



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

MINUTES
March 23, 2022

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Terrace Room at the Lied Lodge Nebraska City, 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 March 10, 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; and Scott Cassels, Omaha; Bob Allen, Eustis was absent.

Minutes of the business meeting held January 28, 2022 were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Curry to approve the meeting minutes. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Hoggatt, Brandt, Curry and Kreitman; Allen absent not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Financial vouchers for January and February were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt and seconded by Mr. Kreitman to approve the financial vouchers. Voting aye: Zingula, Berggren, Cassels, Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush and Kreitman; Allen absent, not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Director's Report

Director McCoy thanked the Lied Lodge and Arbor Day Farm Staff for the tour of Arbor Day Farms and dinner at the Arbor Lodge mansion the day before.

Service awards were presented to Mike Remund for 45 years and Gene Hunt for 50 years of service.

Director McCoy gave a report on the North American conference he attended in Spokane Washington.

The Director announced the next Commission meeting will be at Niobrara State Park April 27 and 28 as well as other items of interest to Commissioners coming up in April.

End Director's Report

Chairman Berggren read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the April Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Order 003 Antelope, Deer, and Elk.

Motion by Mr. Zingula, seconded by Mr. Hoggatt to approve staff recommendations. Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush, Zingula and Kreitman, Cassels and Berggren; Allen absent and not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Since it was not yet time for the public hearing, Chairman Berggren moved to item seven. Furbearer and Carnivore Program Manager Sam Wilson shared the results of the first River Otter trapping season. He reviewed the remarkable re-population efforts that resulted in the removal of the species from the Threatened and Endangered Species list. He shared that a total of 78 otters were trapped during the initial season.

Chairman Berggren opened the public hearing at 8:33 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Section 003, Antelope, Deer, Elk. Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin shared that the proposed regulations give preference to residents to purchase non-draw deer and antelope permits before non-residents. There were no comments received and no public testimony at the meeting. The public hearing was closed at 8:39 AM.

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Ms. Kush to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Cassels, Kreitman, Curry and Berggren; Allen and Cassels absent and not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Berggren asked Legislative, Finance and Communications Chair to give the report for his committee to fill time until the public hearing could begin. The rest of the Committee reports will be given later.

Chairman Berggren opened the public hearing at 8:47 AM to consider comments to Wildlife Commission Orders C06, Coots, Geese, Crow. Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin presented staff recommendations regarding changes in dates, bag limits and zone boundaries. She reported that 81 comments representing 226 people were received: seven comments representing 110 people wanting the season to start later than staff recommendations, 12 comments in support of staff recommendations, 19 comments representing 99 people wanting to accept staff recommendations or move the start date to October 15, two comments to move the season a week earlier, one comment supporting staff recommendations, but would also like later dates, one comment to move their area to Zone 2 (due to earlier dates) and one comment preferring later start dates, but did not specify a zone. There were six commenters that asked to be part of the public record. Those comments are attached to these minutes. There were seven testifiers at the meeting:

Mike Cunningham 2220 N 81st St. Lincoln, NE testified in support of staff recommendations, although earlier would work for him as well. He also commented that spinning wing decoys should be banned.

John Svoboda 16107 Wakeley St. Omaha, NE testified that he prefers an October 15 start date for Zone 4; but can live with staff recommendations start date of October 22. He advised that

TIME OUTDOORS IS TIME WELL SPENT

OutdoorNebraska.org

Commissioners should not base their decisions on personal preferences or special interests.

Phil Mentzer 2903 Brooks Hollow Drive Fremont, NE testified that staff recommendations are "100% right on." He said that thousands of ducks sit on sandpit lakes and a later season does not help with their success rate in Zone 4. His son moved to South Dakota because he didn't like duck hunting in Nebraska.

Chad Podolak 1409 53rd St. Columbus, NE testified that the optics of NGPC and the Commission were not very favorable 4-5 years ago, when the Commissioners changed dates abruptly and again when the Commission changed the dates for Zone 4 without discussion last year. Last year's decision resulted in a 19% reduction in their success. He supports the staff recommendations for Zone 4. He believes use of spinning wing decoys ought to be banned.

Chuck Blaha #5 Bussell Park Road Ord, NE testified last year to change the dates for Zone 4 to a week later and came to support changing the dates like they did last year with an October 29-January 10 season.

Randy Chin 1403 8th Street Columbus, NE testified in favor of staff recommendations for Zone 4. He said he has hunted for 60 plus years. He has 104 acres in permanent wetlands and says the ducks are gone by January. Earlier dates give hunters a greater success rate.

Kyle Simpson 209090 Elkhorn, NE also testified in support of staff recommendations for Zone 4. He has been hunting in eastern Nebraska for 50 years and agreed with earlier comments. He said earlier season dates offer more opportunity and recruitment for kids. He suggested for the future, ideally the federal framework should allow 2 zones, with 2 splits in both. Opening day should not be during the week. He added that he agreed that spinning wing decoys should be eliminated.

Commissioners discussed the comments that they had seen and heard and their experiences within the zones they hunt. They had questions and gave comments regarding the data used in the recommendations, the timing and content of the waterfowl hunter survey, the need to practice good process, and the importance of information and input received in their decisions. With no other testimony, the public hearing was closed at 10:17AM.

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Mr. Zingula to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, and Cassels; Allen absent and not voting; voting nay: Berggren and Kreitman. Motion carried.

Chairman Berggren announced a ten-minute recess.

The next item on the agenda was the public comment period. There were a couple of comments Chad Podolak of Columbus expressed his concerns over the Legislature passing the Early Landowner Season. He said it is discriminatory in favor of landowners and it is a difficult situation for youth when their friends can start hunting earlier because their families own land, and those that do not have family land cannot. He hopes that NGPC could kill it, or at the least, make it youth only.

Mike Cunningham of Lincoln earlier statement that spinning wing decoys be eliminated, or to take a two-year break from using them to see what that does to help waterfowl.

The rest of the Committee reports were given by their respective Chair/Spokesperson.

TIME OUTDOORS IS TIME WELL SPENT

OutdoorNebraska.org

Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Kreitman and seconded by Ms. Kush to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 11:21 AM. Voting aye: Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Cassels, Hoggatt, Berggren and Kreitman; Allen absent and not voting; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 11:39 AM.

Motion by Mr. Kreitman and seconded by Mr. Brandt 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.

The Commissioners discussed some topics for the April meeting agendas.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Curry to adjourn the meeting at 12:01 PM. Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Cassels, Berggren, Curry and Kreitman; Allen absent and not voting; 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 March 23, 2022.



Timothy McCoy, Director