MINUTES
October 15, 2020

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the exhibition building at the Keith County Fairgrounds Ogallala, 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 September 30, 2020.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 A.M. Chairman Kreitman 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. He also reviewed the precautions being taken to maintain social distancing due to COVID-19. Members present: Chairman Dan Kreitman, Pat Berggren, Broken Bow; Bob Allen, Eustis; and Doug Zingula, Sidney; Jim Ernst, Columbus; Scott Cassels, Omaha; Rick Brandt, Lincoln; Donna Kush, Omaha; and John Hoggatt, Kearney.

Minutes of the business meeting held August 28, 2020 were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approved the August meeting minutes. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Allen, Brandt, and Kreitman; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Financial vouchers for August and September were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Ernst and seconded by Mr. Cassels to approve the financial vouchers. Voting aye: Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Brandt, Allen, Kush, and Kreitman; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Director’s Report

Director Douglas thanked parks staff for hosting meetings the day before and the previous night’s dinner at Lake McConaughy.

Various local organizations were recognized for their efforts in assisting the agency in efforts to make Lake McConaughy a family friendly destination—through the implementation of the Lake McConaughy Strategic Plan. Resolutions of Appreciation were presented to representatives of Keith County Emergency Management, Keystone-Lemoyne Fire and Rescue, the Lake McConaughy Advisory Committee, and the Keith County Visitor’s Committee.

The Director asked Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin to come up to present a 30-year service award to Todd Nordeen, the Disease and Big Game Research Program Manager.

End Director’s Report.
Chairman Kreitman opened the public hearing at 8:48 AM to consider implementation of statutory authority for the creation of new Commission Order C02, Wild Turkey that will contain season dates, permit bag limits, number of permits authorized, shooting hours and areas open. There were no public comments and the public hearing was closed at 8:53 AM.

Motion by Mr. Cassels, seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Brandt, Allen, Kush, Zingula, and Kreitman; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Kreitman opened the public hearing at 9:00 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4 Wildlife regulations, Section 002, Wild Turkey, regarding the deletion of open seasons, permits authorized, permit bag limits, shooting areas, and areas open, which are included in Commission Order C02, Wild Turkey. Section 002 will retain application periods and requirements, youth eligibility, legal weapons, and hunter orange requirements for turkey hunting. There was no public comment and the hearing was closed at 9:03 AM.

Motion by Mr. Allen and seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Kush, Brandt, Zingula, Berggren, Allen, and Kreitman; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Deputy Director Tim McCoy reviewed the staff recommendation to modify the proposed Chapter 1, Section 006 Regulations approved on August 28, 2020 for a non-substantial change removing the non-resident paddlefish permit fee increase.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Ernst to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Ernst, Hoggatt, Allen, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, and Kreitman; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Parks Division Administrator Jim Swenson reviewed the staff recommendations for the Commission to approve the acquisition of 58.08+ acres in Kearney County adjacent to the Commission’s Fort Kearny State Recreation Area. Staff recommends approval and designation of this area as an addition to the Fort Kearny State Recreation Area.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt and seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Allen, Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, and Kreitman. Voting nay: Brandt. Motion carried.

Director Jim Douglas reviewed the proposed 2021 Commission meeting schedule. There were several adjustments due to calendar conflicts. The 2021 meeting schedule was set as follows: January 12 & 13 Lincoln, March 16 & 17 in Norfolk, April 19 & 20 at Niobrara, June in Chadron dates- TBD, August 26 & 27 Scottsbluff, and October 21 & 22 in North Platte. This schedule is subject to change if necessary due to health concerns or other unavoidable conflicts.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Allen to approve the 2021 meeting schedule as discussed. Voting aye: Allen, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, and Kreitman. Voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Kreitman opened the public hearing at 9:18 AM to consider amendments to

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Commission Order C06, Sport Fishing, regarding daily bag limits, possession limits, length limits, and open areas. There was no public comment and the hearing was closed at 9:27 AM.

Motion by Mr. Ernst and seconded by Mrs. Kush to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Allen, and Kreitman. Voting nay: None. Motion carried.

The meeting was recessed for a ten-minute break and resumed at 9:38 AM.

Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed staff recommendation that the Commission approve acquisition of 6.0± acres in Cherry County adjacent to the Commission’s Chat Canyon Wildlife Management Area. Staff recommends approval and designation of this area as an addition to the Chat Canyon Wildlife Management Area.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Allen to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Allen and Kreitman. Voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Parks Division Administrator Jim Swenson gave a report on Lake McConaughy covering the past summer season, sharing both the accomplishments and difficulties. The improvements made at the lake have been very beneficial, but there is still more work to be done to address the issues caused by extremely large crowds that continue to pour into the area during the summer season. There is not enough local staff, and NGPC staff were brought in from across the state to assist during the peak weekends.

Disease and Big Game Research Program Manager Todd Nordeen gave a report on the state’s mountain sheep herds. Lamb mortality is an ongoing issue in the Pine Ridge, while those lambs in the Wildcat Hills seem to fare much better. Ongoing research continues with South Dakota to find solutions to address these mortality issues related to communicable diseases such as pneumonia.

Planning and Programming Assistant Division Administrator Michelle Koch was present to share information about the Battle Creek Flood Risk Reduction Project and possible impacts the project could have on Oak Valley WMA. She also provided updates on the Missouri River Planning Assistance to States Study for Flood Control and the Platte-Republican Diversion Project.

Wildlife Education Division Administrator Lindsay Rogers was present to share a Northern Prairie Skink for critter moment. This small reptile is fairly common in Nebraska, but has a limited range.

Alicia Hardin gave a brief update on the progress of the Berggren 2.0 Committee’s meetings.

Commissioner Committee Chairs shared reports on their respective meetings.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Berggren to go into Executive Session at 11:22 AM to discuss personnel issues and litigation. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Allen, Brandt and Kreitman. Voting nay: None. Motion carried. Regular session was resumed at 11:47.

The Commissioners agreed to hold their annual strategy meeting on December 11 and 12, 2020 at the Marshall cabin near Kearney.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Allen and seconded by Mrs. Kush to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 AM. Voting aye: Berggren, Cassels, Ernst, Hoggatt, Allen, Brandt, Kush, Zingula and Kreitman. 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 October 15, 2020.

[Signature]

James N. Douglas, Director