



Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

August 08, 2025

In-Person: Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 245 Fallbrook Blvd, Suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68521

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/96856969847> | **Meeting ID:** 968 5696 9847

Voting Members Present:

Jonathan Nikkila
Trevor Johnson (Chairperson)
Justin King (Vice Chairperson)
Dennis Schroeder
Steven Jara
Josh Nelson
Kristopher Stahr
John Thorburn
Jonathan Spurgeon

Voting Members Absent:

Kimberly Stuhr
Kim Todd

Non-Voting Members Present:

Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Travis Connot
Chris Helzer

Advisory Support Members Present:

Jeremy Gehle
Carson Jones
Jena Paugels

Gary Stone
James Thiele
T.J. Walker

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Natalia Bjorklund
Lorri Grueber
Kassie Karssen
Mitch Renteria
Bret Schomer

Guests Present:

Buffalo Bruce
Amy Morey
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:01 am CST.
2. Review and approval of [May 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – John Thorburn moved to approve the minutes, Kris Stahr seconded, motion carried.
3. [2025 Annual Report Survey](#) – The 2025 Annual Report Survey is now available through October 24 for councilmembers to complete. Members can also submit photos to be used in the annual report in the [Photo Submission Folder](#).
4. [Updated Nebraska Terrestrial Invasive Plants List](#) and [List Disclaimer](#) – The Terrestrial Invasive Plants Workgroup updated the current list of terrestrial invasive plants, along with the categories. There is a second sheet for problematic native plants. Chris Helzer wrote up a disclaimer to go before the list stating that the list is not official for the state of Nebraska and the criteria that was used to determine which species are on the list. Please review both the list and disclaimer to provide any feedback by September 10, 2025. Once the list and disclaimer are approved by the Council, the list will go to several other individuals outside the Council that can provide expertise on terrestrial invasive plants in the state (Cheryl Dunn, UNL; Gerry Steinauer, NGPC; Steve Rolfsmeier, Chadron State College) to review and approve.
5. Nebraska Conservation Roundtable Infographic – The Nebraska Conservation Roundtable will begin working on their one-page infographic for the Senators' Breakfast in early 2026 focused on invasive species in Nebraska. Shannon Smith

will serve on the infographic subcommittee but wanted to determine if there are other council members interested in participating on the subcommittee as well to create the infographic. Jena Paugels volunteered to serve on the subcommittee with Smith. Smith will inform Paugels when the first subcommittee meeting is scheduled. Kris Stahr mentioned that providing the cost of zebra mussel damage to infrastructure and irrigation systems in Nebraska would be valuable information to feature on the flyer since the audience is somewhat agriculture focused.

6. [NISC Website Updates](#) – The aquatic invasive species pages are complete, aside from management information needed to be updated, which Shannon Smith will finish next week. Smith will begin working on the terrestrial invasive plants pages next. Any council members with website feedback or suggestions can email Smith. Kris Stahr mentioned that aquatic invasive pathogens should not be listed on the website since they are not state-designated.
7. [Society for Range Management & Natural Legacy Project Joint Conference](#) Presentation – Cheryl Dunn (UNL) reached out to Shannon Smith to see if there is any interest in presenting on a terrestrial invasive plant-related topic for the upcoming conference. Smith wanted to see if any council members are interested in co-presenting for the conference and have any topic ideas. Smith's current idea is to present on the updated terrestrial invasive plant list, categories, and how the list was determined, but is open to other ideas and suggestions. Presentations are 20 minutes with 5 minutes for questions. Presentation abstracts are due August 22. Josh Nelson and Trevor Johnson are interested in co-presenting. Smith will contact them to begin working on the proposal.
8. Member/Supporter Updates/Comments

Jonathan Nikkila – No updates.

Trevor Johnson (Chairperson) - NDA, UNL, NWCA partnered to create an invasive range/pasture grasses in NE brochure. Grasses featured are OWB, Johnsongrass, Ventenata, Medusahead, and Cheatgrass. Brochure details how they're introduced, why they're problematic, key identification characteristics, and how to control and report them. Brochures should be printed by next week. If you would like to receive some for distribution, email Johnson. The brochure will also be available online via NDA's website. There is tentatively \$353,000 in NDA's budget for WMA grants for 2025-2026. Applications were due in June; WMAs awarded prioritized river basins that are compacted or decreed by invasive riparian vegetation. There will be \$353,000 available

for the next fiscal year as well. Assisted with the new county weed control superintendent training in Norfolk on August 5, NWCA fall training was August 6-7.

Justin King (Vice Chairperson) – Cooper Nuclear Station seeing more zebra mussels. Nebraska City OPPD plant not seeing as many zebra mussels. Interiors of power plants may be set up differently with slower water times, allowing zebra mussels to infiltrate. There may be river tributaries between Cooper and Nebraska City with more nutrients, allowing them to increase populations. NPPD is increasing monitoring and moving from 2 treatments to 3 treatments annually using molluscicide.

Dennis Schroeder – Lots of rain has contributed to a lot of vegetation change over last two weeks. Neighbors are currently dealing with phragmites, which seems to come back each year.

Steven Jara – New fire management officer started this week, fire season busy. Nebraska is currently at the level 4 preparedness for fire. 8 fires occurred around various areas throughout the state due to lightning strikes. NFS will celebrate Smokey Bear's birthday at UNL East Campus Discovery Days on August 9. They will also host Forest Fest on September 8 at the Horning State Farm Demonstration Forest.

Josh Nelson – Attended the NWCA fall training in Norfolk this week. WMA projects are getting started, NRDs for Lower Platte WMA funding helicopter surveys, has landowner cost share to extend project funds. Legislative Review 168 from Ibach, NDA has portion to work with, meeting in October to discuss the importance of the bill for riparian vegetation management, how much funding needed, task force assisting. Working with Offutt AFB Lake to treat phragmites. Noxious Weed Awareness Month occurred in June with NDA, NWCA.

Kristopher Stahr – Zebra mussels go through boom-and-bust phase (at Offutt just boom). 11 watercraft inspectors across state, now at 10, roughly 6,000 watercraft inspections this year. No new zebra mussel detections in a Nebraska waterbody. Colorado has a \$3 mil budget dealing with new zebra mussel detections in the Colorado River and other waterbodies in the state. Received funding for herbicide on aquatic plants, treated 4 lakes in spring, experimental treatment on curly leaf pondweed that worked well. Confirmed hybrid watermilfoil in Box Butte, North Platte, and Fort Robinson ponds, used ProcettaCOR, now only two lakes left without treatment are Box Butte and Chapel Lake. NGPC also tests the watermilfoil found in the lakes to determine where they originated from; determined that Fort Robinson ponds' watermilfoil originated there and were probably moved by kayaks. Applied to Bureau of

Reclamation for grant to get more funds to treat lakes with herbicides. Treating Cottonwood Lake, Rock Creek Lake for regular invasive watermilfoil. \$100,000 in chemicals ordered for continued treatment. Golden mussels moving through California, easier to spread than zebra mussels. Will be speaking with NGPC about protection against golden mussels next week. Ritch Nelson asked about whether “permits” were a discussion item for Aquatic Invasives in regard to non-motorized kayaks, canoes, etc. in Nebraska – either in the past when legislation was being proposed OR into the future as a consideration. Nelson noted he had to get a permit for his kayak to enter Wyoming and use it – and it is a reminder to users that this can be an issue, etc.

John Thorburn – Meeting with NDWEE for Platte-Republican River Diversion project to ensure that it addresses invasive carp movement. An engineering solution is needed, whether it is a containment pond or a fish grinder pipe, which would eliminate any fish species that attempts to move from the Republican to the Platte and vice-versa. Will be getting a burn association going in Gosper County due to significant interest from landowners in the area.

Jonathan Spurgeon – Silver carp movement on Platte River basin project from the Missouri River to the Central Platte, in year 1 of the project. Project is still early in its data collection and analysis, but they have noticed movement from Salt Creek towards the Loup River.

Justin Krahulik – Central Plains Water Science Center stakeholder meeting on August 18, all are welcome to attend.

Ritch Nelson - NRCS are on the cusp of working with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and their partners to launch their RCPP-funded effort to help address Eastern redcedar invasion throughout a wide swath of the state from southwest to northeast and including the Sandhills. This ties in with comments T.J. Walker made about ERC control efforts and they are partners on the RCPP project as well as NDWEE, USFWS Partners for Wildlife, Pheasants Forever and a few others. This is just shy of 19 million “on-the-ground” dollars along with some funding for staff time. The project lifespan is a 5 year period.

Jeremy Gehle – Now NDWEE, water administration group absorbed surface water monitoring group. Jesse Bradley new director, Matt Manning is conservation management director.

Carson Jones – UNL proposing research to do drone surveys on road ROWs, wetland sites, NDOT wants to be able to identify noxious weeds through that, proposal to be submitted to NDOT.

Jena Paugels – More education, outreach for AIS. 1-2 events/week. AIS Trivia Night on September 10 at Code Beer Brewing in Lincoln. Nebraska Invasive Species Awareness Week (NE-ISAW) was held May 26-30 and featured a different webinar each day on invasive species issues. Webinars covered weeds vs. invasive terrestrial plants, zebra mussels, the pet release pathway, and aquatic weeds. All webinars are available to watch on the [Nebraska Game & Parks Education YouTube Channel](#). NE-ISAW concluded with Know Your Nebraska Invasives Day at Pawnee State Rec Area, 75-100 participants. Partner organizations want to come back in future. Continued to do crayfish and aquatic vegetation surveys throughout the state this summer. Also examined zebra mussel veliger samples and found only 1 of 100 samples of concern, fortunately with no positive zebra mussel identification. Awarded a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to buy an AIS education trailer.

Gary Stone – Held annual ENVU cheatgrass meeting with Rejuvra on July 1. Wildcat Hills areas are being sprayed, one in burn area. Used 5 oz Rejuvra mixed with 5 oz Plateau. Photos of the test strips can be viewed [here](#). Nebraska Extension and Northeast Community College will host the 3rd Nebraska Agriculture & Spray Drone Conference on August 21–22 in Norfolk. The event will address the evolving regulatory environment, including FAA Part 107 certification, Nebraska pesticide applicator licensing (Category 12), and compliance with FAA Part 137 and aerial pesticide laws.

James Thiele – Treating phragmites on OPPD sites, one sighting of leafy spurge.

T.J. Walker – Continuing eastern redcedar control in grasslands, increasing efforts in oak woodlands. Project at Merritt Reservoir for \$700,000 NET grant with additional \$700,000 from NGPC. Will start soon, callout for bids out now. Considering NET cool season grass control grant, in legacy plan from beginning to target for grassland conservation, starting in the Panhandle and SW corner of state for cheatgrass. RVMTF met in Ogallala to discuss need for funding, work to be done, and intent is to educate and show value of the NDA grant funds for riparian vegetation management. The goal is to show that NDA money is used to multiply funding across the state. There will be a hearing in October with an informal meeting with legislative committee point-of-contact Rick Leonard.

Blayne Renner – No updates.

9. Next Meeting Date – Friday, September 12, 2025, 10 am – 12 pm CST, Offutt Air Force Base Lake Aquatic Invasive Species Tour in Bellevue.
10. Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting:
 - Feedback complete for terrestrial invasive plant species list
11. Presentation – “Human-Mediated Spread of Invasive Plants into Minnesota Through Online Sales”, Dr. Amy Morey, UMN Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center
12. Adjourn – Johnson adjourned the meeting at 12:12 pm CST.