Nebraska Invasive Species Council
Meeting Agenda
Friday, October 9th, 2026, 10:00AM – 12:00PM CST
Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 245 Fallbrook Blvd, Lincoln, NE 68521
Zoom Meeting Link: https://unl.zoom.us/j/92899143555 **| Meeting ID:** 928 9914 3555

Voting Members Present:
Natalia Bjorklund
Josh Nelson
Kristopher Stahr
Kimberly Stuhr
John Thorburn
Kim Todd

Voting Members Absent:
Steven Jara
Justin King
Jonathan Nikkila
Dennis Schroeder
Jonathan Spurgeon

Non-Voting Members Present:
Justin Krahulik
Ritch Nelson

Non-Voting Members Absent:
Travis Connot
Chris Helzer

Advisory Support Members Present:
Cheryl Dunn
Ryker Starr
James Thiele
T.J. Walker
Rich Walters

Call to order – Stahr – 10:01AM CST

Approval of September Meeting Minutes – Stahr – Nelson motioned to approved, Thorburn seconded

Agenda:

Update from Annual Report Workgroup –Annual report this year will look like a combination of reports from the past two years and those prior, creating a document that is both engaging and official in appearance. Moving forward, the report will emphasize work on two invasive species present in the state and one emerging invasive species. Paugels requests that all voting and non-voting members please send a summary of their year's activities, emphasizing any work done with phragmites, zebra mussels or ventenata, which will be highlighted in this years report. Paugels will send out a Calendar invite/reminder for the deadline of October 30th with further information on details to include in the summary.

Nelson and Paugels suggested hosting an event inviting all partner organizations and individuals to an end-of-year review, during which Council members can highlight items in report and further elaborate on projects and accomplishments. More information to come as report is finalized.

Education and Outreach Efforts – Paugels reviewed education needs survey results that members and supporters provided over the past month. Major needs included accessible resources online and in-person via conferences focusing on fundamentals of invasives (ID, impacts, management/control methods). Members discussed that although not everyone would utilize online resources, it was a good platform to provide information and that social media would be a vector via which to increase engagement, which was identified as one of the main education obstacles.

Paugels will start a NISC Facebook and Instagram page and start sharing information/posts from other partner platforms that convey invasive species information. Todd, Dunn, and AIS Program to be administrators on those pages to help share this information. If Council members and supporters have content that they would like shared or developed, please contact Paugels.

Members also discussed that creating a monthly or quarterly newsletter to share with other groups highlighting NISC work and efforts may be beneficial to encourage partnerships and increase reach.

Policymaker Engagement – Paugels requests that others who are interested in joining the Annual Policymaker Informational Session workgroup please contact her. Workgroup will meet within the next month. Nelson volunteered to be on workgroup.

Members discussed other way to engage policymakers, including developing fact sheets that build from the 2026 Annual Report and providing them to policymakers early next year and developing novel and memorable ways of delivering/providing information.

Conservation Nebraska Seminar – Bjorklund, Stahr, and Paugels presented invasive species seminar with Conservation Nebraska on 10/7/2026. Paugels will forward YouTube link to members and supporters when she receives it and will link it on Council website.

2027 Chairperson – Members to consider whether they would like to nominate themselves or another for NISC Chairperson in 2027. Please consider nominations to suggest during November meeting. Vote will take place at December meeting if there are multiple nominees.

Member/Supporter Updates/Comments:

John Thorburn, Voting Member, NE Association of Resource Districts – Thorburn will be presenting at NE Association of Council Officials Annual Conference

Ryker Starr, Advisory Support Member, NE Department of Transportation – NDOT will submit an annual monarch butterfly report this year. Carson Walters attended pollinator conference in Wisconsin this week. Starr to present at NE Association of County Officials Annual Conference

James Thiele, Advisory Support Member, Omaha Public Power District – Currently spraying for phragmites, including phragmites patch near Fort Calhoun which will be sprayed via helicopter.

Justin Krahulik, Non-Voting Member, USGS – USGS is changing funding format and will no longer be offering reimbursable funding.

Natalia Bjorklund, Voting Member, NE Department of Agriculture – Interviews start next week for weed inspector position in Noxious Weed and Seed Program.

Josh Nelson, Voting Member, NE Weed Control Association – WMAs are completing river projects in Lower Platte and mostly finished aside from areas around Saunders

and Sarpy counties. Sarpy and Douglas county to map sandbars that are potential flood points for NRDs due to invasive species. Some NWCA members attended Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in WI this week and others will be attending North American Invasive Species Management Association conference in a couple week. $800k in Pottawattamie County in Iowa allocated to conservation management outside of regulation required funding

Kristopher Stahr, Voting Member, NE Game and Parks Commission – Dowding and Stahr attended Western Regional Panel meeting in California last month where the primary topic was golden mussels, whose spread would be catastrophic. Stahr completed an interview with NE Public Media regarding zebra mussel spread to Bellevue and impacts across the state. Watercraft inspections and vegetation surveys are complete, now trapping for crayfish in urban areas. Paugels and Stahr received a sighting for an unknown snail which was later identified as a ghost snail, native to South America. The snail arrived via a shipping container from Florida. USDA APHIS has contacted Stahr due to interest in genetic testing of snail and stated that this is the farthest inland a ghost snail has traveled.

Cheryl Dunn, Advisory Support Member, University of Nebraska, Lincoln – Old World Bluestem reported in Lincoln and johnsongrass is becoming more prevalent in Lincoln as well. Natural Resource Conference will be October 27-29th, where Nelson and Paugels will present on biosecurity and Dunn will potentially host an invasive grass ID workshop. This conference has an entire section dedicated to invasive species and registration closes on Monday, October 12th. Late registration will still be available.

Kim Todd, Voting Member, Public Interests – Backyard Farmer has finished for the season and is now working on reels and shorts.

Ritch Nelson, Non-Voting Member, Natural Resource Conservation Service – No updates

Rich Walters, Advisory Support Member, The Nature Conservancy – Rich will be tag-teaming meeting attendance along with Chris Helzer. Currently performing phragmites spraying via helicopter and using drones off bridges in more sensitive areas

T.J. Walker, Advisory Support Member, NE Game and Parks – Eastern red cedar and cheatgrass control occurring in panhandle utilizing NE Environmental Trust grant and partnership with numerous other organizations. Funding via main channels is becoming more restricted. Currently helping with eastern red cedar removal under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant.

Kimberly Stuhr. Voting Member, Agricultural Landowner – No updates

Jonathan Spurgeon, Voting Member, NE Fish and Wildlife Research Cooperative Unit – Unit conducting invasive carp egg drift study on Platte River to determine viability and trajectory of carp eggs.

Next Meeting Date – Friday, November 13th, 10:00AM – 12:00PM CST at Pearson's Pumpkin Place – 1357 N 6th Rd, Eagle, NE 68347, where Council will receive tour of grounds and learn about biosecurity measures utilized.

Goals/Objectives for Next Meeting:

1. Paugels hopes to provide annual report draft for members to review.
2. Will review social media progress.
3. Members to consider 2027 chairperson nominees.

Meeting adjourned at 11:23AM CST.