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MINUTES  
October 13, 2023

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Buffalo Barracks meeting room at Fort Robinson State Park, Crawford, 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 8, 2023.

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

Minutes of the special meeting held August 2, 2023, were reviewed.

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

Minutes of the business meeting held August 4, 2023 were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for August and September were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy thanked the Fort Robinson Parks staff for hosting these meetings and the great meals they have provided.

Director McCoy presented Prominent Partners Awards of Excellence to NW Development Corp Director Deb Cottier and to Carl Larsen for their roles on the Governor's Pine Ridge Wild Turkey Hunt Committee and all the years they have made the Pine Ridge Turkey Hunt such a success.

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Thirty-five-year service awards were presented to Dean Studnicka of Wildlife by Alicia Hardin and to Karen Becker of Administration from the North Platte District Office by Sheri Henderson.

The Director gave a report on the Ponca Expo and the memorial gift from the Vanderheiden family of a Trail & Track Chair.

The Director reviewed some upcoming NGPC events, including the Turpin Outdoor Education Center dedication on October 14.

### End Director's Report

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing at 8:25 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 1 Administration Regulations, Chapter 1, Section 006, Rules relating to fees for licenses and permits, regarding increasing license fees for non-resident permits for deer, antelope and turkey for the 2024 season. Budget and Fiscal Division Administrator Kay Mencl reviewed staff recommendations. No comments were received before the hearing. Richard Edwards of Alliance, NE stated that we should not raise fees because there is no wildlife left. The remainder of his comments were regarding predator control and other concerns. Steve Erdman of Bayard NE commented in opposition because he says Game and Parks has extra money they are not spending. He asked what they would do with the money? More projects at Fort Robinson? The remainder of his comments were focused on wildlife depredation and other topics. Stacy Swinney of Chadron commented saying that non-residents will pay for the permits and the increase will not bother them, but his concern was related to the reduction in the numbers of non-resident permits available to public and his hope that the reduction in permits is temporary, because hunting has important economic impacts on the local area. With no other public testimony, the hearing was closed at 8:52 AM.

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

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing at 8:56 AM to consider amendments to Fisheries Commission Order C06 Sportfishing regarding daily bag limits, possession limits, length limits, and open areas. Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal shared staff recommendations. No public comments were received prior to the hearing, and with no public present to testify, the hearing was closed at 9:08 AM.

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

Chairman Cassels moved back to item 5 on the agenda and read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the January Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section 001, General Regulations Covering Wildlife Species.

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

Chairman Cassels read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the January Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section 003, Antelope, Deer and Elk.

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

Chairman Cassels read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the January Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section )19 Area Specific Regulations.

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

After a 15-minute recess, Chairman Cassels opened the public comment period:

Richard Edwards of Alliance who shared his frustrations with the Commission and depredation on his property he had set up for pheasant hunting and 18 elk were on the property. He does not feel he should have to go through the depredation process to get a special landowner depredation permit, but that he should be able to submit an affidavit that he has wildlife damage and take care of the problem himself.

Barbara Keegan, Box Butte County Highway Superintendent was present to talk to the Commission about the need for improvements on County Road 70 going to the Box Butte State Rec Area. She was interested in knowing if the Commission would be willing to partner with the county to make improvements to the roadway. The Commission advised that Parks Division would be happy to visit with them about any opportunities there might be in the rec road program to do so.

Outfitter Scott Kuhn stood to let the Commissioners know that predators are the culprits in the declining turkey population and he has 140 trail cams that he monitors. He was asking if the Commission would authorize a tail bounty on the predators-skunks, raccoons, and coyotes. He also is not a fan of the new permit system and says we should make our programs easy for 60-year-olds to navigate.

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Tad King spoke briefly as a former employee of Fort Robinson State Park. He used to do jeep rides and everyone always wanted to see the “sheep”. He would like us to get more big horn sheep back at Fort Robinson.

Budget and Fiscal Division Administrator Kay Mencl reviewed staff recommendations that the Commission approve a mid-biennium adjustment request for FY24 and FY25.

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

Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval of the park fees established for the new cabins at ET Mahoney and Platte River State Parks.

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

Director Tim McCoy reviewed staff recommendations with Commissioner weigh in from the day before for Commissioner approval of the dates and locations of the 2024 Commission meetings held across the state. Commissioner Kush noted one correction with clarification that the October 2024 meeting will be on October 24 and 25, instead of the 10 and 11.

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

Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval of a permanent easement request from Custer Public Power District for burying overhead powerlines on Victoria Springs State Recreation area, Custer County, Nebraska.

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

The Know Your Region presentation was given by Mike Morava from Parks, Craig Stover from Law Enforcement, Hunter Baille from Wildlife, Joe Rydell from Fisheries and Justin Haag from Communications.

Big Game Program Manager Luke Meduna gave a pronghorn research update showing the movement of antelope which were collared for this project. Research shows that some of these animals travel many miles during different times of the year.

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Regional Parks Superintendent Mike Morava gave a presentation on Fort Robinson State Park operations.

Commissioner Kush recognized and thanked the Fort Rob staff for the wonderful meal they prepared the night before during good of the order.

#### Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Mr. Brandt to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel and legal matters at 11:52 AM, asking the Director McCoy and AAG Wiggam to participate. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Hughes, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, and Cassels; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

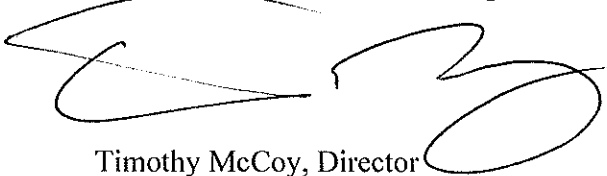
The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 12:20 PM.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt and seconded by Mr. Curry to leave executive session. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Hughes, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, and Cassels; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

#### Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Ms. Kush to adjourn the meeting at 12:23 PM. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Hughes, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, Curry and Cassels; Hughes was absent; 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 13, 2023.



Timothy McCoy, Director