

N E B R A S K A



INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2026

Turpin Outdoor Education Center, 4703 N 44th St, Lincoln, NE 68504

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/93835039925> | Meeting ID: 938 3503 9925

Voting Members Present:

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

Voting Members Absent:

Jon Nikkila
Kim Stuhr

Non-Voting Members Present:

Derek Asche
Travis Connot

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Chris Helzer
Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Advisory Support Members Present:

Natalia Bjorklund
Carson Jones
Jena Paugels

Mitch Renteria
Bret Schomer
Gary Stone
James Thiele

Advisory Support Members Absent:

Kassie Karssen
TJ Walker

Guests Present:

Alicia Hardin
Heidi McMaster
Brent Meyer
Erik Prenosil

1. Call to order – Trevor Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM CST
2. Approval of [December 2025 Meeting Minutes](#) – Stahr motioned to approve the meeting minutes, Johnson seconded, motion carried.
3. Agenda:
4. [Nebraska Conservation Roundtable Infographic V4](#): Alicia Hardin returned to discuss feedback on the fourth version of the infographic on invasive species to be distributed at the Senator's Breakfast. Brent Meyer recommended updating the NWCA website from NEWeedFree.org to NEWeed.org, the NWCA's homepage, which links to the NE Weed Free Forage Program. John Thorburn recommended changing the phrasing used in the information about phragmites from "causes flooding" to "increases flooding risk." Justin King recommended highlighting the text "costs 25 times less" with a different color to emphasize the savings benefit of invasive species prevention.

The breakfast will be hosted by the Nebraska Conservation Roundtable at Billy's Restaurant, 1301 H St, in Lincoln on February 10, 2026, from 7:30 am to 8:30 am. Typically, 10-15 senators attend. Shannon Smith and Kris Stahr plan to attend breakfast, and Shannon will speak for a few minutes about invasive species. If any additional members wish to attend, please email Shannon so she can inform Alicia. Shannon will prepare short information cards for each display object that will be on the tables for the event and will be reaching out to members to arrange a pickup date for objects prior to February 10.

5. NISC Coordinator Vacancy: Shannon Smith accepted a new position with the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in Madison, WI that she will begin in March 2026. Her last meeting with the Council will be on Friday, February 13, 2026, and her last day as the Council Coordinator will be Friday, February 27, 2026. Shannon thanks all council members and supporters for making her experience as Council Coordinator both valuable and fun; she has truly enjoyed her time working with the Council and learned a lot that really prepared her for her next role. Shannon is excited to continue working in the invasive species field.
6. 2026 Council Priorities/Contingency Plan: Shannon Smith sent out emails to tentative workgroup members to schedule first meeting to begin projects. The proposed workgroups are as follows:

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

At the first meetings, Shannon will assign a workgroup coordinator who can work with the other members of the group to assign individuals to complete the following tasks: set up virtual meeting links, send meeting calendar invites via email, create meeting agendas, type up meeting notes and distribute to workgroup members, and work with workgroup members to determine workgroup tasks and distribute assignments.

Per the Council's suggestion, Shannon will add scheduled 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.

Shannon created a sign-up sheet for council members and supporters to help fulfill roles for upcoming meetings through 2026. Anyone who is available and interested in helping fulfill meeting roles can sign up [here](#). In accordance with [Legislative Bill 391](#), which states that the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will provide administrative support for the Council, Kris Stahr will serve as the Acting Council Coordinator until a new coordinator is hired.

Shannon will set up an automatic reply for the Council's email, invasives@unl.edu, stating there is not currently a Council Coordinator checking this email address, and will provide the appropriate point of contact for education/outreach, reporting invasives, and any other questions. Emails received to the Council's inbox will be automatically forwarded to Kris, who can then forward them on to the appropriate point of contact. For reported sighting forms, aquatic invasive species will go to NGPC AIS Program, terrestrial invasive plant species will go to Trevor Johnson, terrestrial invasive insect species will go to Natalia Bjorklund, terrestrial invasive wildlife species will go to TJ Walker, and invasive pathogens and diseases will go to Natalia (insect-related), Trevor (plant-related), or the state veterinarian (wildlife-related).

Shannon is continuing to update the Council's website, neinvasives.com, and will be sure all information is up to date prior to leaving the Council at the end of February.

7. Member/Supporter Updates/Comments:

Derek Asche: Filling USDA APHIS non-voting member council representative position until vacancy is filled.

Natalia Bjorklund: No updates.

Travis Connot: No updates.

Steven Jara: No updates.

Trevor Johnson: Senator Teresa Ibach introduced [Legislative Bill 807](#) to change the administration of the Noxious Weed Control Act from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment.

Carson Jones: No updates.

Justin King: No updates.

Heidi McMaster: Serves as the Invasive Pests Management (IPM) Program Coordinator for the Bureau of Reclamation. Eric Riggins serves as the office coordinator for the Nebraska/Kansas area. Interested in learning more on the invasive species-related work going on in Nebraska as well as what challenges are being faced.

Brent Meyer: Nebraska Weed Control Association (NWCA) held the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) Annual Conference last month in Kearney, NE. The NWCA's Annual Conference will be in February in Norfolk, NE. Lancaster County is hiring 7 [Season Noxious Weed Inspectors](#) at \$20+/hour.

Josh Nelson: No updates.

Jena Paugels: Sent out schedule to members of the Nebraska Invasive Species Awareness Week (NE-ISAW) planning committee. Committee members are Kris, Trevor, Shannon, Josh, and Jena.

Erik Prenosil: The Nebraska Department of Water, Environment, and Energy (NDWEE) will be choosing sites for water sampling this year along the Niobrara River basin.

Mitch Renteria: No updates.

Bret Schomer: Updating Operational and Maintenance Manuals (OMMs) and working on mitigation plans for sites located on the Missouri River as these areas deal with several different invasive species, including invasive carp.

Dennis Schroeder: Received an inch of rain yesterday (1/8/26).

Jon Spurgeon: Working with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) to figure out the hiring process and timeline for a new Council Coordinator. Continuing work on invasive carp projects and research in the state.

Kris Stahr: Nebraska Game and Park Commission's AIS Program is hiring 4 [7-month positions](#) and 6 [3-month positions](#) for Temporary Conservation Biologist II at \$17+/hour across the state. Positions will start in April or May and run through August or November.

Gary Stone: Weather in Western NE is high, dry, and windy. [Controlling Invasive Weeds and Pests in Pastures](#) webinar will run February 9-26, 2026, with webinars every Monday and Thursday from 6:30 pm to 7:45 pm MST/7:30 pm to 8:45 pm CST. Registration is \$75 and open through January 26, 2026. Registrants will receive the 2025 UNL Guide to Weed Management, booklets of NebGuides and Extension Circulars focused on invasive species, and a Weeds of the Great Plains book.

Kim Todd: Send winter social media short ideas for Backyard Farmer. One of Backyard Farmer's filming locations this summer will be Schramm Outdoor Education Center.

Created [a one-page infographic on cheatgrass management impacts in Nebraska](#). For landowners interested in long-term cheatgrass management, they can sign up with their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office by January 15, 2026, and request the practice outlined for "315 - Herbaceous Weed Control, Specialized Chemical Control for Resistant Plant Species" for participation in EQIP funding.

James Thiele: No updates.

John Thorburn: Nebraska Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) [are taking tree and shrub orders online](#). The [NRD's 2026 Legislative Conference](#) will take place from January 27-28, 2026, in downtown Lincoln with the Senators Reception on January 27.

8. Next Meeting Date – Friday, February 13, 2026, from 10 am to 12 pm CST
 - a. Nebraska Department of Agriculture
9. Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting
 - a. Prepare for Senators Breakfast
10. Adjourn: Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:00 am CST.