

Nebraska Invasive Species Advisory Council

Meeting Notes

Date: Friday, January 10th, 2020 **Time:** 10:00AM-12:00 PM

Location: Hardin Hall Room 901, 3310 Holdrege St. Lincoln, NE 68583, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- I. **Featured Presentation: Update on Eastern Red Cedar Planting Policy for NRCS in Nebraska**, By: Ritch Nelson, State Wildlife Biologist, Nebraska – Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - a. The conservation roundtable issued a white paper in 2016 discussing Eastern redcedar (ERC) impacts and actions and it can be accessed here:
<https://nfs.unl.edu/documents/Cedar%20Issue%20Paper%20July%202016%20w%20signature.pdf>
 - b. Livestock protection-ERC has been using windbreaks to provide livestock protection. Ritch shed a picture of an ERC windbreak in 1993 and another image of the same area in 2016 and there appeared to be ERC invading areas radiating from the windbreak
 - c. The Forest Resource Sandhills book by Tom Worland did an assessment in the 1970s to quantify ERC and other tree species plantings occurring in the Sandhills. Historically different pine species were planted but overtime plantings gravitated to ERC because they were better survivors in the Sandhills. We now have better tools to rear trees and can do a better job if we want to plant other pines instead of ERC. Ritch said containerized ponderosa pine are being looked at for their survivability growing about 4 varied sizes to make available for a trail process. Ponderosa pines do not have the same structure as ERC in stopping the wind and they are susceptible to deer damage. Rocky mountain juniper-is hard to tell from ponderosa-but they are used in western Nebraska more due to humidity requirements
 - d. The containerized ponderosa pines are hard to get because they must grow them in the greenhouse cost of that tree. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funds can be used to buy the trees and for planting costs
 - e. Russian olive-NRCS 7-10 years ago removed the species from the tech guide and no longer suggest it for planting and will no longer fund it
 - f. Public meeting process-At state technical committee meetings, there are 3-4 times a year, the Eastern redcedar task force gave feedback. Some agencies wanted to be overly aggressive like they were on Russian olive to prevent NRCS funds for ERC purchase or planting
 - g. The NRCS ERC policy was put out in August 2019 it will impact the 2020 contracts.
 - i. Outreach is needed in the form of written guidance. There is a windbreak workshop in North Platte next week to work through an example of what to use instead of ERC to make sure it would work
 - ii. It would be good to have a written document with alternatives to plant instead of ERC
 - iii. Justin King-Tom Brag talked about growing male only ERC 10 years ago-if we can figure out how to grow only male ERC trees it could help. There has been work on this, but the cost associated with it has been limiting the effort. There is some thought that even if a male ERC were created it could change sex in a stand. If you are paying for a male only tree but are you saving costs on the back end because will not have to control it. Cloning the males is being done and getting progress with Ritch Gilbert
 - iv. It takes 5-7 years before you can tell if an ERC is female and at that point removing female trees from a stand can prevent ERC from spreading. It can be difficult to remove them though. NRCS has been assisting in brush management to remove unneeded trees

- v. [You can learn more on ERC at the UNL ERC Literacy Page here: https://agronomy.unl.edu/eastern-redcedar-science-literacy-project](https://agronomy.unl.edu/eastern-redcedar-science-literacy-project)

II. Coordinator Updates (Allison Zach)

- a. Discuss draft council rack card
- b. We could create separate cards targeting on terrestrial and aquatic invasive species and steps people can take to prevent their spread
 - i. These cards could be smaller and have the program's website large on them to get people to visit it
- c. Want to reach public at events by distributing these cards to partners

III. Council Member Updates

- a. Rick Holland- The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will be opening the aquatic invasive species coordinator position next week. The coordinator would build a statewide approach to manage the aquatic invasive species program and coordinating field staff and hire additional seasonal temps-doing boater surveys, surveys to monitoring veligers and adults and veg sampling. Attending the regional national meetings attendance and seek out additional funds. The coordinator will also work on Asian carp issues
- b. Kevin Pope-He ordered a ranger bass boat for the Coop unit. The NE Coop unit will be hiring 2 new coop professors, and the overall coop budget had a national increase of 5 million dollars. The national budget is now 24 million and they will strive to be fully staffed by the end of the fiscal year. There will be a few new coop units created. The NE coop will be hiring a Wildlife Professor to focus on wildlife stressors like disease, climate, invasive species, and landscape level changes on wildlife. After the Wildlife Professor is hired the Coop unit will be hiring a Fisheries to focus on prairie streams and species at risk
- c. Justin King-Columbus Nebraska 5 days a week-have the Columbus on Wednesday-Columbus city council said will adopt EAB policy-apply for a grant to fund
- d. Jeremy Gehle- The proposed Transbasin diversion project had a June 2019 hearing. The hearing was held regarding challenges to the proper applicant for the project. The DNR legal staff and director will have a ruling. That ruling can then be appealed
- e. Mitch Coffin-working with counties doing upland phragmites surveys. Doing seed sampling and reviewing currently
- f. John Thorburn-recently did a 2-minute segment on that emerald ash borer
- g. Steven Jara-A new community landscape bureau chief is still posted. The statewide forest plan is towards the end of completion, it is a priority plan like the natural legacy plan and will be used to give a snapshot of priorities and comprehensive analysis. It is focused on priority landscapes and consulted 23 NRDs and the NRCS to get input on priorities and will go to the public comment phase. They have a new GIS person to add a map to the document. It will be 200 plus pages-the ERC white paper will be in the appendix and changing climate will also be mentioned. It will be done in June 2020. Every state must follow this plan.
- h. Chris Helzer-The Nature Conservancy (TNC) hired Chad Blaydo about a year ago in the Sandhills to work with anyone there that wants to conduct prescribed burns to control ERC. He helps do the burns and helps with cost shares. He is hoping to ramp up thousands of acres burned this year. This is a partnership PF, NGPC and forest service funded and the Sandhills task force is also involved. TNC will be doing research on Sandhills fires to see what makes fires more or less successful. They will look at time of day and time of season. They will apply for Environmental trust grant funds to look at field moisture in ERC to see when that increases and when that correlates to success. They want to create guidance to give to ranchers to tell people what conditions will be most successful in controlling ERC. There will be training at the Niobrara exchange for people who want to learn about fire. People are looking to

get fed certification and for ranchers to see how fire works. The training will be offered March 21-April 3rd

- i. Ritch Walters-there is a tool called Rabet, which stands for the range land brush estimation tool. The ARS and NRCS are involved with it. This past season and in the fall, they want to use it to get remote sensing information on low, medium, and high infestations of ERC invasion-especially at low levels. Dirac Twidwell is working on something similar and ran 56 transects in the low and ultra-low levels of ERC infestation with people out of Arizona. This was to ground truth the imaging which is similar area to the Nebraska Sandhills. Rabet could be used as a planning tool for an individual ranch or at the landscape level. Dirac is working more on the landscape scale for ERC. Rabet will be ready in early 2020 and will be a GIS based system. It is unclear who will have access to use it

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