

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES – February 23rd, 2022

CALL TO ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL

Vice Chairman Batie announced that Chairman Steffen was unable to attend the meeting today and that he would run the meeting in Steffen’s absence. Batie called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.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

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 December 15th, 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	19	0	0	8

DNR UPDATE & PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vice Chairman Batie opened the floor for comments, Zimmerman stated that DNR staff would begin moving into their new office in Fallbrook mid-March with plans to have everyone in and fully staffed by April 1st.

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.

Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund

This is currently an unfunded program.

Soil & Water Conservation Program Fund

The status report showed business as usual.

Natural Resources Water Quality Fund

The status report showed business as usual. A distribution of \$825,000 was made in early February.

Water Well Decommissioning Fund

The status report showed business as usual.

Water Sustainability Fund

The status report showed business as usual. The current status of a few projects was discussed. A table titled "Water Sustainability Fund Budget Summary Closed Projects" was reviewed. The table included all WSF projects that have been completed to date listing any amounts returned when projects were completed under budget. Unused grant funding has all been distributed to help fund additional new projects. Fully executed contracts are in place for each of the projects approved at the December NRC meeting except for the CSO project. The City of Omaha is in the process of completing that grant award contract as well.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice Chairman Batie stated the Executive Committee had met at 9:00 a.m., prior to this meeting and gave an update on the following:

- Rules Changes Update – Draft changes to NRC Rules Titles 257 & 262 are being reviewed by the Governor's Policy Research Office staff.

- Changes to Expense Reimbursements - Commissioners were updated on changes to the mileage rate on Expense Reimbursement Documents and reminded those documents must be filed within 60 days of incurring the expense.
- Governor Appointed Positions Open - Commissioners seeking re-appointment to serve another four-year term on the NRC were reminded to complete an application and submit it via the Governor’s website. Appointments representing the following interests are open this spring:

<u>Representing</u>	<u>Current Member</u>	<u>Appointment End Date</u>
Agricultural Interests	Don Batie	5/31/2022
Wildlife Conservation Interests	Mark Czaplewski	5/31/2022
Agribusiness Interests	John Heaston	5/31/2022
Public Power & Irrigation Districts	Don Kraus	5/31/2022
Range Livestock Owners	Tim Krause	5/31/2022
Irrigation Districts	Dennis Strauch	5/31/2022
Groundwater Irrigators	Loren Taylor	5/31/2022

Applications are available on the Governor’s website: <https://governor.nebraska.gov> under “Constituent Services” click on “Boards & Commissions” scroll down for the application as well as for the listing: [2022 January - June Boards and Commissions with Openings](#) scroll down to **May**.

Current members indicated they will apply for reappointment with the exception of John Heaston, Don Kraus and Loren Taylor.

ANNUAL SCHEDULING OF MEETING DATES

Following discussion, the following tentative dates were selected for the next four quarterly Commission meetings:

- April 13th
- August 10th
- October 12th
- February 15th, 2023

DISCUSSION ON STREAMING

At the request of Commissioner McDonald at the last Commission meeting, staff looked into the possibility of streaming NRC meetings. It was determined it could be handled with a zoom meeting. The zoom meeting participants would need to register in advance and the meeting would be limited to 100 attendees. Staff could provide an owl, dedicated microphones and an additional staff person at each meeting because it would require one person to run a laptop to administer drop-offs and drop-ins and let people back into the zoom meeting room.

Smathers questioned the value of providing this service noting no one would be allowed to ask questions nor would they be able to participate in any discussions. Smathers stated you have to ask yourself, “is this a valued service or just another cost?” Fornoff noted that there was no one in the audience today and there is usually very little interest by the public in Commission meetings. Reynolds noted that the board agrees and made the following motion.

Reynolds moved and Smathers seconded the motion to not stream NRC meetings.

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	19	0	0	8

OTHER BUSINESS & AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

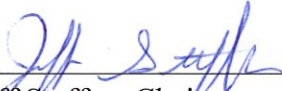
Vice Chairman Batie noted that there are no bills in the legislature that affect the Natural Resources Commission. Steinkruger requested a budget update at the next Commission meeting highlighting the status of the large projects across the state and where the ARPA funding is being distributed. Smathers noted the legislative session is supposed to end by April 20th so it may be a bit premature as the NRC meeting is April 13th.

Clouse requested a WSF project sponsor update from some of the sponsors at the next commission meeting.

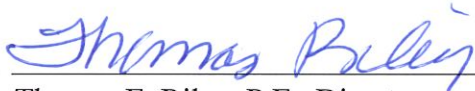
Batie noted the Comprehensive Planning committee would meet after this meeting to begin review of the WSF rules for possible changes. Reynold requested Commissioner's email any suggestions for items they want reviewed or changed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.



Jeff Steffen, Chairman



Thomas E. Riley, P.E., Director