



## Nebraska Invasive Species Council

### Meeting Minutes

**September 12, 2025**

**In-Person:** Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, 724 S 12th St, Omaha, NE 68102

**Zoom Meeting Link:** <https://unl.zoom.us/j/94027978807> | **Meeting ID:** 940 2797 8807

#### **Voting Members Present:**

Trevor Johnson (Chairperson)

Steven Jara

Justin King (Vice Chairperson)

Dennis Schroeder

Josh Nelson

Jonathan Nikkila

John Thorburn

Jonathan Spurgeon

Kim Todd

#### **Voting Members Absent:**

Kristopher Stahr

Kimberly Stuhr

#### **Non-Voting Members Present:**

Derek Asche

Justin Krahulik

Ritch Nelson

Travis Connot

#### **Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Chris Helzer

#### **Advisory Support Members Present:**

Natalia Bjorklund

Carson Jones

Jena Paugels  
Gary Stone  
T.J. Walker

**Advisory Support Members Absent:**

Jeremy Gehle  
Lorri Grueber  
Kassie Karssen  
Mitch Renteria  
Bret Schomer  
James Thiele

**Guests Present:**

Scott Erthum  
Keith Koupal  
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – King called the meeting to order at 10:07 am CST.
2. Review and approval of [August 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – John Thorburn moved to approve the minutes, Josh Nelson seconded, motion carried.
3. [2025 Annual Report Survey](#) – The 2025 Annual Report Survey is now available through October 24 for members to complete. Members can also submit photos to be used in the annual report in the [Photo Submission Folder](#). Thank you to those members who have already submitted the survey. Smith reminded council members that these numbers are not only used by the Council for the Annual Report, but they are also used by other organizations as well. For example, the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project used last year's numbers to update their 10-year plan this year.
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. Smith updated the language in the disclaimer to reflect some changes that Dennis Schroeder recommended. Smith noticed that the [Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's Invasive Plants List](#), created in 2011 and still

accessible online, includes 28 additional plants that are not on the updated plant list and asked members on whether any of these plants should be added. Todd requested that the Council receive a follow-up email to review the list of plants as there are some on the NSA list that she would not recommend including on the updated list. The Council discussed the idea that it may be relevant to list regions where they are considered problematic for the problematic native plants. Smith will send out a follow-up email to the Council with the update list and NSA list for additional review and comments.

5. [NISC Website Updates](#) – Smith is now working on the terrestrial invasive plant pages. Any council members with website feedback or suggestions can email Smith. Josh Nelson recommended an “invasive species of the month” to highlight on the homepage each month. Smith will work on adding this section to the homepage and send out an email to councilmembers to request any specific species they would like to highlight for the month of October.
6. Upcoming Events – Smith is attending a Tree-Of-Heaven removal event at Rudge Memorial Park on Saturday, September 13, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Smith and Nelson will present “Updating Nebraska’s Terrestrial Invasive Plant Species List: Additions and Considerations” for the [Society for Range Management & Natural Legacy Project Joint Conference](#) Presentation on Wednesday, October 8, at 2:50 pm. Smith will send out the conference registration link to councilmembers in a follow-up email. Smith and Nelson will also be appearing on KZUM 89.3 FM’s How’s It Growing on October 1 at 11:00 am to discuss invasive plant species of Nebraska, in particular: issues with honeysuckles; the difference between native and invasive thistles; updates on phragmites, sericea lespedeza, and purple loosestrife; ornamental invasives (ornamental pear, tree-of-heaven, Russian olive, common buckthorn, autumn olive, porcelain vine, oriental bittersweet, sweet autumn clematis, multiflora rose). Paugels is participating in the Missouri River Outdoor Expo at Ponca State Park on September 20-21. Thorburn is participating in the Future Problem Solvers seminar at Central Community College, Hastings Campus, on September 17 for 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students.
7. Member/Supporter Updates/Comments

Jonathan Nikkila – No updates.

Trevor Johnson (Chairperson) – Nebraska Department of Agriculture hosted an information booth at the Nebraska State Fair from August 22-September 1 and Husker Harvest Days from September 9-11. The public had lots of noxious weeds questions in

comparison to last year, where they asked more questions about turf. The invasive annual grasses brochure has been printed. To request brochure copies, please email Johnson and he will mail them to you. The PDF version of the brochure should be available online soon.

Justin King (Vice Chairperson) – Completed electrofishing instructor training at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln last week that concluded with a hands-on demonstration and training at Branched Oak Lake, where they were able to shock lots of white perch fish.

Dennis Schroeder – Corn harvest will start soon.

Steven Jara – The Nebraska Forest Service hosted Forest Fest on September 5 at Horning State Farm with over 700 attendees. NFS also participated in Husker Harvest Days. Wildfire is low in Nebraska currently.

Kim Todd – Backyard Farmer concluded its latest season on September 11. BYF has been getting great publicity on their reels and shorts posted to their social media pages. If you have any short ideas that can be featured, please email Todd. A new graduate research assistant started working at Kimmel Orchard where their work is focused at invasive species management and landscape management.

Derek Asche – 3 seasonals worked with APHIS this year, focused on conducting grasshopper surveys, which have high populations in the Panhandle and Thomas County. For biocontrol actions, APHIS released field bindweed mites released in the Omaha area and worked on emerald ash borer. Conducted Japanese beetle trapping at the Omaha Eppley Airport and received slurry to release in the area. Funding is not available to trap spongy moths and wood beetles.

Josh Nelson – Counties in Lower Platte Weed Management Area getting riparian vegetation surveying and spraying projects done. Currently working on targeting areas owned by Nebraska Game and Parks, it is now slowly moving onto county land. LPWMA does a cost share with landowners for chemical control of invasive weeds on private lands. Preparing for [Legislative Review 168](#), county superintendents are encouraged to complete a document for feedback from the NWCA to assist with this process. Sarpy and Cass Counties are surveying the Missouri River for noxious vegetation using an airboat. On his farm, he found lots of corn rust this year, which makes corn mature early, decreasing the harvest yield.

John Thorburn – Will attend the legislative hearing for LR 168 on October 30. Upcoming events include the ESE Future Problem Solvers event, Rainwater Basin Conservation Day, and his son's wedding!

Jonathan Spurgeon – No updates.

Justin Krahulik – USGS sends employee to the water leaders academy every year, highly recommends it for others interested in learning about Nebraska's water resources.

Ritch Nelson – No updates.

Carson Jones – The research proposal with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was submitted on September 11 to fly drones over wetland mitigation sites and highway right-of-ways to better identify noxious weeds utilizing imaging and AI. If any noxious weeds are found on an unknown property, please send a pin marking the location to Carson so he can help determine who owns the property.

Jena Paugels – Continued ProcellaCOR treatment on Eurasian watermilfoil in Fort Robinson State Park's ponds this summer. There have been no zebra mussel veliger introductions this year in Nebraska. Watercraft inspection season closed over Labor Day Weekend. Helped organize and present an invasive species-themed trivia through Nebraska Nature Nerd Night at Code Beer Company in Lincoln in partnership with NGPC's Outdoor Education program. Around 50 people attended, including a team from the Council. The Council's team won first place!

Travis Connot – Helped with range judging for 230 students in Thedford and will be hosting state range judging in Springview with over 500-700 high school students. Working on submitting an annual invasive species report to NPS for the Niobrara area. The Northern Chute cuts back 8-10 feet every year, so NPS is looking at when it is cutting and why. Looking at low flow or high flow years. Field season is slowing down in October.

Gary Stone – [Nebraska Water Leaders Academy applications](#) are open to apply. It is a year-long program where participants meet every other month to look at water aspects at sites across state. They are required to complete a project to graduate. Program's total cost is \$3,000. Applications are due before November 11.

T.J. Walker – Pittman Robertson Grant was approved for eastern redcedar removal. Also submitted an NET grant for cheatgrass control in the Panhandle.

Blayne Renner – No updates.

Keith Koupal – Looking at carp expansion on the Platte River.

Scott Erthum – Working on publishing the latest Weed Watch, which will be published next week. Working on the fall biocontrol program, where they are pushing to control Canada thistle rust. There will be a landowner engagement meeting in the Sandhills on October 2.

8. Next Meeting Date – Friday, October 10, 2025, 10 am – 12 pm CST – Josh Nelson confirmed with Offutt Air Force Base Lake cannot host our Council meeting because we do not have a former or active military member affiliated with the Council. Smith will look into reserving Schramm Education Center for our October meeting.
9. Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting:
  - Complete the Annual Report Survey by October 24
  - Upload photos to folder for Annual Report
  - Finalize terrestrial invasive plants list
10. Presentation and Tour – “From the Great Lakes to the Great Plains: The Visible Currents of Climate Change” with Abby Fogle-Erickson, Community Experience & Engagement Manager, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts
11. Adjourn – King adjourned the meeting at 11:01 pm CST.