MINUTES
April 28, 2022

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Eagle View Lodge at Niobrara State Park, Niobrara, 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 April 15, 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Berggren 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. Members present: Chairman Pat Berggren, Broken Bow; Dan Kreitman Wahoo; Doug Zingula, Sidney; Rick Brandt, Lincoln; Donna Kush, Omaha, Ken Curry, Columbus; John Hoggatt, Kearney; Scott Cassels, Omaha; and Bob Allen, Eustis.

Minutes of the business meeting held March 23, 2022 were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for March were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy thanked Scott Wessels for the early morning visit for interested Commissioners to see sharp-tailed grouse. He also thanked Cogan Thompson and the rest of the Niobrara staff for hosting the meeting and the field trip the day before.

Awards- A 45-year service award was presented to Dean Rosenthal. Thirty-year Hunter Education Instructor Awards were given to Bill Christensen and Gary Howe. Niobrara Park Superintendent Cogan Thompson was given a certificate of appreciation for his military service in the National Guard and his year-long deployment.

Director McCoy gave an update on the Grasslands Initiative work that is ongoing. He also announced that a $1,000.00 donation was made by Safari International for the Hunters
Helping the Hungry program.

The Director announced the next Commission meetings will be at Holiday Inn Express in Lexington on June 16 and 17.

End Director’s Report

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the June Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Section 001 General Wildlife Regulations.

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

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the June Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Section 037 Mountain Lions.

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

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the June Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 2, Fisheries Regulations, Section 006 Sportfishing.

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

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the June Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Orders C002 Turkeys.

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

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the June Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Orders C005 Small Game.

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

TIME OUTDOORS IS TIME WELL SPENT
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Chairman Berggren moved to item 10. Communications Division Administrator Christy Firestone shared details on what is new for Take “Em Fishing-Year 4.

Chairman Berggren opened the public hearing at 8:34 AM to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Order 003, Antelope, Deer, Elk; regarding changes to permit numbers, season dates, bag limits, and areas open. Big Game Program Manager Luke Meduna shared the 2022 Big Game recommendations. Commissioners asked questions/shared their views, but there were no comments received and no public testimony at the meeting. The public hearing was closed at 9:34 AM.

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

Chairman Berggren announced a ten-minute recess.

Furbearer and Carnivore Program Manager Sam Wilson reviewed some changes with the status of wolves. Gray wolves were taken off the Federal Endangered Species list in January of 2021, after which wolves were not protected in Nebraska. In February of 2022, a federal court reinstated federal protections for wolves as endangered in 44 states, including Nebraska. With federal protections, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will lead responses to reports of wolf mortalities or livestock depredation, and we will coordinate with the Service on wolf sightings or suspected presence.

The next item on the agenda was the public comment period. Senator Tim Gragert was present at the meeting and shared that the STAR WARS projects passed by the Nebraska Legislature will be a great opportunity for northeast Nebraska, and the whole state, by providing additional outdoor recreation to boost economic development and tourism. He feels NGPC will be important to the success of these projects and expressed his appreciation for the agency.

Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed projects that have taken place and are ongoing at Fort Atkinson State Historical Park. The Commission has a great partnership with the Friends of Fort Atkinson which is a volunteer group that raises money and helps with improvements at the park.

Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal gave a fisheries update, including a report on the Lake Mac fisheries public meeting and the walleye spawn and shared a video of the spawning process.

Communications Assistant Division Administrator, Jeff Rawlinson shared an update on shooting ranges, sharing details on ranges that were recently completed and still in the works.

Committee reports were given by their respective Chair/Spokesperson.

Executive Session

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Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Brandt to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 11:41 AM, asking the Director and Deputy Director to participate. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Allen, Kreitman, Cassels, Hoggatt, Brandt, Curry and Berggren; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 12:12 PM.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Curry to leave executive session. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Zingula, Kush, Brandt, Kreitman, Cassels, Curry and Berggren; Allen absent and not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Allen to adjourn the meeting at 12:16 PM. Zingula, Brandt, Kush, Allen, Kreitman, Cassels, Curry, Hoggatt and Berggren; 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 28, 2022.

Timothy McCoy, Director