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## **Gunnison Conservation District**

216 North Colorado St, Gunnison, CO 81230

(970) 707-3047

### **Board Meeting Minutes**

November 19, 2024, Regular Meeting

Held at 216 North Colorado St Conference Room, Gunnison

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**Board Members Present:** Bill Ketterhagen, Jan Coury, John Rozman, Jon Mugglestone, Jesse Kruthaupt

**Board Members Absent:** Brooke Vasquez, Dan Zadra

**Employees Present:** Tonya Carr, Ben Prior

**Employees Absent:**

Others Present: Tommy Rozman

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**Call to Order:** Bill Ketterhagen called the meeting to order at 1:38

### **Partner Updates:**

#### **NRCS-**

The recent batching deadline was last Friday. This deadline applied to irrigation projects. Updates on the number of irrigation projects included in the team will be available soon. Processes are being handled similarly to last year.

"Act Now" is in place for specific practices that do not require engineering.

Upcoming Deadlines: January 10th. Approximately 30 days later, in February. Another deadline is in March.

Contract Obligations: All applications are expected to be obligated into contracts by June.

Potential Additional Signups: If funds remain after March, additional signups may occur later in the year. No further signups are planned unless additional funds become available for contracts.

FY 2026 Planning- resource funding pool base on local work group meetings. Funding allocation will shift from broad allocation strategy to a more targeted funding approach. Local working groups can propose special projects focused on specific resource concerns, practices or areas. If local work groups collaborate on a specific project the entire pool fund can be allocated to that project otherwise the funds would be split.

### **Trout Unlimited Update:**

#### **TU Projects**

Trout Unlimited has been working on a range of projects under its RCPP program, including some that recently concluded and others in the design and survey phases for 2025. Ongoing work is to finalize reports, complete checkouts, and close out grants. TU is

considering options to renew or apply for additional RCPP funding, as the initial \$900,000 allocation from a few years ago has been largely spent. Jesse noted that, in hindsight, a more significant funding request would have been beneficial given the high costs of engineering and implementation.

Jesse provided an update, noting some discussions from a recent meeting about the potential for hosting a workshop day. The idea is to bring together NRCS, FSA, and other partners to share information on available programs like CSP and equip and provide resources such as enrollment assistance and form updating. This workshop could also serve as an opportunity for education and engagement with local stakeholders.

Additionally, there was discussion about focusing efforts on specific resource concerns, practices, or geographies, which might overlap with the local working group meeting. Jesse suggested hosting a general educational session in coordination with Upper Gunnison, possibly before the annual meeting, which could increase attendance and engagement at local workgroup meetings.

Jesse also mentioned that some community members have been confused about the roles and distinctions between different conservation organizations, highlighting the need for more transparent communication and collaboration.

A new Upper Gunnison staff member with extensive NRCS experience, Bailey is exploring partnership opportunities to support irrigation infrastructure and programs like the Wet Meadows Program. Discussions included the possibility of cooperative efforts to secure funding and resources.

**CBLT**— CBLT is concluding last year's projects while starting new ones for the upcoming season, focusing on statewide and local funding sources. They recently submitted a grant request to the Colorado State Forest Service for mountain pine beetle mitigation near Crested Butte. They are planning noxious weed mitigation on their properties, aiming for funding from the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

The Land Trust is collaborating with the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District on a grant-funded project to address river stabilization along the Slate River. They are also working with Forever Our Rivers on a recreation planning project at the Gunsight parcel in the Slate River Valley to manage intense use and prevent overuse. Jon highlighted the significance of these priorities and regional collaboration in achieving their goals.

### **Approval of Minutes**

November 2024, meeting minutes

**ACTION:** Moved to approve minutes

Moved: Bill

Second: Jan

Approved: Board unanimously

### **Treasurer's Report**

December, treasurer's report

The treasurer provided updates on the financials.

The DM addressed a budget discrepancy of \$27.28, which stemmed from an original negative \$602 in the general budget—a mistake flagged by DOLA and received guidance against submitting negative figures. Further complicating matters, data entry into QuickBooks changed the figure to a positive \$27.28. The DM remains committed to improving accuracy and consistency in the accounts as we advance.

The balance sheet discussion revealed a newly identified negative accounts receivable.

Two issues were found:

1. In February 2024, a \$500 deposit from Gunnison County was mistakenly credited twice due to an uncredited invoice.

2. In February 2024, a \$37.31 customer charge was also credited twice.

As QuickBooks does not allow changes to deposited funds, journal entries were created to correct these discrepancies for proper recordkeeping and auditing. Documentation of these adjustments was reviewed during the meeting.

An unresolved opening balance equity discrepancy of \$682 remains, possibly linked to a closed equity account, but the exact cause is still unclear.

The board concluded that all identified issues were resolved, and the financial sheets have improved.

**ACTION:** Moved to approve treasurer's report

Moved: Jesse

Second: Jan

Approved: Board unanimously

## **Old Business**

### **DCT**

Ben provided an update on the following items:

**The CDA and US Forest Service Cheatgrass Grant**, received in 2022, is nearing completion—using remaining funds to run cheatgrass advertisements in the Gunnison Times and the Shopper. Additional funds have been used to treat the city tree dump, enabling further work on the project.

**The Gunnison County Contract Renewal** has been reviewed and remains unchanged from the previous year. Ben's role as a wildlife biologist involves examining land-disturbing activities in the Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. He submits monthly invoices at \$50 per hour, with a \$12,000 yearly cap, and organizes Gunnison Sage-Grouse Strategic Committee meetings. The contract also covers building permit reviews. The board agreed to sign and return the contract to the county, which will review and renew.

### **DM**

District Manager's updates:

**The BOR B2E grant proposal was submitted** before Thanksgiving on November 20th.

**NFWF reimbursement request:** The last one for the 2022-2024 grant, excluding the holdback amount, totaled \$14,826. However, there will be a delay in receiving the funds,

which are expected to appear in the next fiscal year. The holdback amount, around \$9,100, will be requested in March with the final report.

The 2025 General Fund budget was also presented in October and updated to include a revision of the previous figures for the NFWF Grants budget item. This adjustment accounts for a holdback amount, reducing \$5,000 annually from the original budget for 2025 to 2027. Additionally, a holdback amount of \$15,000 will be received in the fourth year, along with the final report. The herbicide budget was adjusted to \$0, and contract fees were similarly reduced to \$0. The district technician revenue for 2024 was slightly decreased due to adjustments in the yearly working days; other figures remained unchanged.

**ACTION:** Moved to approve the 2025 General Fund Budget

Moved: Bill

Second: Jan

Approved: Board unanimously

The issue raised of reviewing and potentially amending the district's bylaws, particularly regarding the requirement that 66% of board members must be agricultural producers. This could become an issue if the board cannot comply with this rule. DM suggested that the board could petition the state for an exemption or revise the bylaws to include more diverse representation, such as members from municipalities or land trusts. There was further discussion about the possibility of amending the bylaws to increase the number of board members from seven to eight to provide more flexibility in meeting agricultural representation requirements.

The board agreed to review the bylaws at the next meeting and consider either expanding the board or petitioning for a reduction in the percentage requirement for Agricultural Producers. It was also suggested that the board should focus on filling current vacancies before seeking to expand. There was a discussion of reaching out to potential new board members, including those involved in agricultural and land management activities. The update concluded with a reminder to complete the necessary documentation and sign forms for new members.

**ACTION:** The board nominated Tom Rozman to join the board with unanimous approval

Moved: Jesse

Second: Bill

Approved: Board unanimously

## New Business

### **District Technician Update**

The board was updated regarding new NRCS programs to mitigate predator and livestock conflicts. These initiatives, funded under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), will roll out next year with a budget of \$2.5 million over three or four years.

Gunnison falls within the Phase 1 region, meaning local applicants will have a higher ranking for funding.

**The program includes practices such as:**

**Range Riding:** Payment rates per head vary based on herd size, with funding available for hiring range riders.

**Flagging (Fladry):** Seasonal fencing modifications to deter predators during calving and similar vulnerable times.

**Carcass Management:** Cost-sharing for labor, equipment use, hauling, and landfill fees associated with carcass disposal.

**Prescribed Grazing:** Encouraging healthier herds and improved resource management. Ben recently attended training in Glenwood Springs and presented at a Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) event outlining available federal and state funding programs. He emphasized that producers should apply early, as the application period begins January 10. The deadlines for applications, ranking, and funding obligations are February 7, March 7, and June 1.

Discussion followed regarding eligibility and practical implementation. It was clarified that individuals can apply directly for funding through the NRCS without being part of an entity. Some questions arose about managing pooled herds, hiring range riders, and coordinating multi-permittee applications, which will require further clarification. Ben noted that the program's proactive approach aims to establish practices before potential issues arise. Colorado, Montana, and Oregon are among the first states to implement these non-lethal predator management practices. He also mentioned that other organizations, such as the Colorado Department of Agriculture and CPW, have funding opportunities.

**Additional updates included:**

The update to the habitat prioritization tool is expected to be finalized in January. This tool aids in county reviews by identifying tiered habitat levels.

Confirmation from Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) will assist with a fencing project for wildlife-friendly modifications, including replacing top wires with white vinyl to reduce barriers for deer and other wildlife.

A county permit application for a solar garden project covering four acres west of town, close to Tier 1 habitat. This project has been referred to CPW for review.

Ben concluded that county permits are slowing down, but activity around these new initiatives and collaborations remains steady.

**DM Update**

DM discussed upcoming Dola deadlines, filing budget, upcoming election requirements, annual reports, end-of-year tax and audit exemption preparations, and insurance renewals.

**Next Meeting**

GCD Board Meeting: February 18, 1:30 PM

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

GCD Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm