



Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

May 09, 2025

In-Person: Nebraska Department of Transportation Headquarters, 1500 Nebraska Pkwy,
Lincoln, NE 68502

Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 280 194 792 831 7 | **Passcode:** 6H9Lg6o4

Voting Members Present:

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

Voting Members Absent:

Justin King
Jon Nikkila
Kim Stuhr

Non-Voting Members Present:

Ritch Nelson

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Travis Connot
Chris Helzer
Justin Krahulik

Advisory Support Members Present:

Jeremy Gehle

Bret Schomer
Carson Jones
James Thiele

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Natalia Bjorklund
Lorri Grueber
Kassie Karssen
Mitch Renteria
Gary Stone
T.J. Walker

Guests Present:

Scott Erthum
Brent Meyer
Amy Morey
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM CST.
2. Review and approval of [April 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – Stahr moved to approve the minutes, J. Nelson seconded, motion carried.

NE-ISAW 2025 – [Proclamation](#) signing ceremony on May 13 at 9 am CST in Warner Chamber at the State Capitol. Details about the ceremony, directions to the Warner Chamber, and parking information can be found [here](#). Smith will provide a brief opening statement before Governor Pillen signs the proclamation. Other NISC members/supporters who will attend the ceremony are Paugels, King, Johnson, and J. Nelson.

NISC Information Table – Following the ceremony, Smith will host NISC information table in the rotunda from 10 am – 1 pm CST. Smith created a [one-page document](#) about invasive species in Nebraska to distribute. She will also provide NISC stickers and have the zebra mussel shoe on display. J. Nelson and Johnson will also table with Smith.

NE-ISAW Webinars – Webinars will take place from 1 PM – 2 PM CST May 27-30. Schedule is available online via Facebook and NGPC Outdoor Calendar and is as follows:

5/27: [Invasive Plants Are Bad, Weedy Plants Are Just Misunderstood](#) with Chris Helzer, TNC

5/28: [Mussel Madness: Zebra Mussel Invasion in Nebraska](#) with Jena Paugels, NGPC AIS

5/29: [Don't Let it Loose and the Pet Release Pathway](#) with Sara Rickfels, ISAN

5/30: [Weeds, Weeds, Weeds: Nebraska's Invasive Aquatic Plants](#) with Kris Stahr, NGPC AIS

[Know Your Nebraska Invasives Day](#) – In-person education/outreach event co-hosted with NGPC on May 31 from 10 am – 1 pm CST at Pawnee State Recreation Area. NISC members/supporters attending are [INSERT NAMES].

Thorburn requested that once created, press releases regarding NE-ISAW are distributed to councilmembers so they can be forwarded through their organizations. Smith and Paugels will each complete press releases after the proclamation signing ceremony to UNL IANR Media and NGPC Media.

3. [SWAP Invasive Species Section Feedback](#) – Please review and provide feedback to Smith by Friday, May 23. Smith will forward all comments/corrections to Olivia DeRugna of NE Natural Legacy Project.

Stahr mentioned that SWAP is updated every 10 years and the document is important to secure future funding. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (S. 1149), or RAWA, would be the most significant investment in wildlife conservation in decades providing \$1.397 billion to fund local and state efforts to help recover endangered species and to prevent at-risk wildlife from becoming endangered. Senators have been trying to pass RAWA for the past five years. On March 30, 2023, U.S. senators reintroduced the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. If passed into law, the act would be the largest investment in U.S. wildlife conservation in decades. RAWA would provide money to states to keep common species common. NGPC could be awarded several million dollars.

4. Summer Workgroups 2025 – Smith is soliciting 4-5 NISC members to participate in workgroups over the summer during meeting hiatus from June to July. Workgroups will meet 2-3 times online and are as follows:

2025 Annual Report: Workgroup will plan out the goals, objectives, and format for the 2025 NISC Annual Report due in December 2025. Workgroup members are

Stahr, Johnson, Jones, and Todd.

Terrestrial Invasive Species Workgroup: Workgroup(s) will determine categories that are applicable to terrestrial invasive species to create prioritization categories that each invasive species can fit into. NGPC already has categories for AIS, but nothing exists in NE for terrestrials.

Plants workgroup members are Johnson, Helzer, J. Nelson, Meyer, R. Nelson, Todd, and Jara.

5. Member/Supporter Updates/Comments:

Jara – Arbor Day planting occurred at state capitol with Gov. Pillen in attendance. There were also East Campus and City Campus tree plantings. Sycamore tree on City Campus was filled with concrete, a common practice in the early 1900s. NFS staff in field, preparing for fire-related work, burn ban in NE continuing.

Todd – Planning 1 segment/reel for NE-ISA, distributed to BYF social media outlets. BYF hosts 24,000 audience members/week airs live on Thursday. Would need to Tape/air segment for NE-ISA the week before NE-ISA dates. BYF will be remote in Valentine, NE, filming at various locations. Connect Connot with Todd for possibly of filming segments together at Niobrara NSR. Stahr will be up in Valentine during filming dates and will connect with Kim as well.

Spurgeon – No updates.

Meyer – No updates.

Schroeder – Reach out to Bryce Duska at Market Journal with NE-ISA press release, TV program at 7 am Saturdays, good opportunity to put out to agricultural audience. Currently planting wildflowers.

Erthum – Preparing to start biocontrol season. Working with NPS along Niobrara NSR after receiving NET grant funds for sandhills region. Looking at Canada thistle growth following fire that occurred in Johnstown.

Morey – From UMN, presenting about research at August NISC meeting.

Ritch – No updates.

Gehle – Dry, drought conditions. Grand Island – 100 CFS in River. USFWS conducting germination suppression release to suppress sandbar vegetation growth. NDEE merging with NDNR by July 1. Jesse Bradley will serve as director of combined agency. Chief water officer will inherit NDNR duties.

Renner – No updates.

Thiele – No updates.

J. Nelson – NRD tree distribution; farmers planting, noxious weeds appearing. Leafy spurge having great year in eastern part of state. Schramm park burn follow-up, seeing what happened with sericea lespedeza.

Johnson – Watching budget, due next week. The Appropriations committee put half of the riparian budget back. If passes as it is, NDA will put out grant applications quickly. Currently at \$353,000/year.

Stahr – Watercraft inspection season rolling out. Temporaries are starting now. Hitting AIS weeds hard. Early season curlyleaf treatments, last lake done in Valentine, successful so far. Watching budget, hoping to get money for herbicide next year. Using the budget last year to do AIS sampling, hybrid milfoil now in Box Butte, Fort Robinson, and Chapel. Conducted genetic samples of Eurasian watermilfoil at MT State. Once positives come back, NGPC evaluates treatment plan. Goal is to do hybrid treatment in Hershey, North Platte, Fort Robinson. Procured 10 gallons of ProcellaCOR for treatment. Take 20 individual plant samples from each lake. The Bureau of Reclamation got extra \$2 million for zebra mussel management. Submitted grant yesterday to Bureau of Reclamation to buy an education trailer for AIS education supplies/outreach and zebra mussel prevention funding.

Jones – construction season rolling, seed mixes coming in.

Thorburn – planting season. Tree planting in NRDs. Water Jamboree in late April, over 400 5th and 6th graders.

Schomer – Internal funding support for burning at Missouri river recovery program sites.

6. Next Meeting Date – Friday, August 8, 2025, from 10 am – 12 pm CST, NDA
 - a. 9/12 – Offutt air force base AIS tour, Bellevue
7. Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting:
 - a. Annual Report 2025 – progress survey, report structure
 - b. Terrestrial plant categories - feedback
8. Presentation: [Agricultural Specialist 101](#) and [Agricultural Awareness for Stakeholders](#) – Matthew Swedell, Supervisory Agriculture Specialist, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Field Operations, Area Port of Minneapolis
9. Adjourn – Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11: 59am CST.