



**Nebraska Invasive Species Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**September 13, 2024**

**Nebraska Department of Transportation Headquarters**

**1500 Nebraska Pkwy, Lincoln, NE 68502**

**Voting Members Present:**

Steven Jara  
Trevor Johnson  
Justin King  
Josh Nelson on behalf of Brent Meyer  
Jonathan Nikkila  
Dennis Schroeder  
Jonathan Spurgeon  
Kris Stahr  
Kimberly Stuhr  
John Thorburn  
Kim Todd

**Voting Members Absent:**

Brent Meyer

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Travis Connot  
Jeremy Gehle  
Ritch Nelson  
Mitch Renteria  
James Thiele  
T.J. Walker

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Natalia Bjorklund  
Lorri Grueber

Chris Helzer  
Kassie Karssen  
Mike Koenig  
Justin Krahulik  
David Nielsen  
Bret Schomer  
Gary Stone  
Jennifer Weisbrod

**Guests Present:**

Carson Jones  
Erika Hinz  
Blayne Renner

1. Call to order – Stahr called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM CST.
2. Review and Approval of [August 9, 2024, meeting minutes](#) – Thorburn moved to approve the minutes, Schroeder seconded, motion carried.
3. NGPC Wildlife Division Meeting Presentation on September 18, 2024 – Smith will be presenting on Invasive Plants to Watch Out for in Nebraska at the NGPC Wildlife Division Meeting at Mahoney State Park in Ashland, NE. She will present on johnsongrass, old world bluestems, yellow/dalmatian toadflax, ventenata, and sickleweed. Thank you to Cheryl Dunn, Trevor Johnson, and Chris Helzer for your input on and assistance with this presentation.
4. NISC Member Vacancies – Smith noted there are currently two voting member positions vacant within the council, one for the voting member representing the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and one for the voting member representing agricultural landowner interests. Smith will send out a poll to current members in November to determine who plans to renew their term to the council and who plans to conclude their term at the end of December 2024. For members who are planning to conclude their terms, please begin thinking about potential replacements for your position.

Stahr also noted that we need to consider a new chairperson to take Meyer's place. The council may want to think about anyone who is open to taking on the chairperson position. Stahr noted he talked to Meyer about making the chairperson a one-year term. Thorburn noted that a two-year term would allow more continuity than a one-year term since voting member positions are two-year term positions. Thorburn noted we may want to also consider adding vice chairperson. Vice

chairperson could become chairperson once the chairperson's term ends and would be able to cover for the chairperson when they are absent at meetings. Walker concluded that this was a good solution to ensure there is usually a chairperson available at meetings to run the agenda. Smith will add some questions in the poll for current members to determine who may be interested in taking on the chairperson or vice chairperson.

5. 2024 Adaptive Management Plan – Due by October 5, 2024 – Smith requested that councilmembers review the [rough draft](#) for the Adaptive Management Plan by today for feedback and discussion during the meeting. She provided the following questions for consideration during review:

- a. Which species need to be prioritized for reporting and control?
- b. Is the information digestible? What information can we remove to make it shorter and more comprehensible?
- c. Is the language understandable for our audience (Legislature)? Is there any wording we should change and/or terms we should add to the glossary?
- d. 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?)
- e. Is the references section cohesive and/or are sources listed correctly in APA format?
- f. Are there any actions/goals that we should consider adding to help us meet the [eight required elements](#)?
- g. Should we include a timeline of when actions will be completed over the next three years?
- h. Is there anything we can do to make the document more enticing for legislators to read?
- i. Are there any other comments/feedback/suggestions?

Smith will begin designing the final document to include photos next week and will send out the finished product to members to review the week of September 23. Final edits will be needed by September 27.

Thorburn recommended having everyone affirm that they are happy with the final draft. Smith will send out calendar invites to remind members of the due date for document approvals with the adaptive management plan attached.

6. 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.

7. Photo Submission Requests – due by September 20 – 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 or upload them directly to the [photo submissions folder](#).

Council member updates:

King- Canal owned by NRD confirmed the presence of invasive silver carp. One found last year was dead, but a live adult captured this year below the diversion east of North Platte, NE.

Stahr – NGPC will create invasive carp team to leverage aquatic invasive species program, rivers and streams program, MO River program, and is planning to conduct more sampling to get better idea of invasion by identifying sample sites now. Ten watercraft inspectors worked for AIS this summer, completing 80,370 inspections. Zebra mussels were found on boats coming from the Missouri River. Mostly boats were encountered with vegetation on them. All state fish hatcheries were sampled for aquatic invasive species, with all being found negative. In addition, 30-40 aquatic vegetation surveys were completed in Nebraska waterbodies over the summer. Brittle naiad was discovered in Box Butte along with a new Eurasian water milfoil detection. The AIS program completed herbicide treatment in North Platte, NE at Iron Horse Lake, which was successful as no living Eurasian watermilfoil was found 30-90 days after treatment. Next year, AIS will treat at East Hershey Lake. All samples of watermilfoil recovered during vegetation surveys were sent to MT State for testing, with results finding that at two lakes, watermilfoil had hybridized. AIS is planning to treat watermilfoil at Carter Lake with IA DNR soon. They will have a meeting next week for treatment options since it is a jointly treated water body. Zebra mussels were discovered in Marimo aquarium moss balls in WA and ID. The contaminated moss balls were shipped to 12 states, with NE not being one of them. NGPC is currently inspecting moss balls at pet stores. Organisms in Trade (OIT) workgroup meeting is on October 7. AIS Program is currently updating NGPC Section 12 for aquatic invasive species. Thorburn asked if NGPC has inspected exotic pet auctions, which Stahr said they have not; however, they have investigated the Aquarium Society Swap Meet. Stahr asked how the council wants to handle the pet trade. Renteria stated that WY used non-game species law to manage gap for pet trade regulations.

Thorburn – Platte River Recovery Foundation helps to fund PVWMA through their endowment, which councilmember Jonathan Nikkila is also a part of the foundation. The PVWMA is looking to develop a fundraising strategy for the group and hire a person for that position. PVWMA is well-funded enough to continue work through the year despite the NDA's grant program funding cut. They will spray for phragmites on the Platte River and Kearney Canal this year.

Schroeder – Harvest time is underway in the Midwest. Calves are also being weaned. Schroeder noted that the council needs to continue to think about a strategy for how to conduct education on invasive species, as there is a huge gap to be filled.

Johnson – Kudzu has been reported several times but has turned out to be burcucumber. However, kudzu is currently flowering in Otoe County this year. In Saunders County, burcucumber is outcompeting the kudzu. Kudzu was sprayed in Saunders County, which left an open space for burcucumber to grow. Since burcucumber is a native species, it will not be considered a noxious weed. NDA conducted outreach at the Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days this year, both of which were successful with more conversation at Harvest Days. NDA wants to get on the scavenger hunt cards for FFA next year to encourage more booth visitation. Johnson is currently working on updating the weed watchlist for 2025. Once he receives ecoregion responses from the county weed superintendents, he will recruit others to join the workgroup to update the list.

Connot – Received some calls about common mullein in Valentine, NE. EPA issued emergency order to stop using the pesticide Dacthal due to serious health risks, he is currently contacting landowners to make sure they're not spraying with it. He will also contact county weed superintendents about the news. Connot will also send out the press release to the council provided by the EPA.

Walker – Currently working on eastern redcedar control. Valentine Wildlife Refuge is done clearing cedars, McKelvie National Forest is looking for funding and submitted an NET grant for funding to remove cedars on Merritt Reservoir. NGPC may have 1,000,000 acres addressing ERC removal. NGPC is in the process of spending the America the Beautiful Challenge Grant with a stream and wetland projects in the works. No new WMAs applied for NET grants this cycle. Johnson clarified that money from the NDA grant is still there, but not yet available. TVWMA submitted an NET grant with match for this cycle, the only WMA to apply.

Jones – Jones' position requires him to go out to districts at NDOT and conduct

education and outreach on what to look for while spraying weeds. The biggest issue is high turnover in those positions, he provides resources to help in the field.

Jara – When will fire season end? South Dakota had a 1,000-acre fire yesterday. NFS is busy with fire and tree planting season. A new position is coming for a fire lead.

J. Nelson – WMAs with funding are working on current projects. Finished conducting surveys a drone, helicopter, and airboat on phragmites from Sarpy County to Platte County. He is also working on educational challenges with farmers and riparian landowners to help them understand the issues of phragmites if found on their properties. NRDs in the area are taking up some funding to help. They will be spraying the first or second week of October with a helicopter. During a survey, they saw silver carp from the helicopter in the Elkhorn River. NEWMA got an NET grant for yellow flag iris since it is considered a non-regulated plant and received funding to help with producing educational materials and implementing control methods. There have been plenty of burcucumber and Japanese hops sightings in Sarpy County.

R. Nelson – NRCS is holding five 2-day training sessions around the state focused on woody encroachment since there is a statewide effort involving partners, such as the NFS, to control cedars and oak woodlands. They are also trying to get a CRP established to combat Johnsongrass in Cherry County.

Gehle – The NDRS director left one month ago, so a decision will not be made on the Platte-Republican Tri-Basin Diversion Project until a new director is appointed.

Todd – BYF employed an editor from the NRCS grant that is currently getting things organized and will start launching a newsletter for BYF in mid-October. The last BYF show for the season will happen next week. Please send Todd emails with ideas for new segments on the show if you have any thoughts.

8. Next meeting date – Friday, October 11, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm CST, at UNL BYF Garden, 3850 Center St, Lincoln, NE 68503.
9. Goals/objectives for next meeting:
  - a. Annual Report
  - b. Kim Todd – presentation/tour of BYF Garden

10. Adjourn – Stahr adjourned the meeting at 11:21 CST, Johnson seconded, motion carried.