff Theater-Rental
- Barlow Ag Sales
- CO Association of CD Employees
- Chase Buoy-Peters Scholarship
- Sam Meisner-Peters Scholarship
- Kaitlyn Meisner-Peters Scholarship
- Jenna Wieser-Peters Scholarship
- Addyson Juhnke-Zwirn Scholarship
- Tate Towns-Zwirn Scholarship
- Jayden Witte-Zwirn Scholarship
- High Plains No-Till Conference-FFA

NRCS Report:

Daniel Palic provided the NRCS report, including updates on CSP and EQIP application deadlines, the new Regenerative Agriculture Initiative, NRCS staffing positions, and the Pheasants Forever position. He also discussed efforts to obtain certified planner status for District Conservation Technician (DCT) Rafael Trejo. Following his report, Daniel Palic departed the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Grants & Updates: District Manager Fell gave updates on the following grants:

- **Bonny Grazing Project:** Three grant applications have been submitted to fund the project at the Bonny Reservoir – Demonstration Grant, HPP Grant and the Colorado Water Plan Grant.
- **Restore Colorado Grant 2024 -NFWF:** \$320,000 grant request for Rejuvra for all of Yuma County: The Conservation District has received an invoice from Aero Applicators totaling \$45,690.59. The Conservation District has issued an invoice to landowners for their \$15.00 per acre cost-share and submitted an invoice for the remainder to NFWF.
- **CSCB 50/50 Matching Grant 2025:** All producer payments have been issued, and the final grant report has been submitted to CSCB. This project is now closed.
- **CSCB Supplemental Matching Grant 2025:** The Yuma Conservation District, under the administration of the Yuma County Conservation District, has been awarded a \$50,000 grant to support tree restoration efforts. Producers have been contacted to get the number and types of trees needed for the project.
- **Mule Deer Foundation Grant - MDF:** The Conservation District has \$10,000 remaining from the \$20,000 grant with an additional \$22,500 available for projects in 2026.
- **CSCB 50/50 Matching Grant 2026:** The Conservation District was awarded a \$50,000 CSCB 50/50 Matching Grant for 2026 to support water tanks, pipelines, solar pumps, and wireless tank monitoring devices benefiting producers in both the Yuma Conservation District and the Yuma County Conservation District. Producer applications are currently available, with an application deadline of January 30, 2026. Press releases have been distributed to the Wray and Yuma newspapers and posted on Facebook and the Conservation District’s website. The Board

discussed the potential need to implement an application ranking process in future years to ensure equitable distribution of funds and avoid repeat funding to the same applicants.

Upcoming Grant Opportunities: District Manager Fell gave updates on the following grant opportunities:

- **NRCS Locally Led Targeted Conservation Project:** A locally led Targeted Conservation Project Proposal for fiscal year 2026 was submitted by the Yuma County Conservation District in the amount of \$500,000 for Cheatgrass Control, which would encompass Yuma County, Phillips County and Sedgwick County. No further information is available.
- **Conservation Partners Program - NFWF:** The application has been submitted for \$ 287,660. This grant would be for staff funding for Habitat Enhancement on Grazing Land or Soil Health Practices on Cropland. The conservation district was informed that the grant request was denied.
- **Demonstration Grant #1 – CACD/NRCS:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$10,000 for Cheatgrass Control Test Plots. The conservation District has been informed that it has been awarded this grant. Project will be started in the Spring with the assistance of ENVU.
- **Demonstration Grant #2 – CACD/NRCS:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$10,000 for Virtual Fence, Portable Corral System & Water Structure at Bonny Reservoir.
- **Habitat Partnership Program - CPW:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$50,555 for virtual fence, and water structure at Bonny Reservoir.
- **Restore Colorado Grant – NFWF:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$349,242.77 for a watershed wide grant for cheatgrass control.
- **Climate Resiliency Grant – Colorado Department of Ag:** The application has been submitted for a grant in the amount of \$30,000 for living snow fences. The Conservation District has been informed that it was awarded this grant. District Manager Fell will reach out to the Colorado Department of Transportation for assistance with the grant.
- **Friends of NACD - NACD:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$2,500 for the “Garden in a Box” project.
- **Colorado Water Plan Grants - CWCB:** The application has been submitted in the amount of \$112,500 for virtual fence, portable corral system and water structure at Bonny Reservoir.
- **Technical Assistance Grant- NACD:** This grant would fund a dedicated employee position to provide technical services on behalf of the district. The application has been submitted in the \$121,037.50 Awards are expected to be announced in March 2026.

- **Soil Health and Optimizing Water Grants – Colorado Department of Ag:** This grant would be for an educational project for 5th – 8th grade students. The maximum amount of the grant request is \$50,000.
- **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program:** A grant opportunity for a Specialty Crop Block Grant Program was announced by the Colorado Department of Agriculture. The maximum grant request is \$50,000.00.
- **Urban Agriculture Grant:** A grant opportunity is available with a maximum request amount of \$5,000. Potential project ideas discussed include assistance with establishing a farmers' market or implementation of a Garden in a Box project.

District Vehicle - Door Signs:

District Conservation Technician Trejo did not obtain a quote at this time but will work on obtaining a cost estimate for producing and installing a logo decal on the Conservation District's pickup.

Leadership Training Reschedule:

Stephanie Scott was unable to present the leadership training due to sickness in the family. Training will be rescheduled at a later date, possibly at the March 3rd board meeting. A preliminary job description for the Board of Supervisors is to be reviewed and updated at a later date.

Workshops:

- **Estate/Succession Plan Workshop:** The Conservation District is planning an estate/succession planning workshop geared towards younger producers. District Manager Fell will follow up with CSU Extension Specialist Jeffrey Tranel regarding available dates.
- **Pesticide Applicator Workshop:** The Conservation District has scheduled a pesticide applicator workshop for March 10, 2026. The Conservation District will try to obtain sponsorships from chemical companies to help defray the cost of putting on the workshop.
- **Landowner Dam Easement Education Workshop:** The Board discussed the need to hold a workshop for landowners near the dams to emphasize the importance of keeping these areas clear of brush to ensure water flow is not impeded during significant rain events. The workshop is tentatively planned for June.

Host CSCB Solar & Agrivoltaics tour for the Northeast Region:

District Manager Fell will follow up with Jordan Macknick (NREL) and Jeff Risley (Executive Director, Renewable Energy Farmers of America) about serving as speakers for an Agrivoltaics workshop .

Candidates for Conservationist of the Year:

A motion was made by Supervisor Shaw to nominate the following candidates for the YCCD Conservationist of the Year awards. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously.

- Education Program of the Year: Wray Museum Prairie Chicken Program
- Educator of the Year: Josh Melby
- Conservationist of the Year – Small Acreage: Sandhill Bloomers
- Conservationist of the Year – Farmer: Brad Wingfield
- Conservationist of the Year – Rancher: Nathan Andrews
- Outstanding Partner of the Year: CSU Extension – Travis Taylor

Awards will be presented at the annual meeting on February 9, 2026. District Manager Fell will check into getting plaques from Kelandy Center in Yuma, CO for awardees.

Wray Dam Inspections:

The Conservation District has received the Engineer's Inspection Reports for the Wray Dams following the site visit conducted on October 30, 2025, by Dam Safety Chief John Batka. The Conservation District has contacted James DePue with the City of Wray concerning one missing dam inspection report and will need to request an updated Emergency Action Plan from the City of Wray. Copies of the Engineer's Inspections Reports have been forwarded to Daniel Palic with NRCS.

Colorado State Unemployment Tax:

Premier Accounting had previously emailed correspondence from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) regarding the Conservation District's Colorado State Unemployment Tax Account. Premier Accounting had requested that all reports submitted in 2024 and the first half of 2025 be transferred to the new account created when the Conservation District changed from non-contributory to contributory status in 2024. They also noted that a CDLE letter dated August 25, 2025, had incorrectly identified the Conservation District as a 501(c)(3), potentially due to an incorrect NAICS code assignment.

The Conservation District has received amended unemployment insurance rate notices from the Colorado Department of Labor dated January 12, 2026, correcting the rate from 3.05% to .2%. Premier Accounting is still working to correct the late fees, interest, and amounts submitted.

Lunch Break:

The board recessed the meeting for a lunch break from 12:20 p.m. to 12:52 p.m., after which the meeting was reconvened.

2026 Annual Meeting:

A motion was made by Supervisor Richards to host the annual meeting on February 9, 2026, at the Cliff Theater in Wray. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously.

Conservation District Signs:

The Conservation District will reach out to neighboring conservation districts about sharing the cost of signs.

NEW BUSINESS:**2026 Mill Levy Correction:**

The County Assessor informed the Conservation District that incorrect property valuation figures were provided for calculation of the 2026 mill levy, resulting in a reduction of mill levy revenue from \$46,080.85 to \$45,265.74. The Conservation District is not required to complete a formal budget amendment and has the option to file a corrected Certification of Tax Levies with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). A motion was made by Supervisor Smith to upload the corrected Certification of Tax Levies to the DOLA website. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Shaw and carried unanimously.

Tree Sales:

Tree sales commenced in January. Order forms are available, and advertising will be conducted through Facebook.

Envirothon:

Envirothon, a high school quiz bowl competition focused on natural resources and consisting of four-member teams, was discussed. The Board decided to table further discussion until summer.

Zwirn Scholarship:

The Board was informed that Chester Zwirn confirmed his intent to offer a scholarship again this year. The scholarship will be administered by the Yuma County Conservation District.

Raymond Peters Memorial Scholarship:

Supervisors did not make a formal motion at this time but indicated their intent to offer the Raymond Peters Memorial Scholarship again this year. Staff will distribute the scholarship application packet to all schools within the Yuma County Conservation District and post a notice regarding the availability of the scholarship on the YCCD Facebook page. A formal motion will be made when scholarship recipients are selected.

2026 Workgroup Survey:

Supervisors discussed proposed changes to the 2026 Workgroup Survey form. Daniel Palic with NRCS also reviewed the survey form and did not identify any issues. A motion was made by Supervisor Shaw to use the revised survey form for the Workgroup meeting. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Richards and carried unanimously.

High Plains No-Till Conference – February 3 – 4 2026:

The High Plains No-Till Conference is scheduled for February 3 – 4, 2026. A motion was made by Supervisor Richards for District Manager Fell and DCT Trejo to attend the conference. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Shaw and carried unanimously.

NACD Conference:

District Manager Fell requested approval to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting to be held in San Antonio, Texas, February 15–19, 2026. A motion was made by Supervisor Richards to approve expenditures in an amount not to exceed \$1,450 for District Manager Fell to attend the conference. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Shaw and carried unanimously. District Manager Fell will seek additional financial assistance from the Colorado State Conservation Board or the NACD to support attendance at the conference.

Republican River Watershed Association Spring Meeting:

The Spring Meeting of the Republican River Watershed Association is scheduled for March 26, 2026, at Cheyenne Wells, CO.

Joint Board Meeting – Department of Agriculture:

A joint meeting between the Colorado State Conservation Board and the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts is scheduled for January 21–22, 2026. Supervisors are encouraged to attend.

Colorado Special District and Liability Pool – Insurance Procedures Card:

The Colorado Special Districts and Liability Pool provided reference cards outlining procedures to follow in the event of an accident or loss. These cards were distributed to board members for their reference.

Consolidation of Yuma County and Yuma Conservation Districts:

Supervisors discussed the potential consolidation of the Yuma County Conservation District and the Yuma Conservation District. Supervisors will reach out to area landowners to gather feedback regarding the proposed consolidation. Supervisors also plan to attend the Yuma Conservation District Annual Meeting on February 10, 2026, to discuss the possibility of consolidation with their Board.

Press Releases:

The Board reviewed press releases titled *Eastern Plains Water Conservation Infrastructure Improvement Matching Grant Funding Available* and *Yuma County Grassland Fires: A Soil Conservation Perspective*. The Board discussed the need to develop an additional press release addressing proper tree watering during drought conditions, as well as a press release providing guidance on the care of fire-damaged trees.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Supervisor Richards to dispense with the executive session. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously.

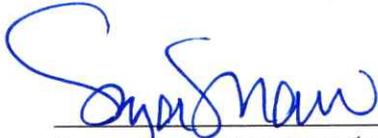
ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Supervisor Richards to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Smith and carried unanimously with President Lenz adjourning the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Next Meeting:

The next Yuma County Conservation District meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. and will be held in the NRCS conference room in Wray.

Minutes submitted by: Shirley Deason, Office Assistant



Sonya Shaw, Secretary/Treasurer



Date