Nebraska Invasive Species Council
Meeting Agenda
September 11, 2026
245 Fallbrook Blvd, Ogallala Aquifer Conference Room
Zoom Meeting Link: https://unl.zoom.us/j/99085672402 **| Meeting ID:** 990 8567 2402

Voting Members Present:
Natalia Bjorklund
Steven Jara
Justin King
Kristopher Stahr
Joshua Nelson
Dennis Schroeder
Jonathan Spurgeon
Kristopher Stahr
Kimberly Stuhr
John Thorburn

Voting Members Absent:
Jonathan Nikkila
Kim Todd

Non-Voting Members Present:
Travis Connot
Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Non-Voting Members Absent:
Chris Helzer

Advisory Support Members/Guests Present:
Kali Boroughs
Cheryl Dunn
James Thiele

1. Call to order – Stahr called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM CST

2. Approval of August Meeting Minutes – King motioned to approve, Thorburn seconded, motion carried.
3. Agenda

Action Item Priority Survey Results – Action Item 3.2 (Facilitate outreach and education) was identified as the number one priority between both Voting Members and all Council members/supporters per the August survey. Council agreed that identifying education gaps and creating materials that are targeted to specific audiences would be better than creating generalized educational materials. Paugels to develop and send survey to Council members to determine where gaps are and what audiences to target when creating materials. Council agreed that social media would be a vector via which to channel education efforts, Paugels to discuss with administration about this possibility. Council also discussed looking into applying for education grants to help fund printing of materials. Paugels to discuss this with administration as well. Council also agreed that item needs should be identified and content somewhat developed before applying for grants.

Action Item 2.3 (Invite policymakers and staff to meetings or informational sessions) was identified as the second most priority among the Council. Council established an Informational Session Workgroup consisting of Kristopher Stahr, John Thorburn, and Grace Dowding which will develop an annual informational session for policymakers and staff. Council also discussed that continuous communication with policymakers and staff was essential and that Paugels should continue to reach out with information and meeting invitations as able.

Council discussed that third priority action item (3.4: Identify information and funding gaps) was being somewhat addressed through action item 3.2 and would be addressed during creation of 2026 annual report. Council agreed to focus on Items 3.2 and 2.3 before addressing other action items directly.

Establishing Traveling Meeting Months – Per August meeting, Council determined 2 months of the year during which to have traveling meetings to increase in-person participation for members who do not live in Eastern Nebraska. Council agreed that April 2027 meeting would be held at Lake McConaughy (if meeting space is available) and that October 2027 meeting would be held in Central Nebraska. Moving forward, monthly April meeting will be held in Western Nebraska and October meeting will be held in Central Nebraska.

Annual Report Workgroup Volunteers – Workgroup for the annual report consists of only Stahr and Nelson. Paugels requested other workgroup volunteers. Bjorklund, King,

and Thorburn volunteered. Paugels will send out When2Meet poll to have first workgroup meeting sometime this month.

Conservation Nebraska Presentation – Conservation Nebraska presentation initially set for September but was moved to October 7th, 12-1pm CST, at Anderson Library (3635 Touzalin Ave, Lincoln, NE 68507). John Bowley of NDA Plant Pest Program, Stahr, and Paugels to present. Bowley to present on invasive insects, Stahr on aquatic invasive species, Paugels on the NISC and terrestrial invasive plants. Please contact Paugels if you would like something specific included in the presentation.

Nebraska Natural Resources Conference – Conference to be held in Kearney from October 27-29th. Paugels and Nelson to present on terrestrial invasive plant management on the 28th. AIS Program will also be presenting.

Co-op Annual Meeting – Annual meeting to occur on September 22nd where Paugels will provide update on NISC activities throughout the year. Please contact Paugels if you would like something specific included in the presentation regarding NISC activities.

Member/Supporter Comments/Updates

John Thorburn – Gosper County Burn Council established, no other updates.

Kali Boroughs – Fish Tissue Monitoring and Stream Biological Monitoring Program both complete for this year. 3 sampling programs still in place for this year with a lot of fieldwork through September, which will slow in October.

Natalia Bjorklund – Two-spotted cotton leaf hopper detected in Nebraska for the first time on August 31st on a tropical hibiscus at Menards. Preferred host is cotton, but will attack okra and soybeans, though it is not believed to be very problematic to soybeans. It is not believed to be able to overwinter in Nebraska.

Dennis Schroeder – Phragmites is blooming in the countryside and is significant. High likelihood of phragmites movement with highway traffic.

Justin King – No updates

Kristopher Stahr – Watercraft inspections are complete for this year, with 7.906 inspections completed, the second highest number in AIS Program history. American Hero's Park Pond/Kramer Lake in Bellevue has a confirmed zebra mussel infestation. Pond is very close to the MO River and mussels were likely introduced during a flooding event. No boating, kayaking, or swimming is permitted on the waterbody, making it low risk as a spread vector. 200 veliger samples from 56n waterbodies have been analyzed for zebra mussel EDRR efforts and have all been negative. Brittle naiad confirmed in the MO River backwaters, likely moved by waterfowl hunters. Stahr and Dowding to go to

Western Regional Panel Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force meeting in Sacramento, CA in a couple weeks.

James Thiele – No updates.

Cheryl Dunn – Graduate student working on developing a NebGuide for Old World Bluestem, which continues to expand across Western Nebraska. Developing a potential display for Omaha's Luminarium about day and night in the prairie. Will update when more information is available and may be able to include invasive species information in display.

Travis Connot – Helped Scott Erthum write grant and letter of support for spraying noxious weeds in counties in Midway. Range judging took place in Valentine recently and state will occur next week where noxious weed identification and control has been a major topic of discussion.

Justin Krahulik – USGS will have booth present at World O Water this weekend in Omaha.

Ritch Nelson – No updates, business as usual.

Josh Nelson – NWCA weed management areas are working on river management projects. Lower Platte management area will be doing herbicide applications along the Platte and its tributaries in October. NDA is stressed for inspection staff currently after the passing of an inspector. Sarpy County will be at World O Water this weekend.

Steven Jara – Forest Fest event in Plattsmouth today. NFS staff still receiving sick tree calls. Some seed fires still occurring out West. Will be reviewing applications for State Forester next week.

Kimberly Stuhr – No updates.

Jonathan Spurgeon – No updates.

Next Meeting Date – Friday, October 9th, 10AM to 12PM CST

Paugels asked if Council would be interested in touring Pearson's Pumpkin Place during November meeting and receiving a tour regarding invasive species management on the property. Council agreed, Paugels will confirm with Pearson staff.

Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting

1. Council members will receive a survey from Paugels to assess education/information gaps. Survey will be sent out ASAP and members should complete it prior to October meeting.

2. Annual report workgroup will meet before October meeting.

3. Council will continue to revisit ways to increase and enhance education and policymaker interaction efforts.

Adjourn – Stahr adjourned meeting at 10:55AM CST