



Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2025

In-Person: Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, 44450 Elm Island Rd,
Gibbon, NE 68840

Online: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/96234627986> | **Meeting ID:** 962 3462 7986

Voting Members Present:

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

Voting Members Absent:

Jon Spurgeon
Kris Stahr
Kim Stuhr

Non-Voting Members Present:

Travis Connot
Chris Helzer
Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Dave Nielsen

Advisory Support Members Present:

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Natalia Bjorklund
Jeremy Gehle
Carson Jones
Bret Schomer
Gary Stone
James Thiele

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Lorri Grueber
Kassie Karssen
Mitch Renteria
T.J. Walker

Guests Present:

Ruby Collins
Sam Cowan
Keith Koupal
Dustin Loy
Brent Meyer
Blayne Renner
Rob Schultz
Paul Moyer

1. Call to order – Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM CST.
2. Review and approval of [February 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – Thorburn moved to approve the minutes, Nelson seconded, motion carried.
3. [NISC Mission Statement Rough Draft Results](#) – Smith requested that members and supporters review the mission statement rough draft key words and results and select up to three mission statements using [this poll](#) by **Friday, April 4, 2025 (extended to Wednesday, April 9, 2025)**.

Meyer provided the original NISC mission statement: “The Nebraska Invasive Species Project is dedicated to providing information about research and management efforts going on throughout the State of Nebraska”, which was added to the poll. Members and supporters can vote if they would like to keep this

statement or select a new one.

4. NE-ISAW 2025 – Smith called for members and supporters to participate in webinars during NE-ISAW from May 27-30, 2025. Thorburn asked about topic requests, Helzer asked who the audience is. Target audience is the public, specifically Nebraskans who will begin doing outdoor activities, such as hiking and boating, to raise awareness about “[Clean, Drain, Dry](#)” and “[Play, Clean, Go](#)” practices. Interested in organizing a webinar with the [Pet Advocacy Network](#) on the “[Don’t Let It Loose](#)” campaign, which urges the public not to release pets or other nonnative/exotic animals into the wild. Helzer suggested a presentation on the differences between weeds and invasive plants and specific plants to watch out for in the state. For members and supporters interested in presenting a webinar during NE-ISAW 2025, please email Smith. Webinars can be short, simple, approximately 20 minutes-1 hour, with time for questions included.

NE-ISAW 2025 will conclude with an in-person event on Saturday, May 31, 2025, tentatively from 10 am – 2 pm CST, at Pawnee State Recreation Area. Event will be hosted in conjunction with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Activities will include a short hike led by Smith to map and identify invasive plant species using the Wild Spotter app, kayaking to show how to identify aquatic invasive species, invasive aquatic vegetation surveying, and other invasive species-themed games focused on identification and prevention. Helzer and Meyer mentioned being able to possibly provide plant specimens for the hike; teasel, phragmites, and sericea lespedeza should be readily available by the time of event. Meyer also mentioned the NWCA has an invasive plant-themed bean bag toss game that we could borrow for the event. Johnson plans to attend on behalf of NDA, Nelson tentatively plans to attend on behalf of NWCA.

5. Upcoming Meeting Presentation Opportunities – USDA APHIS Field Epidemiologist Kevin O’Neill, DVM, is available to present at an upcoming NISC meeting on H5N1 effects on domestic livestock, poultry, other animals. CBP Agricultural Specialist Matthew Swedell for Area Port of Minneapolis available to present on invasive species import/export trends. Smith will also reach out to Amy Morey from UMN Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center to present on human-mediated spread of invasive plants into MN through online sales. NWCA is interested in learning more about eBay, online sales of noxious weeds in NE.
6. [NISC Website Invasive Species List](#) - Smith requested members and supporters review the current list of invasive species to determine any updates/changes to

make for [new website](#) by **Friday, April 4, 2025 (extended to Wednesday, April 9, 2025)**.

7. Council Member/Supporter Updates:

Collins – No update; attending to learn more about Council.

Connot – New weed superintendent, Patrick Hooper, in Cherry County; looking for funding .

Helzer – TNC collaborating with other researchers to look at native deciduous shrubs and trees (sumac, dogwood, wild plum) and why they are spreading faster. They are examining the understory of these plants, looking at whether increasing atmospheric CO2 and drought are contributing factors, and whether grazing management affects their growth. UNL's Russo's lab is studying smooth sumac at Niobrara Valley Preserve, looking at its effect on understory plant and insect communities, using remote sensing to view its distribution.

Jara – NFS seeing what happens with fires; preparing for training and tree planting season.

Johnson – Hiring northeast region inspector; Moyer discovered seed mix at Menard's had ventenata, Menard's voluntarily pulled seed mixes, found to be sourced from WA. Working on final regional watchlist species to encourage more participation from weed control authorities to report invasive weeds.

King – Lots of zebra mussels found at Cooper Nuclear Station in Nemaha County.

Koupal – Seasonal aquatic species technicians hired.

Loy – Participated in [KETV news story with NGPC](#) to discuss [new online form](#) to report suspected avian influenza in wildlife.

Meyer – Attended hearing in favor of [LB145](#) – Require the Director of Agriculture to administer a grant program relating to noxious weeds and restate intent regarding appropriations for vegetation management – on January 28, 2025. Currently the bill faces no opposition; had 8 in support, 0 against. Bill is asking for \$6 million and is a priority for NACO but hasn't been prioritized by a legislative committee yet.

J. Nelson – New superintendent training NWCA in Norfolk on March 25, 2025.

Schroeder – Heard about mystery invasive seeds being shipped to other states from overseas in agricultural orders to producers, curious if Nebraska is receiving any reports of these seed shipments. Johnson said there are no current reports in the state, to report to him and USDA seed program if any are received. If any are received, double bag them and dispose of them.

Schultz – Weed superintendents performing phragmites inspections to map infestations.

Stone – Water conference at Younes Conference Center in Kearney on April 1, 2025.

Thorburn – Prescribed fire and tree planting season.

8. [Presentation](#): Invasive Riparian Vegetation Effects on Migratory Bird Roosting Habitat Along the Platte River, Cody Wagner, Conservation Program Manager, Audubon Rowe Sanctuary
9. Next meeting date – Friday, April 11, 2025, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm CST – Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 245 Fallbrook Blvd suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68521.
10. Goals/objectives for next meeting:
 - a. Choose final NISC mission statement
 - b. Review updated NISC invasive species list for website
 - c. Presentation on H151 from USDA APHIS (tentative; awaiting confirmation)
11. Adjourn – Smith adjourned the meeting at 11:54 AM CST.