NEBRASKA
— GAME PARKS —

2200 N. 33rd St. • P.O. Box 30370 • Lincoln, NE 68503-0370 • Phone: 402-471-0641

MINUTES

April 22, 2016

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Multi-purpose Room at Chadron State Park located at 15951 Highway 385 Chadron, Nebraska for the transaction of business. Advance public notice having been given through release to news media and official public notice published in the Lincoln Journal Star on April 11, 2016.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Spurgin advised this meeting was being held in conformance with the State Open Meeting Act and the act was available for review on the table in the back of the room. The Commissioners introduced themselves and gave a brief report on hunting in their districts. Members present were Bob Allen, Eustis; Rex Fisher,Omaha; Kent Forney DVM, Lincoln; Norris Marshall, Kearney; Dan Kreitman, Wahoo; Mark Spurgin, Paxton; Dick Bell, Omaha; Mick Jensen, Blair; and Pat Berggren, Broken Bow.

Chairman Spurgin introduced Director Jim Douglas who made several remarks about hunting in the state as a whole and thanked Commissioner Kreitman and his wife Patty for their hospitality the evening before. Director Douglas asked recently appointed Commissioners Kreitman and Berggren to recite their oaths of office and photos were taken. He asked Christy Rasmussen to share the details of a local award for the agency's new website.

Minutes of the special meeting held February 25, 2016 were reviewed.

> Motion by Mr. Jensen, seconded by Mr. Bell to approve the minutes. Voting aye: Allen, Bell, Jensen, Forney, Berggren, Fisher, Marshall, Kreitman, Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Minutes of the business meeting held February 25, 2016 were reviewed.

> Motion by Mr. Allen, seconded by Mr. Fisher to approve the minutes. Voting aye: Berggren, Allen, Bell, Jensen, Forney, Fisher, Marshall, Kreitman, Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Financial vouchers for February and March were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Bell, seconded by Mr. Fisher to approve the financial vouchers. Voting aye: Bell, Forney, Fisher, Marshall, Kreitman, Jensen, Allen, Berggren and Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Director Douglas made some introductory comments about Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources presentation by Kristal Stoner. Kristal reviewed the panel's recommendation that Congress dedicate up to $1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program to provide critically needed funding to the states, territories and District of Columbia to implement State Wildlife Action Plans.

Chairman Spurgin opened the Public Hearing at 8:36 A.M. to consider amendments on Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Commission Order 003, Antelope, deer, Elk. Kit Hams reviewed staff recommendations providing for the regulations of big game based upon feedback from hunter surveys and land owner contacts. Overall, permit sales and hunting harvests across the board were very successful.

Bill Wilson of Harrison shared several comments on elk damage and that he is aware pronghorn fawns are taken by birds as well as coyotes.

Scott Kuhn of Deer Meadow Outfitters in Gordon shared a concern regarding supplemental proteins for big game and wanted to make sure the laws hadn't changed regarding hunting within 200 yards. Additionally, he asked about advertisement in the Big Game Handbook by businesses (outfitters) which bring in non-resident big game hunters. He was advised by Commissioner Forney that the baiting regulations were changed last year for 2016, so caution should be exercised in that area. Commissioner Forney also advised the agency must be very careful about who is allowed to advertise so it is not showing any favoritism among outfitters. With no other comments, the public hearing was closed at 9:08 AM.

Motion by Mr. Forney, seconded by Mr. Jensen to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Fisher, Marshall, Kreitman, Allen, Jensen, Bell, Berggren, Forney, and Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Chairman Spurgin opened the Public Hearing at 9:10 A.M. to consider amendments on Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Commission Order 006 Coots, Ducks, Geese, Crow. Mark Vrtiska reviewed staff recommendations providing for waterfowl seasons across the various zones in the state including data from surveys were taken of hunters across the state. Discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of starting hunting season on Labor Day weekend.

Sean Sutherland of Sidney shared his concern that a later season in Zone 3 creates a hardship due to potential freezing conditions of the waters in the panhandle; additionally

it is uncomfortable for young hunters and women due to the colder weather. He stated he is speaking on behalf of others as well as himself, when he requests the Commission begin the season in Zone 3 on October 15. He understands that other hunters along the Platte River have other preferences. Debate continued over starting teal season on Labor Day weekend.

> Motion by Dr. Forney, seconded by Mr. Norris to approve staff recommendations, with the exception to set the start date of Teal Season on September 3. Voting aye: Kreitman, Jensen, Forney, Allen, Berggren, Bell, Fisher, Marshall, Spurgin; voting nay: none. Motion carried.

The Chairman announced a 10 minute recess.

The meeting was resumed at 10:10 A.M.

Director's Report

Director Douglas gave his Director's Report and asked Fisheries Division Administrator, Don Gabelhouse to assist in introducing the 40-year service award recipient, Al Hansen. Al was presented with his award by Chairman Spurgin and Director Douglas.

End Director's Report

Jim Swenson presented research on allowing the use of Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV's) in State Parks. State regulations vary depending on where they are used. They can be approved by local ordinance by communities. Nebraska Game and Parks is responsible for regulations and management for the roadways within the parks, currently UTV's and similar vehicles are not allowed within the parks, with exceptions for special events and golf cars for handicapped persons. There are very few requests by the public for UTV use in parks, many more people have expressed an interest in the creation of an All-Terrain Vehicle Park, for which the Commission is currently considering potential sites. Swenson expressed maintenance and enforcement concerns regarding use of UTVs in parks.

Deputy Director Tim McCoy shared staff recommendations for the Commission to express approval for the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation to proceed with acquisition of the Ardyce Haring Nebraska Prairie Revocable Trust tract in Franklin County, Nebraska with the understanding that Legislature approval is necessary to accept any future gift of land to the Commission.

> Motion by Dr. Forney, seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Kreitman, Jensen, Forney, Allen, Berggren, Bell, Fisher, Marshall, Spurgin; voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Karie Decker reviewed the staff recommendation to approve acquisition of 80± acres in Dawes County adjacent to the Commission's Chadron Creek Wildlife Management Area. Staff recommends approval and designation of this area as an addition to the Chadron Creek WMA.

> Motion by Mr. Allen, seconded by Mr. Kreitman to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Allen, Bell, Jensen, Forney, Berggren, Fisher, Marshall, Kreitman, Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Jim Swenson presented staff recommendations to approve an increase of the Cash Change Fund from $250.00 to $500.00 at Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area to accommodate the Outdoor Education Shooting Complex Facility.

> Motion by Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Bell to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Forney, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Fisher, Jensen, Marshall, Kreitman, and Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Jim Swenson shared staff recommendations to establish the fee structure at the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area Outdoor Education Shooting Complex Facility. There was a discussion concerning setting the fees at a sufficient rate they do not have to be adjusted again in the near future.

> Motion by Marshall, seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Allen, Berggren, Jensen, Marshall, and Kreitman. Voting nay: Bell, Fisher, Forney and Spurgin. Motion carried.

Alicia Hardin gave a presentation and shared staff recommendations to approve a comprehensive pheasant plan for Nebraska- "Nebraska's Mega Plan Improving Pheasant Hunting". Commissioners suggested the plan be referred to the "Berggren Plan" and they would like to look at changing the pheasant hunting start time from beginning one-half hour before sunrise, due to concerns related to people shooting in the dark. Director Douglas made a commitment to the commission that he would bring a staff recommendation to a future meeting.

> Motion by Pat Berggren to approve staff recommendations in honor of his father, seconded by Dr. Forney. Voting aye Bell, Berggren, Fisher, Jensen, Marshall, Kreitman, Forney, Allen and Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

Sam Wilson gave an update on mountain lions, reviewing the science and technology used to identify individual lions and track collared animals in the multi-year project and their most current findings. There are three areas in the state with mountain lion populations, Wildcat Hills, the Pine Ridge and Niobrara River valley. Twenty-one different mountain lions were captured and marked since February of last year. Several

have lost their collars. Eight kittens have been born to collared females and ear tagged. Five big horn sheep have been killed by mountain lions in the Pine Ridge area since last February. A population estimate was created for the Pine Ridge. Information gathered in Wildcat Hills does not allow for a population estimate in this area. Wilson asked people to keep in mind that birth, death, and travel to and from other states affect the ever-changing population. The data shows that the population is similar to the previous year's survey with broadly overlapping confidence intervals. The point estimate for the Pine Ridge population during the 2015 survey period is 33 total animals. Each subsequent year of the project will allow for more precise findings and estimates.

Executive Session

> Motion by Mr. Bell, seconded by Dr. Forney to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation and personnel at 11:34 A.M. Voting aye: Berggren, Fisher, Jensen, Marshall, Kreitman, Forney, Allen, Bell and Spurgin. Voting nay: None. Motion carried.
>
> The meeting was re-convened and a motion made by Mr. Bell, seconded by Mr. Marshall to leave executive session at 12:18 P.M. Voting aye: Fisher, Jensen, Marshall, Kreitman, Forney, Allen, Bell, Berggren and Spurgin. Voting nay: None. Motion carried,

Motion to adjourn.

> Motion by Dr. Forney, seconded by Mr. Fisher to adjourn the meeting at 12:21 P.M. Voting aye: Jensen, Marshall, Kreitman, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Forney, Fisher and Spurgin. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

I hereby certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at its meeting held April 22, 2016.

James N. Douglas, Director