

MINUTES
Uintah County Conservation District
Regular Meeting, May 12, 2025
Location: Western Park Board Room
302 East 200 South, Vernal, Utah

ATTENDANCE:

Conservation District Chair Bryan Bell

Conservation District (CD) Supervisor

Jim Slaugh, Treasurer

Johnathan McKee, Supervisor

Conservation District Supervisors, Absent:

Todd Thacker, Vice Chair

Steve Hanberg, Supervisor

Conservation Partners Representatives:

Cheyenne Reid, USU Extension

Jeremy Maycock, NRCS

Department of Agriculture and Food:

Darrell Gillman, UDAF

Conservation District Staff:

Andrea Merrell

Guests:

SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT ACTION

MEETING – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bryan Bell called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Andrea Merrell passed out copies of the minutes for the April 14 Uintah Conservation District (UCD) Board Meeting. The Supervisors reviewed and discussed the minutes. **Action Item: Jim Slaugh made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Johnathan McKee seconded the motion. The voting was unanimous, and the motion passed.**

UINTAH COUNTY EXTENSION BUSINESS

Cheyenne told the Supervisors she did complete and send out the Uintah County Extension newsletter for June.

She reported that there won't be irrigation research at the Vernal USU Farm this growing season because there was a break in an irrigation pipeline in proximity to the alfalfa field. The flood of water washed out the newly planted seed. Therefore, she requested a change in what she will purchase with the annual donation from UCD. Matt Yost, USU, asked her to consider using the funds to pay for a thermal drone and to cover the cost for her to certify as a drone pilot. She has contacted Extension agents in other counties and discovered they are using these drones, at the request of agricultural producers, to do aerial crop health surveys. With the drone's thermal imaging, the Extension agent can detect signs of crop stress, document the affected areas, and alert the producer so they can act in a timely manner to prevent yield losses. Extension agents are also using the drones to locate lost cattle in range ground, digitally mark the location, and provide the producer information that saves them time and effort in locating their lost cattle. Cheyenne plans to use the drone at the Research Farm as well as to assist residents of the Uinta Basin. **Johnathan made a motion to authorize Cheyenne to use the funds UCD will give to Utah State University to purchase a drone as described in her presentation and to pay the costs of becoming a certified drone operator. Jim seconded the motion. The voting was unanimous, and the motion passed.**

NRCS BUSINESS

Jeremy Maycock, District Conservationist, reported that he and his staff are working hard to complete contracts and obligate funds for Farm Bill programs. Sixty-six contracts are currently in pre-approval status. He commended his staff for the work they are accomplishing given the uncertainty they are dealing with, and the resulting staff shortages from the buyouts and layoffs. He said that currently the USDA plans for reorganization are on hold as ordered by a federal judge.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Andrea passed out copies of a preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2026. The Supervisors reviewed the preliminary budget. The following are suggested changes: Under **Revenues** increase the amount in line 1.5 Weed Barrier Sales to \$7200 and decrease the amount in line 1.7 Project/Contract Income to \$53,700. Under **Expenses** delete line 2.10 which is a duplicate of line 2.1. Change description in line 2.13 to Meeting Attendance Pay. Increase amount in line 2.15 Project/Contract Expense by \$4000. **Jim made a motion to approve the preliminary budget as presented with the suggested changes. Johnathan seconded the motion. The voting was unanimous, and the motion passed.**

PLANNING FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS, TOURS, PROJECTS

Darell began this agenda item by asking the Supervisors “What do we want to accomplish in regard to workshops and/or tours to benefit the agricultural producers in the Uinta Basin?”

The first topic the Supervisors discussed was cricket control. They said the crickets had migrated west from the eastern Diamond Mountain and Blue Mountain area and were now in large numbers on the western side of the Diamond Mountain area and moving west across Highway 191. Cheyenne and Darrell discussed the importance of getting insecticidal bait out while the crickets are small. It is usually too late by the first to the middle of June, depending on winter and spring temperatures.

The group agreed winter is the most effective time to present a class on grasshopper and cricket control. It was decided that a class on grasshopper and cricket control would be included in the schedule of the February 2026 Crop School. In addition, the Supervisors asked for a class on virtual fence collars be included in the Crop School agenda.

Darrell suggested including grasshopper and cricket control on public land as a topic of discussion for public agency representatives at the Local Workgroup Meeting to be held in the fall. Any control would be much more effective if there is collaboration between private landowners and public land management agencies. This topic will be included as an agenda item for the June UCD Board Meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

- A. **Balance Sheet/Bank Statement Review.** Andrea gave each Supervisor a copy of the April QuickBooks checking account Reconciliation Report and Balance Sheet as of April 30. For the savings account she reported the interest earned and the balance as of April 30.

For the checking account she reported that during April seven checks and one electronic bank transfer (EBT) cleared the account. She reported the check number, the amount, and the payee for each check as well as the amount and payee for the EBT. Then she reported there were three deposits made in April. She reported the deposit date, the amount, and source of income for each deposit. She compared the ending balances as shown on the Balance Sheet and the MACU bank statement.

- B. **Income:** Andrea reported she had sold three rolls of weed barrier between April 30 and today’s Board meeting.
- C. **Expenses:** Andrea presented the Supervisors invoices she received between the April 14 UCD Board meeting and today’s meeting. There were two invoices from Duchesne Conservation District (DCD) for the total purchase of twelve rolls of weed barrier, an invoice from UACD for Andrea’s payroll from January to March, and an invoice from USU Extension—Uintah County for the Drone Plant Health Research.

Action Item: Johnathan made a motion to accept the financial report as presented and approve payment of all invoices as presented. Jim seconded the motion. Voting unanimously passed the motion.

SERA

- A. **Action Item: Upcoming workshops:** There are no upcoming workshops.

ARDL PROPOSAL

There were no ARDL Proposals.

OTHER BUSINESS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Darrell reminded the Supervisors that UACD has a web page available for the District. The group discussed possible information to include on the web page. Suggestions given included a picture of the Esch no-till drill in use, and pictures of the streambank stabilization completed at Matt Warner Reservoir.

Andrea will bring the District laptop to the June Board meeting and the group will familiarize themselves with the website to help choose content to include.

Next the group discussed the lack of landowner interest in implementing conservation practices in the Pot Creek Watershed. During discussion the idea was proposed for the District to purchase virtual collars for the landowners within the Watershed to rent to try the technology for controlling their herds and keeping them out of the Pot Creek stream corridor. Darrell said the technology will also alert the producer if a cow hasn't moved within a set specified time. He told them the technology works best if the herd is isolated from other herds. The collar only shocks when cattle leave the specified area, not when they come back in. The collars reduce the time needed to gather herds.

Darrell told them some Districts have gotten grants to purchase collars, as well as radio towers needed for the technology. He said that one tower can cover from 5 to 10,000 acres. The producer uses the Avenza app to track his herd. There is a project in the Manti LaSal area using virtual livestock collars. A suggestion was made to see if a producer using the technology would come to the Uinta Basin to make a presentation during a class or workshop on the effectiveness of the virtual collars.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Bell at 2:30 p.m.
Motion by Jim and Seconded by Johnathan