

**PENNINGTON COUNTY WEED & PEST BOARD**  
**Pennington County Natural Resources Office**  
**3607 Cambell Street, Rapid City, SD**  
**Wednesday, February 24, 2024, 12:30 pm**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Paul Paulsen, Vice-Chairman  
Bert Jocks  
Travis Lasseter, County Commissioner Liaison  
Jerry Hirrschoff  
Ron Rossknecht, County Commissioner Liaison

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:**

Scott Guffey, Director  
Casey Knuppe  
Ty Eisenbraun  
Paul Sheets  
Chip Kimball, BLM

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Paulsen called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

**Additional Items / Approve Agenda**

Motion made by Jocks to approve the agenda, seconded by Rossknecht, motion carried. Motion made by Rossknecht to approve meeting minutes for the December 6, 2023 meeting, seconded by Jocks, motion carried.

**Budget Report**

Scott Guffey presented Budget Report for Weed & Pest (615) and Natural Resources (616) budgets. Weed & Pest (615) has 90 % remaining, Forestry budget (616) is at 70% for the remainder of the year.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Shaded Fuel Break**

The Continuing Resolution by the US Congress has continued to delay potential funding for the proposed five-year agreement, that could include fuels mitigation work, timber stand improvement, timber sale marking, or just about anything else that would be a 5-year agreement worth \$1 million. Mystic Ranger District did find funding for the fence clearing project along S. Rockerville Road. A FS agreement is coming in the amount of \$10,000 to clear a 20ft path for around 10miles along S. Rockerville Rd for the range fence. There is some merchantable timber within the clearing that will be cut and sold as well. The Pennington County Highway Department has hired an engineering firm to survey the clear zone, they'll start soon on the survey on the north end. There are bat restriction on the project, cutting is allowed Nov. 1 – April 30.

**Black Hills National Forest Plan Revision**

Not much to report. Shawn Cochran is the new Black Hills National Forest Supervisor and is getting settled into the position.

**SD Weed & Pest Applications / SD Weed & Pest Conference**

The SD Weed & Pest Commission approved both grants that Pennington County submitted - the general grant for \$5,900 and the competitive grant for chemical cost reimbursement in the amount of \$5,000 for Salt Cedar control. Guffey also addressed the SD Weed & Pest Commission about the seldom used state statute *38-22-17.2. Intervention on Federal Land by State Weed & Pest Control Commission*. Guffey wanted to get it on the commission's radar incase the BLM prairie dog complaint goes to enforcement. The conference was in Spearfish this year, Guffey & Craig Smith attended.

The conference was good overall, Rick Johnstone was interesting speaker who talked about how to restore native vegetation and pollinators with selected herbicide use.

### **District 2 Weed & Pest Board Opening**

Took awhile to find anyone that was interested in serving on the board in district 2, Casey Knuppe has submitted his citizen interest form to serve on the board. Knuppe is a generational rancher east of New Underwood. His appointment will need to be approved by the Pennington County board of County Commissioners.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **BLM Prairie Dog Complaint**

Ty Eisenbraun & Jordon Kjerstad have both filed formal prairie dog complaints encroaching onto their private property from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Both landowners have asked the BLM to control the prairie dogs adjacent to their property. Guffey has been in communication with the BLM on the issue and so . Guffey is going to meet with both landowners and document the prairie dog complaint. Kimball said they have had internal discussions on what the BLM can do. Wildlife is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on BLM. There about 12 endangered species they need to protect. Right now there is nothing they can do, Kimball is pushing for a prairie dog management plan for the BLM the Dakotas area. Guffey said maybe getting the county commissioners and SD congressional reps to push might lead to a faster solution than an enforcement legal battle.

#### **Seasonal Employee Wage Reclassification**

Guffey is working with Carol Bancroft, county HR director, on increasing the department's starting wage for seasonal staff. Last spring, it was difficult to get any applicants for our seasonal weed applicator positions. Our starting wage is considerable lower than area federal, state, and local agencies. Guffey and Bancroft will recommend the county commission to adjust the NR seasonal staff grade rating on the county wage scale from A12 to A13. That would move the starting wage from \$13.73 to \$15.88/hr.

#### **Chemical Cost-share Program**

Guffey recommend to once again offer a Chemical Cost-share program to private landowners in Pennington County. Motion by Jocks to continue to offer a 50-50 cost-share program to Pennington County private landowners with a max \$100 reimbursement, seconded by Hirschoff. All eyed

#### **Weed Spraying Rates**

Guffey recommended raising the county weed spraying rates due increased wages. Motion by Rossknecht to set the weed spraying rates as follows: 1 person - \$30/hr; Truck Sprayer - \$50/hr; ATV/UTV Sprayer - \$40/hr; Backpack Sprayer - \$30/hr, seconded by Jocks. All eyed

#### **Crew Update**

Crew has continued to cut hazard trees along rights-of-way.

#### **Additional Item**

#### **Agency Report**

### **ADJOURN**

Motion made by Rossknecht to adjourn the meeting at 1:50pm, seconded by Jocks, motion carried.

Next meeting will be April 24, 2024.

Submitted by Scott Guffey