

NEBRASKA



INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2025

Nebraska Department of Transportation

1500 Nebraska Parkway, Lincoln, NE 68502

Online Meeting Link: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/92930360734>

Meeting ID: 929 3036 0734

Voting Members Present:

Steven Jara
Trevor Johnson
Justin King
Josh Nelson
Jon Nikkila
Dennis Schroeder
Kris Stahr
Kim Stuhr
John Thorburn
Kim Todd
Jon Spurgeon

Voting Members Absent:

N/A

Non-Voting Members Present:

Travis Connot
David Nielsen

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Chris Helzer
Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Advisory Support Members Present:

Natalia Bjorklund
Carson Jones
Mitch Renteria
Gary Stone
James Thiele
T.J. Walker

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Jeremy Gehle
Lorri Grueber
Kassie Karssen
Bret Schomer

Guests Present:

Keith Koupal
Blayne Renner
Rob Schultz

1. Call to order – Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:02 am CST.
2. Review and approval of [December 13, 2024, Meeting Minutes](#) – Schroeder moved to approve the minutes, Johnson seconded, motion carried.
3. Council member/supporter updates/public comment:

Todd – Working on content updates for Backyard Farmer website. Still interested in working with Council to create social media content on invasive species-related topics. Please reach out to her if you have any ideas or would like to assist in creating content.

Meyer – Lancaster County Weed Control Authority is hearing seasonal weed technicians for \$20.52/hour. Positions will run Mid-May through the end of August.

Stone – University of Wyoming released a [new report](#) in December 2024 on the economic impacts of 10 invasive weeds in Wyoming. Several weeds listed in the report currently affect Nebraska as well, so information would be relevant for Council to review.

Nikkila – Elected as the mayor of Kearney by the city council in December 2024.

King – Talked to a landowner in Beatrice who may be interested in joining the Council to fill the vacant agricultural landowner public interest member at-large position and may attend the February meeting. Smith will reach out to them to provide more information about the Council and the February meeting information. King also recommended reaching out to Mercy Manzanares, Program Coordinator for the Monarch Joint Venture, to speak at an upcoming Council meeting about how invasive species are affecting pollinators. Jones seconded this idea and reached out to Mercy on behalf of the Council to schedule a presentation.

Schultz – Preparing for the Nebraska Weed Control Association’s upcoming Annual Conference in February in Kearney.

Walker – Continuing current eastern redcedar removal work throughout the state.

Jara – Nebraska Forest Service is currently hiring two conservation foresters and two assistant community foresters. Positions are located in York, Scottsbluff, and Lincoln.

Connot – Will be attending Grasslands Vision meeting along with Walker. Working on preparing a natural resources training event through NPS in March.

Nelson – Currently finishing up year-end reports on weed control for Sarpy Control. Meeting with local senators to address weed control and funding-related issues.

Nielsen – Released 13,000 Parasitoid wasps over the summer for emerald ash borer biocontrol. Attempted recovery of insects at Zorinsky Lake and Cotton Lake after the summer with no insects found. USDA APHIS will be opening a position for a plant health trade compliance specialist in 2025.

Bjorklund – Completed year-end reports for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture with no pests found that weren’t anticipated.

Stahr – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listing a few injurious aquatic species that will be banned for importation to include Asian pond mussel, golden mussel, marble crayfish, and carriers of fungus to protect native salamanders. The Nebraska Game and Parks Aquatic Invasive Species program will hire 12 temporary watercraft

inspectors for the summer season with three of those positions already filled. Positions will pay \$17.50/hour with the option of 3-month or 7-month. Will begin herbicide treatment in February at one lake per fisheries district. Attending the Midwest Aquatic Plant Society Conference in Chicago. Attending Missouri River Basin Aquatic Invasive Species panel meeting as the Nebraska representative.

Johnson – Collaborating with the Nebraska Weed Control Association to develop educational materials for invasive grasses in Nebraska.

Thorburn – Nebraska Natural Resources District tree sales have begun, including for eastern redcedars. Preparing to perform a 15,000-acre prescribed burn this spring in Gothenburg through collaboration with private landowners.

Smith – Attending 2nd annual Invasive Species Ambassador Training at Lake Guntersville State Park in Alabama in February. The course will host more than 25 speakers dedicated to addressing key topics on how to engage, implement, manage, measure, and sustain multiple facets of invasive species program practices. Contacted by a landowner in Hickman with 80 acres who is dealing with fence damage caused by uncontrolled honey locust trees and is looking for resources and/or assistance on how to address the issue with her neighbor. Council members concluded that it is a dispute over boundary and fencing, and since honey locusts are not a state-designed noxious species, the neighboring landowner is not required to remove or control them. Council members suggested that the landowner contact the Nebraska Farm Bureau for assistance with the issue.

4. [Nebraska Invasive Species Awareness Week Proclamation](#) – Council members provided feedback to Paugels on the proclamation, which she will now submit to the Governor’s Office. Stahr encouraged council members to attend the proclamation ceremony once it is approved and a date is set.
5. UNL Representative Candidates for Council – Smith is still seeking a new voting member to represent the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since Dr. Allen resigned from the Council in Fall 2024. Johnson recommended reaching out to Dr. Hector Santiago, the Assistant Dean/Director with the Agricultural Research Division as a potential candidate to fill the position. Smith will reach out to Dr. Santiago and continue researching possible UNL staff/faculty that could potentially fill the position.

6. Legislative Advisor Role Fulfillment – Smith, Todd, Thorburn, and Meyer received an email from Helzer in December on the idea of putting together an educational event for new senators on invasive species issues and management to fulfill our role as advisors to the Legislature. Smith met with Katie Torpy from the Nature Conservancy to discuss an introduction to Senator Teresa Ibach where we can discuss the idea of organizing an educational, bipartisan event to provide general information about invasive species issues and main species of concern in Nebraska. We would not push funding or any type of agenda, it would simply be an opportunity to educate new senators on potential issues. Smith asked for feedback from the Council on what type of event would be beneficial to host. Members suggested a carp fry and/or a lunch and learn. Schroeder suggested that we may want to tag on to an event that another organization is hosting. Senator Tom Brant would also be a valuable contact since he is engaged in environmental issues. Thorburn recommended that we stay away from individual bills and focus on general education topics. Thorburn invited Smith to attend a legislative dinner that is being hosted by the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts on January 28th in downtown Lincoln to meet some senators and introduce the Council.
7. Council Education Opportunities – Smith received a request from Bob Henrickson for the Council to appear on KZUM 89.3 FM’s show “How’s It Growin’” in 2025. Council members agreed that it would be valuable for the Council to appear on the show to share information about the Council and about invasive plants in Nebraska. Stahr recommended doing a water garden segment on what aquatic invasive plants would be bad to use and what some valuable native alternatives would be. The Council also mentioned other specific events in Lincoln where we could have information available, such as the deer and game expo, the RV and travel show, and the garden show. Connot suggested that if we decide to do some reels for Backyard Farmer, putting together a reel for each species would be valuable. Nelson also suggested looking into producing some articles for *Nebraskaland* magazine. However, Stahr mentioned there may be a backlog of articles, so he will determine a contact to reach out to at the magazine to inquire if there is availability for us to publish something with them.
8. Interagency Response Chart Workgroup – Smith requested volunteers on the Council to serve in this workgroup to begin working on the interagency response chart for invasive species-related issues. The workgroup will meet virtually/in-person at a frequency determined by the workgroup members. Duties on the workgroup will include researching federal/state laws related to invasive species management, contacting federal/state organizations to determine individual

contacts for specific invasive species-related information. Volunteers for the workgroup are currently Stahr, Bjorklund, Nielsen, and Renteria.

9. Website Content Update Workgroup – Smith informed Council that the official website transitioned to the new Next-Gen CMS page as required by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Smith requested volunteers to determine content for the updated NISC website based on the Council’s goals and objectives for a public audience. The workgroup will meet virtually/in-person at a frequency determined by the workgroup members. Duties will include determining relevant content/information to go on updated website related to NISC goals and objectives to educate public on invasive species awareness and related issues. Volunteers for the workgroup are currently Nelson, Paugels, and Jara, with Todd assisting on the updated invasive species list. Todd also suggested reaching out to Brock Lohr for website assistance.
10. Next meeting date – Friday, February 14, 2025, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm CST – USDA APHIS, 5940 S 58th St, Lincoln, NE 68516.
11. Goals/objectives for next meeting:
 - a. Guest presentation – Mercy Manzanares, Program Coordinator, Monarch Joint Venture
 - b. Council member vacancies updates
 - c. [New website feedback](#) - look it over before next meeting, provide any section/information suggestions
12. Adjourn – Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:05 am CST, Stahr seconded, motion carried.