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MINUTES
January 24, 2025

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the third-floor conference room of 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 9, 2025.

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; Kent McNeill, Papillion; Dan Hughes, Venango, Donna Kush, Omaha, and John Hoggatt, Kearney. Scott Cassels, Omaha; absent.

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

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

Minutes of the special meeting held December 2, 2024 were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for October, November and December were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy began his report with a 40-year service award that was presented to Dennis Polk of the Operations and Construction department.

The Director then introduced Keith Koupal to share the details of an award given to Larry Pape by the Aquatic Resources Education Association recognizing the NGPC Aquatic Education Program for the Outstanding Program of the Year for 2024.

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The Director shared information on recent and upcoming NGPC events, including the First Day Hikes, Your Parks Adventure Trail Trek, big game meetings, upcoming sports shows, and captures of three big game species for research planned throughout February and early March.

Director McCoy announced the projects that were awarded through Watchable Wildlife Grants this year and shared that last year was a record breaking one for Open Fields and Waters with over 435,000 acres enrolled.

Other updates included the status of Spring turkey permit sales and the end of the recent mountain lion hunting season, as well as a reminder about the upcoming Nebraska Big Game Society annual meeting and auction.

The March Commission meetings will be held in Ord at the Cobblestone Inn and Suites Trotter Event Center on March 20 and 21.

End Director's Report

Chairman Zingula read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the March Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife C06, Coot, Duck, Geese and Crow Hunting.

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

Administration Division Administrator Angie Janda-Craig reviewed staff recommendations for the Commission to approve the first Nebraska Game and Parks Employee Recognition Program.

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

Fisheries Assistant Division Administrator Tony Barada reviewed the staff recommendation for Commission approval of the 2025 Aquatic Habitat Plan.

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

Planning and Programming Assistant Division Administrator Hannah Jones reviewed the staff recommendation for Commission approval of the ranking of the local community grant outdoor recreation project applications for the FY 2024 apportionment of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Stateside Assistance Program.

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

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McNeill, Curry, Hughes and Zingula; Cassels, absent voting nay: None.
Motion carried.

Game and Parks Trail Manager Alex Duryea reviewed staff recommendations to approve the ranking of local outdoor trail projects for federal funding for the Fiscal Year 2025 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) apportionment and unobligated funds from previous years.

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

Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed staff recommendations for the Commission designation of the Bureau of Education Land and Funds (BELF) property (593+ acres) located in Section 36, Township 20N, Range 54W, Banner County as an addition to the Williams Gap WMA.

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

Chairman Zingula resumed the meeting after a ten-minute recess with the public comment opportunity. Mike Cunningham of Lincoln shared that his company sells duck blinds, so he has been getting many calls from concerned waterfowl hunters due to the reduction in duck populations in Canada and fewer ducks migrating. He wanted to give a 120-day alert of these increasing hunter concerns before the Commission sets the waterfowl criteria for the next season.

Former Fisheries Division Administrator Dean Rosenthal rose to express his appreciation of the Commissioners and all the volunteer work they do to help us achieve our mission.

Mike Anderson of the NE Horse Trails Association rose to express his excitement about equine system improvements in the state parks.

Depredation Program Manager Dusty Schelbitzki gave the annual depredation report. The program has celebrated continued successes that were confirmed by the survey of customers assisted with depredation projects. The review shows positive responses to the program, staff assistance, etc.

Fisheries Division Fish and Wildlife Specialist Keith Hurley reviewed the Fisheries Human Dimensions Research and Application program he created for the agency. He shared the results of the research. The application is called Fincatch and took several years to complete. Once Keith completed his presentation, he was awarded an NGPC Enterprise Award for the creation of the new Fincatch application.

Ag Program Manager Jenny Prenosil gave an Ag Program Update by sharing potential opportunities and items to watch going forward that would affect our program as well as updates on cover crops, contributions to the Great Plains Grassland Initiative and a review of CRP trends.

Game and Parks Trail Manager Alex Duryea gave details regarding the upcoming 2025 Cowboy Trail 30th Anniversary and the events that are being planned to celebrate along the trail.

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The next item on the agenda was the election of 2025 Commission Officers.

Motion by Mr. Hughes and seconded by Mr. Brandt to elect the following slate of officers for 2025: Chairman John Hoggatt, 1st Vice Chair Donna Kush and 2nd Vice Chair Ken Curry. Voting aye: Kush, McNeil, Curry, Hughes, Brandt, and Zingula; voting nay: None; Cassels absent. Hoggatt abstained. Motion carried.

Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Brandt, seconded by Mr. Curry to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel and legal matters at 11:07 AM. Voting aye: Berggren, Brandt, Kush, McNeill, Curry, Hughes, Hoggatt, and Zingula; Cassels, absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 12:14 PM.

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Ms. Kush to leave executive session at 12:14 PM. Voting aye: Brandt, Kush, Hughes, McNeill, Curry, Hoggatt, Berggren, and Zingula; Cassels, absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed staff recommendations to relinquish 279 acres of irrigation water rights on the Chet and Jane Fliesbach WMA.

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

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Hughes and seconded by Mr. Curry to adjourn the meeting at 12:22 PM. Voting aye: Hughes, Hoggatt, McNeill, Curry, Berggren, Brandt and Zingula; Cassels, 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 January 24, 2025.



Timothy McCoy, Director

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