

N E B R A S K A



INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Meeting Agenda

August 9, 2024

Nebraska Department of Agriculture

245 Fallbrook Blvd, Suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68521

Virtual Link: <https://unl.zoom.us/j/95986854294>

Voting Members Present:

Craig Allen
Steven Jara
Trevor Johnson
Justin King
Josh Nelson on behalf of Brent Meyer
Jena Paugels on behalf of Kris Stahr
Dennis Schroeder
John Thorburn
Kim Todd

Voting Members Absent:

Brent Meyer
Jonathan Nikkila
Kimberly Stuhr
Jonathan Spurgeon

Non-Voting Members Present:

Natalia Bjorklund
Chris Helzer
Kassie Karssen
Ritch Nelson
Gary Stone
James Thiele
T.J. Walker

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Travis Connot
Jeremy Gehle
Lorri Grueber
Mike Koenig
Justin Krahulik
David Nielsen
Mitch Renteria
Bret Schomer
Jennifer Weisbrod

Guests Present:

Keith Koupal
Rob Schultz

1. Call to order – Paugels called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM CST.
2. Review and Approval of [May 10, 2024, meeting minutes](#) – Thorburn moved to approve the minutes, Jara seconded, motion carried.
3. Invasive Species News Roundup – Smith began sending out a monthly news summary to council members of relevant invasive species-related topics in June. Smith elicited feedback from meeting participants to determine any updates and/or changes that need to be made to the current news roundup. Thorburn requested that Smith forward the roundup to Megan Grimes to go out to other NRDs. R. Nelson recommended each council member forward the roundup to be distributed throughout their organizations. Smith will send out the August news roundup the week of August 12-16.
4. Summer/Fall 2024 Education and Outreach Opportunities – Smith is participating in the final 2024 UNL East Campus Discovery Days and Farmer’s Market on Saturday, August 10. Jara will also participate on behalf of the Nebraska Forest Service featuring Smokey the Bear’s 80th birthday celebration.

Smith received an invitation for the NISC to participate in the World O! Water Festival on Saturday, September 7 from 12 PM to 4 PM at Papio-Missouri River NRD and asked if any members are interested in having the council participate. J. Nelson will also be attending on behalf of the Sarpy County Weed Control Authority. Paugels is available to help with developing an activity if Smith is available to participate. Smith will review schedule to see if it is possible to attend and contact Paugels if needed.

Smith inquired with members about whether any organizations need assistance with their booths at the 2024 Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island from August 23 – September 2. Schultz and Johnson will be attending on behalf of NWCA and NDA for several days. Schultz will forward Smith the current volunteer schedule for NWCA to see if there is a time slot available to volunteer.

Smith reminded members to fill out the [2024 Education and Outreach spreadsheet](#) if they would like assistance with upcoming events.

5. Revised Invasive Species List on NISC Website – Smith requested that councilmembers review the [current invasive species](#) as listed on the NISC website and provided the following questions for consideration during review:
 - a. Which species need to be prioritized for reporting and control?
 - b. Are the common and species names written correctly? Do they need to be updated (i.e., is it “invasive clam” vs. “Asian clam”?)
 - c. Do the plants need to have ecoregions listed of where they are found in the state? If so, are the ecoregions correct?
 - d. Are the statuses written for each species correct? Do we want to add/change any statuses?
 - e. How do we categorize species on the new website?
 - f. Are there any species listed that do not need to be included on the website? Any species not included on the website that should be added?
 - g. What date should we strive to have the updated list completed?
 - h. How will the public use the list? When does the public come to our website to seek information about invasive species?
 - i. What information is the average landowner looking for and what can we provide them with for guidance?

Thorburn requested that the new NISC website allows users to break down threats by ecoregion through a filtering process.

Helzer noted that we should design the new NISC website based around when the public uses our website and what information they are looking for. The list should include information on what species are invasive and which species are more problematic in some areas of the state and links with information on the species’ natural history and how they became part of Nebraska’s ecosystem. It may be useful to consider designing information sheets for each species on the website with links to more information.

Johnson is starting an invasive weed watch list workgroup in the fall and is looking for 5 representatives per ecoregion (mixed grass prairie, shortgrass prairie, tallgrass prairie, sandhills) to assist with creating the revised list, with the first meeting to be hosted around September.

Jara inquired about the analytics of the current NISC website (i.e., where does the “Report a Sighting” sheet go and how many people are visiting our website?) Smith reported that she receives the analytics for the reported sightings and number of visitors to the website when she logs into the editor’s webpage for the website via UNL.

Todd suggested speaking with Jason Cooper from UNL for website design assistance if needed. Helzer and Thorburn also recommended possibly obtaining funds to hire a website designer to help with creating species fact sheets and compiling other information. Smith will ask if NISC can obtain funds through grants and other means to assist with the new website design.

Stone suggested that dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*) should be added to the NISC website for invasive plant species.

Smith inquired with NISC members if they would like to review the list collectively as a group during the next meeting or independently to then discuss feedback at the next meeting. Karssen and other members suggested that the council review the list independently and then come together to discuss feedback and suggestions for the species list at the next meeting.

Helzer requested that the council postpone working on the list until November – January since there are currently other projects to complete. The council agreed and members plan to revisit the species list in January 2025 after the adaptive management plan and annual report are completed.

6. 2024-2027 Adaptive Management Plan – Smith shared the [adaptive management plan rough draft](#) for members to review by September 6, 2024. Smith included the following questions for members to consider while reviewing the rough draft:
 - a. Is the information digestible? What information can we remove to make it shorter and more comprehensible?
 - b. Is the language understandable for our audience (Legislature)? Is there any wording we should change and/or terms we should add to the glossary?
 - c. Is your name and organization listed/spelled correctly (i.e., is Dr. next to your name if you have a Ph.D., is your preferred name listed?)

- d. Is the references section cohesive and/or are sources listed correctly in APA format?
- e. Are there any actions/goals that we should consider adding to help us meet the [eight required elements](#)?
- f. Should we include a timeline of when actions will be completed over the next three years?
- g. Are there any other comments/feedback/suggestions?
- h. Is there anything we can do to make the document more enticing for legislators to read?

Thorburn and Johnson commented that the NISC should only include a timeline in the plan if it is feasible for us to meet actions. Shroeder also commented that we may want to have an internal and an external timeline, making the external timeline more general while having more specific dates for the internal timeline.

Helzer suggested creating a shorter handout and/or brochure summarizing the key information from the adaptive management plan to give out to legislators.

Smith will send out a calendar invite to council members with the deadline to review the rough draft.

- 7. 2024 Annual Report – Smith requested members complete the [annual report survey](#) by Friday, October 11, 2024. Members can review the [annual report notes](#) to add any ideas and/or feedback they would like the council to consider when putting together information for the annual report.

Smith will send out a calendar invite to council members with the deadline to complete the survey.

- 8. Photo Submission Requests – Smith is seeking photos from members related to invasive species and invasive species management and/or research in the upcoming reports. Smith would also like members to send individual photos of themselves to include in the annual report. Members can submit photos to Smith directly via email at ssmith220@unl.edu or upload them directly to the [photo submissions folder](#).

- 9. Council member updates:

King – Cooper Nuclear Station in Brownville, NE dealing with zebra mussels. Fortunately, there are still no reported zebra mussel sightings in Western Nebraska.

Lake Maloney in North Platte, NE was treated for spiny naiad (*Najas marina*) in mid-June which was successful in reducing the plant around boatdocks and banks. A consultant is currently working on writing a report on the treatment that will be available to share in September.

Karssen – USFWS added an entry-level biologist to its staff. Karssen assisted with western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) surveys in Valentine, NE this summer as well as American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*) surveying in North Platte, NE.

Jara – Nebraska Forest Service hired new mechanic position in Ainsworth. Forest Festival will take place on September 6 at Horning State Farm Demonstration Forest in Plattsmouth, NE. The festival will feature Smokey the Bear's 80th birthday celebration. The fire season is intense across the U.S. right now, but the current weather is helping.

Paugels – Stahr performed treatment at Iron Horse Lake in North Platte, NE on Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) two weeks apart in July and will go survey the treatment areas in a couple of weeks. The treated areas of the lake took well to the treatment. Paugels is now a full-time permanent biologist for NGPC. She will focus on illegal aquatics pet trade, aquatic invasives, and invasive crayfish sampling in the Omaha metro area for the first time since 2005. She also plans to create an interactive map of where different aquatic invasive species are for the NGPC website.

Thorburn – The current legislative session may be taking away the Natural Resources District's property taxing authority to be funded by the state instead. There are possible plans to build a sustainable aviation fuel plant in Knox County, NE, in which water fuel tanks would be filled up in Lake Michigan in Chicago before being brought back to NE. This could lead to lots of aquatic invasive hitchhikers entering NE's bodies of water.

J. Nelson – Completed the National Weed Control Association's fall training on Thursday. Weed management areas are trying to partner more with other organizations to do bigger projects and receive more funding. Sarpy County will be completing more helicopter surveys for common reed (*Phragmites australis*) by the end of the month. The county is also completing landowner agreements that are funded through a 50/50 cost share with NRD by the end of the month.

Johnson – Nebraska Department of Agriculture received five applications for the

riparian vegetation grant in May; however, state budget cuts led to the grant program funding being cut on June 3. There will not be a grant program for this biennium. Johnson is also creating a workgroup to revise the weed watch list for superintendents to make it shorter and more comprehensible. The first meeting may occur in October.

Walker – Attended NWCA fall training. Two WMAs are pursuing grant funds through Nebraska Environmental Trust, so NGPC will review proposed ideas to see if they can possibly contribute. NET grants cannot be used for assistance with noxious weeds control. Smith will also help with reviewing grant applications to maximize the possibility for them to receive funding.

Stone – Working with EdView on using Rejuvra for cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) in the Panhandle; currently working well, growers are also purchasing individually for their own land treatments.

Allen – Moved to Wisconsin and this will be his last meeting with the council. He will maintain a small appointment at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln while wrapping up some research.

R. Nelson – Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide funding for cheatgrass control applications.

10. Next meeting date – Friday, September 13, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm CST, Nebraska Department of Transportation Headquarters, 1500 Nebraska Parkway, Lincoln, NE 68502.

11. Goals/objectives for next meeting:

- a. Adaptive Management Plan – Discussion and review
- b. Annual Report and Survey – Discussion for putting together report with survey results
- c. Photo submissions – needed by next meeting

12. Adjourn – Paugels adjourned the meeting at 11:15 PM CST, Jara seconded, motion carried.