



Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2025

Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 245 Fallbrook Blvd Suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68521

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/97558581601> | Meeting ID: 975 5858 1601

Voting Members Present:

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

Voting Members Absent:

Kim Stuhr
Kim Todd

Non-Voting Members Present:

Travis Connot
Chris Helzer

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson
Derek Asche

Advisory Support Members Present:

Natalia Bjorklund
Carson Jones
Jena Paugels

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Kassie Karssen
Mitch Renteria
Bret Schomer
Gary Stone
James Thiele
TJ Walker

Guests Present:

Kali Boroughs
Scott Erthum
Alicia Hardin
Tracey Latture
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – Trevor Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM CST
2. Approval of [November 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – Kris Stahr motioned to approve the meeting minutes, Trevor Johnson seconded, motion carried.
3. Agenda:
 - a. [Nebraska Conservation Roundtable Infographic Rough Draft](#): Alicia Hardin returned to discuss feedback on the second version of the infographic on invasive species to be distributed at the Senator's Breakfast. The breakfast will be hosted by the Nebraska Conservation Roundtable at Billy's Restaurant, 1301 H St, in Lincoln on February 10, 2026, from 8 am to 10 am. Shannon Smith will email the updated version of the infographic to the Council for additional comments and feedback before the end of the year. Hardin will return for the January Council meeting to go over the final version of the infographic for any final corrections to be made. Shannon Smith and Kris Stahr plan to attend breakfast. If any additional members wish to attend, please email Smith so she can inform Hardin.
 - b. [2025 Annual Report Final Draft](#): Shannon Smith went over final feedback on the Council's 2025 Annual Report with the Council. Smith submitted the report electronically to the Agricultural Committee of the Legislature on Monday, December 15. Thank you to everyone for their helpful feedback and corrections to this year's report.

Chris Helzer noted that for next year's report, it may be valuable to highlight the success Nebraska has achieved keeping feral hogs out of the state. Smith recommended that for Nebraska Invasive Species Awareness Week (NE-ISAW) 2026, we request Sam Wilson, Nebraska Game and Park Commission's Furbearer & Carnivore Program Manager, speak about the work his team has done to eradicate feral hogs here.

4. 2026 Council Priorities List: Smith put together tentative workgroups with both confirmed and proposed members for the following projects to complete next year:

Terrestrial Invasive Wildlife Species List Update Workgroup: TJ Walker, Sam Wilson, Justin King

Terrestrial Invasive Insect + Pathogens and Diseases Species Lists Update Workgroup: Natalia Bjorklund, Josh Nelson, John Bolley, Jon Nikkila, Derek Asche

Invasive Species Event Interagency Response Chart Workgroup: Kris Stahr, Trevor Johnson, TJ Walker, NDWEE Representative (Erik Prenosil, Kali Boroughs, or Jeremy Gehle), Steven Jara, Blayne Renner, Travis Connot, Marnie Roundtree

Smith will reach out to proposed workgroup members to determine if they are available/willing to join our workgroups. In January 2026, Smith will send out polls to schedule the first meeting for each workgroup based on member availability.

The Council suggested adding the workgroup meetings to the calendar page on the website and to create a section on the website called "Get Involved!" to encourage community members to work with the Council on invasive species issues. The workgroups are open to anyone who wants to join outside of the Council. Smith will work on getting this page set up with all relevant information. Smith will also add workgroup meeting dates and times to the "Events" section of the website, so it is viewable for the public to participate if interested.

5. Member/Supporter Updates/Comments:

Tracey Latture: Dealing with ongoing dispute with neighbor regarding a honey locust infestation along the fenceline of their property that can affect her

property and the creek that runs through both properties if ongoing maintenance does not occur. Unfortunately, the Council is not authorized to comment on an ongoing lawsuit, but it was recommended that Latture find a licensed attorney in Nebraska that specializes in fence law and is knowledgeable on natural resources.

Travis Connot: Completing annual reports for the National Park Service; still catching up on work to be wrapped up for 2025 as they recover from the federal government shutdown.

Dennis Schroeder: Attended the Nebraska Ag Expo from December 9-11 at the Sandhills Global Event Center in Lincoln.

Scott Erthum: Wrapping up annual reports for submission to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Natalia Bjorklund: Working through Nebraska Department of Agriculture's nursery license renewal season; conducting Christmas tree inspections and firewood inspections. A spongy moth was confirmed found in a trap for the third time in three years. The specimen was male, which does not necessarily mean there is an established population. Will continue to monitor traps to see if more are found.

Justin King: Zebra mussels are still getting into the Nebraska Public Power District's plant, so more control efforts are being implemented to keep them out.

Steven Jara: Wrapping up the reporting season for the Nebraska Forest Service. United States Forest Service restructuring efforts taking place with wildfire fighting components as the U.S. plans for a new, consolidated firefighting agency, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, to unify the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior agencies (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs) in 2026.

Carson Jones: Visited all 8 state districts with maintenance departments to get input and feedback on how they are handling noxious weed control along roadsides. He learned that many counties are blowing off mowers before crossing county lines to ensure they are not transporting noxious or invasive weeds into new counties. 2026 will be the Nebraska Department of Transportation's first year enrolled in the monarch conservation program, which will mean less mowing and more spraying to protect monarch butterflies. Smith

recommended that highlight NDOT's part in the monarch program could be featured in the Council's 2026 Annual Report.

Trevor Johnson: Assisted at the Nebraska Weed Control Association's booth at the Nebraska Ag Expo.

Jena Paugels: Created and published an [interactive map](#) of what aquatic invasive species are present in which waterbodies across the state; working on an AIS education trunk for grades K-5.

Josh Nelson: Attending the Nebraska Association of County Officials Annual Conference from December 17-19 in Kearney.

6. Next Meeting Date – Friday, January 9, from 10 am to 12 pm CST
 - a. Turpin Outdoor Education Center
7. Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting
 - a. Next steps for selected 2026 priority project
 - b. Find out who else is going to Senator's Breakfast besides Kris
 - c. Get objects for breakfast
8. Adjourn: Johnson adjourned the meeting at 10:46 am CST.