



Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2025

In-Person: Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Ogallala Conference Room, 245 Fallbrook
Blvd Ste 200, Lincoln, NE 68521

Online: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/98799333478> | **Meeting ID:** 987 9933 3478

Voting Members Present:

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

Non-Voting Members Present:

Ritch Nelson
Dave Nielsen

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Travis Connot
Chris Helzer
Justin Krahulik

Advisory Support Members Present:

Natalia Bjorklund
Carson Jones
Gary Stone

James Thiele

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Jeremy Gehle
Lorri Grueber
Kassie Karssen
Mitch Renteria
Bret Schomer
T.J. Walker

Guests Present:

Derek Asche
Layne Bullock
Ruby Collins
Dustin Loy
Kevin O'Neill
Jena Paugels
Brent Meyer
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM CST.
2. Review and approval of [March 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – Stahr moved to approve the minutes, Thorburn seconded, motion carried.
3. [NISC Mission Statement Selection Results](#) – Smith requested members conduct a final vote on the new NISC mission statement. Mission statement options were:

Option #1: Coordinating statewide efforts to detect, manage, and minimize the impacts of invasive species on Nebraska's environment and economy

Option #2: Collaboratively working to protect Nebraska from invasive species threats

Option #3: Collaboratively protecting Nebraska from invasive species threats and sharing up-to-date information with policy makers and the public.

Option #4: Protecting the legacy of Nebraska's landscapes through cooperative action.

Option #5: Protecting Nebraska's environment and economy through coordinated efforts to detect, manage, and minimize invasive species.

After final vote, members selected Option #1 as the new mission statement with 7 total votes. Option #2 received 4 votes, Option #4 received 1 vote, and Option #5 received 2 votes. Smith added the new mission statement to the [NISC website](#).

4. NE-ISAW 2025 – Paugels submitted [final proclamation](#) to Governor’s Office, signing will be **May 13, 2025, 9 am CST**, at State Capitol Building in Lincoln; more details to follow with an official calendar invite. Paugels requested Johnson attend as NDA representative. Johnson forwarded invitation to NDA to request approval to attend.

NE-ISAW will take place May 26-31, 2025. No event on May 26 because it is Memorial Day. May 27-30 will feature 1 webinar a day from 1 PM to 2 PM CST focused on invasive species prevention. Presentations are 5/27: Chris Helzer, TNC, 5/28: Jena Paugels, NGPC AIS, 5/29: Sara Ricklefs, ISAN/Don’t Let It Loose, and 5/30: Kris Stahr, NGPC AIS.

May 31, 2025, 10 am – 1 pm: In-person education/outreach event open to public at Pawnee State Recreation Area co-hosted by NGPC Education Team. Please promote [Facebook Event Page](#) and [NGPC Outdoor Calendar](#). Event is also on [NISC’s official calendar](#). Other members, organizations who want to assist/participate in event, please email Smith and Paugels.

5. [NISC Website Updates](#) - Smith requested members make species updates/corrections to [NE invasive species list](#) for website. [4 categories](#) created by NGPC for AIS, nothing exists for terrestrial invasives in NE. How do we tackle this issue? Consider [National ISC Guidance](#) and [USFWS Ecological Risk Screening Summaries](#). Stahr noted that we may want to do designation unofficially through Council since official designation requires all new species added/removed from categories be approved. Johnson recommended using [assessment tool](#) similar to what Washington Invasive Species Council uses, and that each terrestrial species group (animal, disease/pathogen, insect, plant) will need separate workgroup. Smith will establish terrestrial invasive plant categories workgroup with Helzer, Johnson, J. Nelson, Todd, Jara, Meyer, and R. Nelson to start.

6. Council Member/Supporter Updates:

Jara - Fire season; 80,000 acres burned in NE so far this year.

Johnson – Northeast region inspector to start April 21st. Efforts focused on seed program will shift to noxious weed program soon.

King - No updates.

J. Nelson - NWCA Spring Training occurred March 26-27, new superintendent training March 25 in Norfolk. Statewide WMA meeting on April 22 in Kearney. Smith, Meyer, and Johnson will also attend.

Nikkila - No updates.

Schroeder - Planted corn, big bluestem, and wildflowers. Soil temperatures are currently around 50 degrees Fahrenheit, a bit early for the season.

Spurgeon – No updates.

Stahr – Hired 10 AIS technicians across state, final position to be filled next week; applying early season herbicide for curly leaf pondweed at 4 lakes across NE; low dosage for up to 13 weeks; treatments working to manage weed; cost is around \$28,000. Plan to treat for 5 years in a row, will dredge for sediment samples to see if seedbank density is decreasing after treatments.

Stuhr - interviewed Superintendent Susan Cook from Niobrara Visitor Center & Headquarters Office in Valentine; interested to know more about funding available for biocontrol use; Middle Niobrara Weed Awareness Group received a grant in conjunction with NPS for biocontrol from NET.

Thorburn - Prescribed burn in Gosper County occurred last Sunday, went well. 55 volunteers assisted from local area along with Pheasants Forever wildlife biologist. Arbor Day will be 4/27; lots of tree planting events occurring across state.

Todd – New season of BYF [premiered 4/10](#); Members with suggestions for short segments to appear on BYF, social media, please contact Todd.

R. Nelson - NRCS working on conservation plans throughout state; IRA funds for invasive species on pause; prescribed burn season.

Nielsen – Last meeting on the Council; last day with USDA is 4/30. EAB biocontrol in Black Elk Park, Branched Oak Lake; request for leafy spurge biocontrol from weed superintendent Erthum for Brown County, Santee Sioux reservation in Knox County; no seasonals this year, will reduce program. State Plant Health Director retiring

soon.

Bjorklund - New inspector starting 21st; still waiting on federal survey funding.

Jones - No updates.

Stone - No updates.

Thiele - No updates.

Collins - No updates.

Loy - Helping state, federal partners with HPAI response.

Meyer - Lancaster County still looking to fill seasonal weed inspector positions. LB 145 will probably not receive funding this year, did not come out of committee.

Agricultural Committee member Rick Leonard wants to do interim study on weed management area work, where funding is coming from. NWCA needs sustainable funding source; grants are not a reliable source of funding.

Renner - No updates.

7. Presentation: [Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Update](#) – Kevin O'Neill, DVM, MS, Field Epidemiologist, USDA APHIS
8. Next meeting date – Friday, May 9, 2025, from 10 am to 12 pm CST, Nebraska Department of Transportation, 1500 Nebraska Pkwy, Lincoln, NE 68502
9. Goals/objectives for next meeting:
 - a. Establish NISC Annual Report Workgroup
10. Adjourn – Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:50 AM CST.