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MINUTES
June 21, 2024

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the Petrified Wood and Art Gallery in 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 June 11, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Zingula advised this meeting was being held in conformance with the State Open Meetings 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; Scott Cassels, Omaha; Dan Hughes, Venango and John Hoggatt, Kearney. Donna Kush, Omaha was absent.

Minutes of the meeting held April 25, 2024, were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for April and May were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy expressed thanks to the Lake McConaughy Park staff for hosting the Commission meetings and tour yesterday. He also expressed gratitude to Central Public Power and Irrigation District for their presentation at the meeting the day before and for hosting Commissioners and staff for dinner last evening.

The Director reported that CJ Zajicek was given an award by the State of Nebraska Tourism for her many years of outstanding customer service as our park reservations specialist.

The Director shared information on recent and upcoming NGPC events.

The August Commission meetings will be at Fort Robinson State Historical Park August 15 and 16.

End Director's Report

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Chairman Zingula read the staff recommendation to call for a public hearing at the August Commission meeting to consider amendments to Chapter 5, Park Regulations Section 001 General Regulations Governing the Administration and Use of State Park Property.

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

Chairman Zingula read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the August Commission meeting to consider amendments to Commission Order CO14 Mountain Sheep.

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

With time before the first public hearing could begin, Chairman Zingula moved to Item #10 on the agenda. Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval to allow hunting in specific state parks and state historical parks.

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

Chairman Zingula opened the public hearing at 8:15 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 2 Fisheries Regulations Section 006 Sport Fishing. Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal reviewed staff recommendations related to the use of live bait fish and special area regulations. There were no public comments received in advance of the meeting nor any testimony given at the hearing. The public hearing was closed at 8:19 AM.

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

With additional time before the second public hearing, Chairman Zingula moved to Item 11 on the agenda. Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval of a land transfer of 88 acres adjacent to Mormon Island State Recreation Area from the Federal Highway Administration to the Commission.

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

There was still some time before the next public hearing, so Chairman Zingula moved to item 15 on the agenda. Marketing and Communications Specialist Julie Geiser reported on the agency's West-central Nebraska outreach and communications.

Chairman Zingula opened the public hearing at 8:42 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 4,

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Wildlife Regulations Section 037 Mountain Lions. Furbearer/Carnivore Program Manager Sam Wilson reviewed staff recommendations. He informed the Commission that there was a drafting error where extraneous text consisting of "Commission Order CO3 CO3-24" was accidentally inserted into section 037.01C Wildcat Hills. He asked that if the Commissioners move to approve the proposed regulations, that they include the approval of deletion of the accidental text. Comments received were as follows:

Exhibit 2: 70 comments in favor, this includes 1 group letter from Safari Club International and additional letters from some of their members, as well as other individuals. 26 were in-state comments, the rest were out of state comments.

Exhibit 3: Five letters were sent in opposition including from three groups: the Mountain Lion Foundation, the Humane Society of the United States, and the Prairie Hills Audubon. There were two in-state letters of opposition. One letter included an online petition list of 222 people, some offered additional comments. Five stated they are in state.

In person testimony was given at the meeting by the following:

Colin Croft Gering NE stated he opposed the harvest recommendations (He also submitted a letter included in Exhibit B detailing his position that included the online petition signers.)

Mark Spurgin Ogallala, NE stated he was in favor of the seasons in all units but would like to see a unit that would cover the rest of the state.

Kent Forney Lincoln, NE stated he was in favor of the season on mountain lions but he wondered if the limits should be higher to prevent lions from causing "stress" to other animals (wild and domestic).

With no additional testimony, the public hearing was closed at 9:21 AM.

Motion by Mr. Curry, seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations including the deletion of the accidental text. Voting aye: Cassels, Curry, Hoggatt Berggren, Hughes and Zingula; voting nay: Brandt. Kush was absent. Motion carried.

After a 10-minute recess, Chairman Zingula opened the public hearing at 9:55 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 5 Park Regulations Section 001 General Regulations Governing the Administration and Use of State Park Property. Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields and Planning and Programming Division Administrator Michelle Stryker reviewed staff recommendations. There were no public comments received before the meeting. Public testimony was given by Colin Croft of Gering in support of the new e-bike regulations. With no other testimony, the hearing was closed at 10:13 AM.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Cassels to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Berggren,

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Brandt, Hughes, Cassels, and Zingula; voting nay: None. Kush was absent. Motion carried.

Public Comment Period

Mark Spurgin of Ogallala stated that he appreciates all of the Waterfowl, Big Game, and Fisheries meetings that NGPC holds each year. While he knows that online meetings are easier, he would like these groups to come out and hold these meetings in person.

Justin Bussell of Imperial shared his opinions on the decreasing numbers of pheasant, quail and deer. He asked if the Commission had considered having Upland Game Management Areas like there is mule deer and suggested that we might look at decreasing the harvest limits. He feels part of the problem is there is significant increase in predators like coyotes, skunks, and raccoons since the fur market has seriously declined and few people trap any more. He thinks NGPC should consider an extra stamp on permits to help small game with a predator bounty.

During good of the order, Chairman Zingula stated it was very rewarding to see how well the partnerships that have been established are working at Lake Mac with all the various entities involved.

Fisheries Irrigation and Reservoir Specialist Keith Koupal gave a report on the Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala Fish survey that was completed.

Jeff Fields gave the Lake McConaughy SRA Mid-season Report.

Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Mr. Berggren to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 11:00 AM. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Berggren, Brandt, Hughes, Cassels, Curry, and Zingula; voting nay: None. Kush was absent. Motion carried.

The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 11:43AM.

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

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Mr. Berggren to adjourn the meeting at 11:46 AM. Voting aye: Hughes, Hoggatt, Cassels, Curry, Berggren, Brandt and Zingula; voting nay: None. Kush was absent. 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 June 21, 2024.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy McCoy', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Timothy McCoy, Director

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