

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES – April 21st, 2021

CALL TO ORDER, NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION, ROLL CALL

Chairman Steffen called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in the Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Kearney, Nebraska, and called the roll.

Roll Call:

Commissioners		Absent	Present	Commissioners		Absent	Present
Anderson	Garry		X	Krause	Timothy P		X
Batie	Donald		X	Kubat	Rick		X
Bradley	Lawrence		X	McDonald	Mike	X	
Citta Jr.	Joseph L		X	Miller	John		X
Clouse	Stan		X	Reynolds	Michael (Mick)		X
Czaplewski	Mark		X	Schroer	Lyle	X	
Deines	Dave		X	Sievers	LeRoy		X
Dunbar	Brad		X	Smathers	Scott	X	
Fornoff	Kevin		X	Steffen	Jeff		X
Hadenfeldt	N. Richard		X	Steinkruger	Dan		X
Halligan	Bill	X		Strauch	Walter Dennis		X
Heaston	John		X	Taylor	Loren		X
Knutson	Thomas		X	Wilke	Greg		X
Kraus	Don		X				

DNR staff in attendance:

Kent Zimmerman, Emily Rose and Jill Richters.

Others in attendance were:

None

Announcements:

None

Introduction of New Commissioners:

Chairman Steffen introduced newly elected Commission member Dan Steinkruger to the team. Steinkruger was elected to fill the unexpired term to represent the Lower Platte River Basin through January 2023.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Notice of the meeting was published on the State Public Meetings Calendar and on the Natural Resources Commission (Commission) web site at <https://nrc.nebraska.gov>. A copy of Nebraska’s open meeting statutes was available in the room. The following DHHS guidelines regarding COVID-19 were implemented:

- Tell invitees not to attend if they are sick.
- Face coverings were provided and use was encouraged when not seated.
- Seating arrangements provide at least six feet of distancing between attendees and presenters.
- Food, beverages and snacks stations were not available to reduce physical proximity and community touching of common surfaces.
- Proper social distancing expectations was reviewed with the attendees related to discussions, training room entry and egress, restroom breaks, etc.
- Attendee roster was completed verbally and recorded by the meeting organizer instead of sign-in sheets.
- Minimize sharing resources/equipment such as pens, markers, presentation remotes, handouts, etc.

MINUTES

Czaplewski moved and Knutson seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the February 24th, 2021 Commission meeting.

Motion Passed.

Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent	Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Anderson	X				Krause	X			
Batie	X				Kubat	X			
Bradley	X				McDonald				X
Citta	X				Miller	X			
Clouse	X				Reynolds	X			
Czaplewski	X				Schroer				X
Deines	X				Sievers	X			
Dunbar	X				Smathers				X
Fornoff	X				Steffen	X			
Hadenfeldt	X				Steinkruger			X	
Halligan				X	Strauch	X			
Heaston	X				Taylor	X			
Knutson	X				Wilke	X			
Kraus	X				TOTALS	22	0	1	4

DNR UPDATE & PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Steffen opened the floor to DNR and the public for comments. It was announced that DNR would no longer be located on the 4th floor of the State Office Building. While waiting for construction of the new location to be completed, most staff will be working remotely. A limited number of staff, up to 15 people per day, will be located in the basement of the State Office Building in a temporary office. No one from the public attended the meeting.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Staff lead discussion on agenda topics pertaining to program activities. No unusual activity was reported during review of status reports for the following funds.

Resources Development Fund

The status report showed business as usual. Staff reported receipt of \$44,293.50 from Lower Platte North NRD for the RDF's share of hay and dirt sales since the last true-up (May 2018 NRC Minutes) for the Sand Creek Environmental Restoration (Lake Wanahoo) project. Those

funds were deposited into the RDF cash fund where they will reside until being transferred to the Water Sustainability Fund.

Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund

This is currently an unfunded program.

Soil & Water Conservation Program Fund

The status report showed business as usual. This program is funded by state General Funds and is used to cost share direct payments to landowners for specific preapproved conservation practices. The annual funding is proportioned by and made available to landowners within the boundary of each NRD. When apportionments are not claimed, unused allocations are made available through redistribution. This year over \$40,000 was unclaimed primarily from within the boundaries of two NRD's and reallocated across the state.

Natural Resources Water Quality Fund

The status report showed business as usual. The source of funding is a cash fund from a portion of the fees collected by the Department of Agriculture's pesticide and applicator licensing fees. Distributions are made to NRDs twice a year.

Water Well Decommissioning Fund

The status report showed business as usual. The source of funding is a cash fund from a portion of the well registration fees collected by the Department of Natural Resources. NRDs submit claims which are used locally to decommission abandoned wells.

Water Sustainability Fund

The status report showed business as usual. Project progress reports are due by April 1st each year. The reports are available on the NRC's website, WSF home page under Reports. Also available are completed project's Final Reports. So far this year five Final Reports have been filed. The Commission takes formal action to close out projects during the fourth quarterly meeting each year.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Steffen stated the Committee met prior to this meeting to review the following:

- Legislative Committee Chairman Kraus give a brief summary of legislative bills of interest including LB 190, LB 380, LB 384 & LB 406.
- Central Platte NRD's Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores project was reviewed, including preliminary discussion of the NRD potentially developing a public education and outreach center with wetland and migratory bird viewing stations. If the NRD chooses to

move forward with this project component, potentially the Commission could transfer funds between components to expedite project close-out.

- Commissioner Krause led discussion on President Biden's 30 by 30 initiative under Executive Order 14008 to place 30% of the Nations land and water into some type of conservation program by the year 2030. Currently only about 12% of the Nation's land falls into that category. The plan is due out by April 27th, 2021.
- Chairman Steffen reviewed 2021 Committee member appointments and brief descriptions of each Committee's responsibilities was discussed.
- The August NRC meeting will be held on August 18th & 19th starting at 3:00 p.m. on August 18th with an informal review and discussion of the Water Sustainability Fund review process, and the Commission meeting the following morning on August 19th.
- Legal Counsel Emily Rose announced the NRC's rules changes have been passed to the Attorney General's staff for review.

OTHER BUSINESS & AGENDA ITEMS

Chairman Steffen asked for any other business to be brought forward. Bradley questioned the status of the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy, Heaston mentioned the class will start in June in Lincoln, Sievers noted there is a limited number of registrations offered each year and this class is full. Steffen asked Commissioners to bring forward any items they want placed on the August agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.



Jeff Steffen, Chairman



Thomas E. Riley, P.E., Director