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MINUTES
August 17, 2017

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Snyder Addition Classroom at the West Central Extension and Research Center 402 State Farm Road North Platte, NE 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 August 2, 2017.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Fisher advised this meeting was being held in conformance with the State Open Meeting Act and the act was available for review on the table at the back of the room. The Commissioners introduced themselves and shared activities in their respective districts. Members present were Norris Marshall, Kearney; Rex Fisher, Omaha; Rick Brandt, Lincoln; Dan Kreitman, Wahoo; Mark Spurgin, Paxton; Bob Allen, Eustis; Jim Ernst, Columbus; Pat Berggren, Broken Bow; and Dick Bell, Omaha.

Minutes of the business meeting held June 22, 2017 were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approve the minutes. Voting aye: Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Financial vouchers for April and May were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approve the financial vouchers. Voting aye: Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Director's Report

Director Jim Douglas thanked the fisheries staff for hosting the Commission for a hatchery tour and fish fry the day before. He also recognized the Nebraska Public Power District for allowing the commission to use their cabin at Lake Maloney for the Wednesday night dinner.

North Platte City Councilman Glenn Petersen was present to accept a Resolution of Appreciation on behalf of the City of North Platte which was presented by Chairman Rex Fisher.

Chairman Fisher asked Commissioner Rick Brandt to draw the name of the winner for the bighorn sheep lottery tag. Frank Nemeth of Chadron was the lucky winner, but could not be reached by phone for notification at that moment.

End Director's Report

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Chairman Fisher read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the October Commission meeting to consider amendments to Commission Order C05, Game birds (not including turkey, coots, and migratory waterfowl) Furbearers, Cottontail Rabbit, and Squirrels.

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Fisher read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the October Commission meeting to consider the creation of Commission Order C06 Sport Fishing.

Motion by Mr. Bell and seconded by Mr. Spurgin to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Fisher read the staff recommendation to consider amendments to Chapter 2, Fisheries Regulations, Section 006 Sport Fishing.

Motion by Mr. Allen and seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Fisher read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the October Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 1, Section 012 Procedures for reviewing the suspension or revocation of a privilege or permit to hunt, fish, or harvest fur by any jurisdiction other than Nebraska.

Motion by Mr. Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Marshall and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Disease and Big Game Research Manager Todd Nordeen reviewed the lamb survival study of the bighorn sheep herds in the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills areas which was conducted May 9-June 24. All 21 lambs in the Pine Ridge collared at birth have died between 30-45 days of age, most likely of bronchial pneumonia. Lambs in the Wildcat Hills area had a much better survival rate. He reviewed plans to identify the disease source and shared they are working with laboratories to develop specific vaccinations for the bacteria which caused the deaths of the lambs to combat similar issues in the future.

Chairman Fisher opened the public hearing to consider amendments to Chapter 2, Fisheries Regulations, Section 005, Aquaculture Regulations, regarding the application for importation of aquatic organisms and requirements related to the discovery of pathogens at 8:32 AM. Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal reviewed staff recommendations requiring facilities to treat discovered bacterial pathogens before transferring them to another location. Treatment would eliminate the need to destroy fish. The Aquaculture Advisory Board recommends and supports this amendment. There was no public comment; the public hearing was closed at 8:37 AM.

Motion by Spurgin and seconded by Mr. Allen to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

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Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal presented staff recommendations to approve increase the cash change fund requirement at the Rock Creek Station Fish Hatchery from \$60 to \$100 and to establish a cash change fund of \$100 at the Valentine Fish Hatchery.

Motion by Spurgin and seconded by Mr. Allen to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall Kreitman and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed the staff recommendation to approve a permanent easement request from the Loup River Public Power District to bury an overhead power line on Wilkinson Wildlife Management Area in Platte County. Moving this power line underground will help protect a variety of waterfowl and other bird species. The easement is approximately 1320 feet long and 25 feet wide. The majority of this project will be paid by grant funds.

Motion by Spurgin and seconded by Mr. Allen to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall Kreitman, Brandt and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Fisher opened the public hearing at 8:48 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Section 014, Mountain Sheep, regarding the authorization of mountain sheep hunting permits for the 2018 season. Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin presented staff recommendations to allow for one lottery and one auction tag for the November 28-December 22, 2018 bighorn sheep hunting season. Despite the lamb deaths this year, there are older rams that are suitable for hunting before they die of natural causes. There was no public comment; the public hearing was closed at 8:53 AM.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Kreitman to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Several members of the Lake McConaughy community requested to be on the agenda to share their thoughts on the beach closings in conjunction with implementation of the Lake McConaughy Strategic Plan. Dave Kalahar, Greg Barnhart, and John Carson all presented their concerns and were addressed by Parks Division Administrator Jim Swenson and Planning and Programming Division Administrator Michelle Stryker who commented that the plan is not set in stone at this point and they appreciate the comments. Director Douglas commented on the necessity of satisfying obligations to protect threatened and endangered species; some adjustments to beach camping and traffic are essential to meeting these requirements. Staff will continue to re-evaluate the need to close beaches and the necessary time periods to protect the endangered species that nest on the beaches. There will be additional public meetings to address concerns.

Chairman Fisher called for a 15 minute recess at 9:30, the meeting resumed at 9:45 AM.

Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed Staff recommendations for approval of acquisition of 15.089± acres in Sioux County from the Board of Educational Lands and Funds of the State of Nebraska (BELF) adjacent to the Commission's Gilbert Baker Wildlife Management Area. It is further recommended that the Commission trade the 27.3± acre tract in Sioux County to BELF. Staff recommends designation of the acquired tract as part of the Gilbert Baker WMA. This is actually a land exchange and BELF will pay the Commission the difference in appraised value of the tracts.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

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Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed Staff recommendations for approval of acquisition 747.91 more or less acres in Banner County adjacent to the Commission's William's Gap Wildlife Management Area. Staff recommends approval and designation of this area as an addition to the William's Gap WMA. A public hearing had been held and there were no comments. This tract contains the formation known as "Sheep Mountain" which is frequently used during lambing season.

Motion by Mr. Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Parks Division Administrator Jim Swenson reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval of hunting seasons in specific state parks and state historical parks. Besides changes of calendar dates to coincide with seasons, all of the park recommendations are the same as last year except that the portion of Ash Hollow SHP east of Hwy 26 has been removed from hunting, due to the use of the trails in that area by hikers and bikers.

Motion by Mr. Marshall and seconded by Mr. Spurgin to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Wildlife Diversity Program Manager Kristal Stoner reviewed staff recommendations for approval of a resolution supporting the recommendations of Blue Ribbon Panel on sustaining America's diverse fish and wildlife resources and the Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife Campaign. A panel of 26 leaders from conservation and business organizations and agencies has recommended 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. These funds would be used to implement State Wildlife Action Plans, designed to recover our at-risk species and keep common species common as current funding sources and levels are inadequate to address the needs of Nebraska's wildlife and the evolving expectations of society. These funds would be used for habitat improvements, research to guide decision making, education and recreation.

Motion by Mr. Marshall and seconded by Mr. Spurgin to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Planning and Programming Assistant Division Administrator Michelle Koch shared information on the newly developed Conservation Environment Review Tool (CERT). This tool will accelerate the review process with automated review of submitted projects and generation of report receipts, including embedded maps and guidance. This will significantly decrease the amount of staff hours for simple project reviews and reduce wait times for project managers. Because staff members Michelle Koch, Rick Schneider, and Rachel Simpson took the initiative to customize this tool for the agency which will increase efficiency and productivity, Director Douglas advised the Commissioners this qualified them for the Employee Enterprise Award. Chairman Fisher presented the award to Michelle Koch on behalf of the group.

Upland Game Habitat and Access Program Manager John Laux gave an update on the Open Fields and Waters Program, sharing that there was an 8.1% acre increase in the program. He also shared the upland game forecast, revealing that although the pheasant counts were down by 5% compared to last year, they were up 4% from the 5 year average. The best numbers are in the panhandle and Southwest district. Quail numbers are up 29% and 81% above the 5 year average.

Biologically Unique Landscape (BUL) Coordinator for the Natural Legacy Project Andy Moore presented information regarding the Loess Canyon BUL and reviewed the impact of Red Cedar as an invasive species in the area. He shared that he and partners are working with landowners using

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prescribed fire as the most effective method to combat this problem combined with tree removal projects. Fire is also beneficial to restoring the grasslands.

Chairs of the Commissioner Committees gave reports on their respective meetings held the day before.

IT Division Administrator Toni Knust shared that members of the GIS Team were honored with a Special Achievement in GIS Award by ESRI. The Commission is one of only 180 organizations selected from more than 300,000 eligible candidates from around the world to receive this award. The team developed an online data portal that provides GIS data to the public in a variety of formats. With the implemented Enterprise GIS System, the public, staff and other agencies can access this information increasing efficiency and productivity. This achievement garnered the GIS team of Sudhir Ponnapan, Trisha Schlake, and Shelley Schulte an Employee Enterprise Award which was presented by Chairman Fisher.

Public Information Officer Julie Geiss and Wildlife Diversity Manager Kristal Stoner presented a "Critter Moment" featuring a salamander and a variety of aquatic organisms.

Executive Session

Motion by Commissioner Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Bell to go into Executive Session at 11:18 AM for the purpose of discussing pending litigation. Voting aye: Kreitman, Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

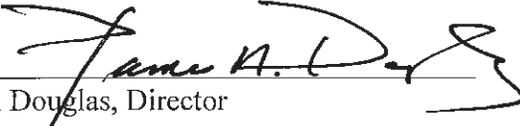
The meeting was re-convened at 11:44 AM.

Motion by Commissioner Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Bell leave Executive Session. Voting aye: Brandt, Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman and Fisher; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Marshall and seconded by Mr. Allen to adjourn the meeting at 11:46 AM. Voting aye: Allen, Bell, Berggren, Spurgin, Ernst, Marshall, Kreitman, Brandt and Fisher; 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 August 17, 2017.


Jim Douglas, Director