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MINUTES
March 21, 2025

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met at the Trotter Event Center in Ord, 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 13, 2025.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Hoggatt 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: Kurt Arganbright, Valentine; Doug Zingula, Sidney; Scott Cassels, Omaha; Kent McNeill, Papillion; Dan Hughes, Venango, Donna Kush, Omaha, and John Hoggatt, Kearney. Steve Mossman, Lincoln and Ken Curry, Columbus were absent.

Minutes of the meeting held January 24, 2025, were reviewed.

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

Financial vouchers for January and February were reviewed.

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

Director's Report

Director McCoy began his report with a 40-year service award he presented to Roger Kuhn and he introduced Alicia Hardin to present a 40-year service award to Mark Feeney. He also reported that Ted LaGrange, the Wetland program manager was honored at the recent North American Fish and Wildlife conference with the Wetlands Conservation Legacy Award from Ducks Unlimited.

The Director shared information on recent and upcoming NGPC events, including the NASP tournament, upcoming fisheries meetings, trout stocking, super tag lottery packages open, big horn sheep and mule deer captures and the start of spring turkey season.

The March Commission meetings will be held in the Crete Carrier Lodge at ET Mahoney State Park on April 17 and 18.

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End Director's Report

Chairman Hoggatt read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the April Commission meeting to consider amendments to Wildlife C03, Antelope, Deer, Elk.

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

Chairman Hoggatt opened the public hearing to consider amendments to Wildlife Commission Orders C06, Coots, Ducks, Geese, Crow, regarding changes in 2025-2026 season dates at 8:16 AM. Waterfowl Program Manager John McKinney reviewed staff recommendations. There was a total of 26 comments on behalf of 17 individuals before the meeting. No comments were received for Zones 1 and 3. There was one comment supporting a week later opening for Early Teal. Zone 2 comments included a comment supporting staff recommendations and one for maintaining an early opener. Zone 4 comments included 3 supporting staff recommendations and 7 suggesting later season dates, 1 comment requesting an earlier start date and 1 comment requesting a 1/11 closing date to get another weekend at the end of the season. There were 2 comments supporting a season on Nov. 14-Feb. 9th for white-fronted and light goose seasons, and 2 for more opportunity in January for those species but dates were not specified. For dark goose, one comment was in support of staff recommendations and the other was to reduce the Canada goose limit to a 3-bird daily bag.

Doug Otte of St. Paul gave testimony at the meeting that he had lost about 3 weeks of his duck hunting season when his property was moved from Zone 2 to Zone 4. Otte said he overall supports staff recommendations but asks the Commission not to move the date any farther back than what was proposed for Zone 4. He hopes his problems may go away if the upcoming re-zoning change will change his property back to Zone 2.

Pat Berggren of Broken Bow agrees with most of staff recommendations, 35% of their harvest is the last 3 weeks of the season, only 15% is the first three weeks. October dates are needed for Zone 2. White-fronts could be moved back a week earlier, but he understands why it is easier to be consistent with the other species. There was no other public testimony so the public hearing was closed at 9 AM.

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

No one stood to make any comments during the public comment period. Chair Hoggatt called for a ten-minute recess.

Recreational Trails Manager Alex Duryea reviewed the staff recommendation for Commission approval of the Board Resolution to sign any outstanding and all future Supplemental Agreements, Contracts, Amendments, or Agreements for the Transportation Alternatives Program, funding the surfacing of the Cowboy Trail from Rushville to Mile Marker 400, near Chadron.

Motion by Ms. Kush and seconded by Mr. McNeill to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Arganbright, Kush, McNeill,

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

Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed the staff recommendation for Commission approval of a right-of-way easement request from Omaha Public Power District, for installation of new power poles and corresponding overhead lines at Louisville State Recreational Area in Cass County.

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

Budget and Fiscal Division Administrator Kay Mencl gave a review of the second year for the new permit system and continued improvements that have been made.

Fisheries Division Administrator Tony Barada provided an update on Walleye spawn efforts and the spawn plan for this year.

Wildlife Assistant Division Administrator TJ Walker gave a habitat presentation reviewing the status of NGPC's habitat improvement efforts across the state including work that occurs with private landowners to improve habitat and increase public access.

Motion by Mr. Hughes, seconded by Mr. Zingula to enter executive session for personnel issues at 11:01 AM. Voting aye: Arganbright, Kush, Cassels, McNeill, Zingula, Hughes and Hoggatt; Curry and Mossman were absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Hoggatt resumed regular session at 12:37 PM.

Motion by Mr. Hughes, seconded by Ms. Kush to leave executive session. Voting aye: Kush, Cassels, McNeill, Arganbright, Hoggatt, Hughes and Zingula; Curry and Mossman were absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Cassels and seconded by Ms. Kush to adjourn the meeting at 12:38 PM. Voting aye: Hughes, Hoggatt, McNeill, Cassels, Arganbright, Brandt and Zingula; Curry and Mossman were 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 March 21, 2025.



Timothy McCoy, Director

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