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MINUTES
January 19, 2024

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the third floor conference room at NGPC Headquarters in Lincoln, 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 January 5, 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 October 13, 2023, were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for October, November and December were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy introduced Jeff Rawlinson to present awards for Hunter Education instructors. Kevin Hennecke of Lincoln was recognized with a 30-year award and a Heritage Instructor Award was given to Gary Brunberg of Omaha.

The Director reviewed upcoming NGPC events, including the sport shows that the agency will be participating in. He also shared that the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation is celebrating their 40-year anniversary and the NASP state tournament is coming up in March.

The March Commission meeting will be in Hastings on March 7 and 8 at the Hastings Convention Center.

End Director's Report

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Chairman Cassels read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the March Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section 006, Coot, Duck, Goose and Crow.

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

Chairman Cassels read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the March Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Orders C06-Coot, Duck, Goose and Crow.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt and seconded by Mr. Zingula 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 8:15 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4 Wildlife Regulations Section 001 General Regulations Covering Wildlife Species to allow for up to six people to apply on one application for applicable big game draw permits, to allow for internet and telephone checking of deer taken during the November firearm season in addition to physical check stations, and to clarify possession and sale of furbearers taken under the authority of 37-559. No public comments were received and no one testified at the hearing. The hearing was closed at 8:26 AM.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt, seconded by Ms. Kush to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Hughes, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt and Cassels; voting nay: Brandt. Motion carried.

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing at 8:30 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section 003, Antelope, Deer and Elk to simplify the application and purchasing process for deer, elk, and antelope permits by collapsing eight purchasing periods to four and harmonizing application periods for elk and antelope landowner permits. To add new draw units for non-resident deer to allow for these higher demand units to have a fair way for non-residents to apply, or purchase or earn a preference point. There were no public comments were received before the hearing and no one testified at the hearing. The hearing was closed at 8:58 AM.

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

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing at 09:04 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations Section 19 Area Specific Regulations to allow for elk hunting on the Clear Creek WMA portion of the Garden County State Game Refuge and to restrict weapons allowed to be used on the Bur Oak WMA in Seward County. No public comments were received prior to the hearing and no one testified at the hearing. The hearing was closed at 9:10 AM.

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

After a 15-minute recess, Chairman Cassels opened the public comment period. There was no public comment.

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Planning and Programming Division Administrator Michelle Stryker reviewed staff recommendations to approve the ranking of the local community grant outdoor recreation project applications for the FY 2023 apportionment of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Stateside Assistance Program. The attached list of projects includes recommendations for LWCF grant applications for the 2023 fiscal year.

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.

Planning and Programming Division Administrator Michelle Stryker reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval of the ranking of the local outdoor trail projects for federal funding for FY 2024 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) apportionment and unobligated funds from previous years.

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.

Due to a conflict with Arbor Day, staff shared a recommendation asking for Commission approval to change the dates for the April meeting to Wednesday, April 24 and Thursday, April 25, 2024.

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

Depredation Program Manager Dusty Schelbitzki gave a summary depredation report sharing the statistics of the depredation efforts made by staff in 2023.

Michelle Stryker reviewed the Strategic Plan Next Steps for 2024, which included reports from leaders of each goal on how we plan to move forward in the coming year.

Leaders of the Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Plan team gave a progress report as well as a summary of the 2023 Summit. The plan includes engaging outdoor participants in boating, fishing, hunting, parks and shooting sports.

Outdoor Education Specialist, Aaron Hershberger gave the National Archery in Schools Program (NASP) update, sharing how much the program continues to grow and expects approximately 800 students to attend the event this year.

The Lake Mac Creel Survey report was tabled until the next meeting.

NGPC Zoologist Shaun Dunn shared the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle Reintroduction update regarding the progress of efforts to add to their population. These beetles are only found in the saline wetlands in eastern Nebraska and require proper conditions to survive.

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The 2023 CWD Testing Update was tabled until the next meeting.

Big Game Program Manger Luke Meduna presented the big game harvest report.

Election of new officers

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Curry to approve the slate of officers of Chairman Doug Zingula, First Vice Chair John Hoggatt and Second Vice-Chair Donna Kush. Voting aye, Hoggatt, Hughes, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Brandt and Cassels; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Mr. Curry to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 12:10 PM, asking the Director McCoy 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 12:55 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.

Motion by Mr. Zingula and seconded by Mr. Hoggatt to approve the Director's Compensation package as presented. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Hughes, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula and Cassels; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Mr. Curry to adjourn the meeting at 1:05 PM. Voting aye: Hughes, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, and Cassels; 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 January 19, 2024.



Timothy McCoy, Director

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