

# NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### CALL TO ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL

Chairman Batie called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. in the Holiday Inn Convention Center, Kearney, Nebraska, and the roll was called following the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:**

Commissioners		Absent	Present	Commissioners		Absent	Present
Rollie	Amsberry		X	Tim	Krause	X	
Garry	Anderson		X	Rick	Kubat	X	
Don	Batie		X	Tom	Mountford		X
Lawrence	Bradley	X		Keith	Rexroth	X	
Devin	Brundage		X	Mick	Reynolds		X
Stan	Clouse		X	Lyle	Schroer	X	
Mark	Czaplewski	X		LeRoy	Sievers		X
Dave	Deines	X		Scott	Smathers		X
Brad	Dunbar		X	Jeff	Steffen		X
Kevin	Fornoff		X	Dan	Steinkruger		X
Randy	Fox		X	Dennis	Strauch		X
Steve	Kelly		X	Greg	Wilke		X
Tom	Knutson	X		Vacant			
				Vacant			

**DNR staff in attendance:**

Kent Zimmerman, Jill Richters, Alexa Davis and Dehvyne Ashmore.

**Others in attendance were:**

Tylr Naprstek, LLNRD.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

None were offered.

### NOTICE OF THE MEETING AND PUBLIC MEETING LAWS

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**

**Clouse moved and Smathers seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Commission meeting.**

**Motion Passed.**

Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent	Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Amsberry	X				Kubat				X
Anderson			X		Mountford	X			
Batie	X				Rexroth				X
Bradley				X	Reynolds	X			
Brundage			X		Schroer				X
Clouse	X				Sievers	X			
Czaplewski				X	Smathers	X			
Deines				X	Steffen	X			
Dunbar	X				Steinkruger	X			
Fornoff	X				Strauch	X			
Fox	X				Wilke	X			
Kelly	X				Vacant				
Knutson				X	Vacant				
Krause				X	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>

## **DNR UPDATE & PUBLIC COMMENTS**

DNR staff members Alexa Davis and Dehvyne Ashmore were introduced to the Commission. They plan to host a pod cast with Commissioners Don Batie, Greg Wilke, Jeff Steffen and Scott Smathers following the Commission meeting. If all goes well, they will host another pod cast with five additional Commissioners in conjunction with the July Commission meeting. These pod casts will be available on the DNR and NRC websites and their social media sites.

### **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. Reynolds reported the Central Platte NRD board went out for bid on the education facility which is a component of the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Creek project.

#### **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 about \$800,000 went out, the next will be in August.

#### **Water Well Decommissioning Fund**

The status report showed business as usual.

#### **Water Sustainability Fund**

- Staff reported a total of 19 applications for funding assistance were filed in March. In the large funding request category, four applications with combined requests totaling over \$13 million were received; fourteen applications were received requesting \$250,000 or less with a combined total request of over \$2.3 million and one application was submitted for a combined sewer overflow separation project. In addition to the anticipated \$11 million legislative appropriation, \$2.1 million will also be returned to the fund through the close out of eight completed projects. One project, WSF #10035 was approved and partially funded last year. That project remaining obligation balance of just over

\$3.62 million will be awarded prior to funding any new projects this year. Staff also gave detailed updates and fielded questions on specific projects.

- Application Review Committee Chairman Steinkruger led a discussion reviewing Commissioner's procedures for review and scoring applications. This review included differences in point values between questions, bonus points, and a brief description of the committee procedures used to compile its recommendation to the Commission for scores and funding. The Committee will hold a virtual Committee meeting once the applications become available to Commissioners. During that meeting the Committee will review the specific procedures for login and data input into the Committee's private electronic data base; as well as an overview and discussion of procedures related to Committee Members and their duties. Only Application Review Committee members have access to the Committee's electronic data base.

Chairman Batie encouraged all Commissioners to review and score each application as soon as possible because often a member of the Application Committee will have something come up at the last minute that prevents them from participating in the Committees' scoring and ranking meeting. When that happens, another Commissioner is asked to step in with little time to prepare and must be prepared to do so.

Once Director Riley makes his determination that each application is satisfactory, or not satisfactory, applications found to be satisfactory are loaded onto a jump drive and mailed to each Commissioner, along with a paper copy of an excel spreadsheet to help record scores. It is the Commission's intent to set final scores and award funding during the July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Commission meeting.

- The status report showed business as usual. Several specific project progress updates were discussed. Annual project Status Reports are available on the Commission's website.
- Alexa Davis described interviews she has conducted with several project sponsors that will eventually be added to the fund's Story Map located on the Commission's website at: <https://nrc.nebraska.gov>. Davis is currently working on editing the video and audio to prepare the final product. Chairman Batie encouraged commissioners to share the Story Map link and encourage others to view it because it does a great job showing where the money is going and how it benefits the state of Nebraska.
- Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, Lower Loup Natural Resources District, presented a power point to showcase the Columbus Recharge Project which will be closed out in July. This project, #5195, was funded in part with a grant from the Water Sustainability Fund. Naprstek thanked the Commission for funding this project.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Chairman Batie stated the Executive Committee met prior to this meeting. Batie plans to contact Program Committee Chairman Rick Kubat who was unable to be present today and request he assemble the Program Committee electronically to review four or five specific projects which

Batie will select. Once review of those project's progress is complete, the Committee may look at four or five more.

Legislative Chairman Scott Smathers stated that he will reach out to Committee Members to discuss legislative activities and how the Committee should proceed. Smathers reminded Commissioners to work with members of the legislature to help them understand who the Commission is and what it does as there are many new legislators that do not have that historical knowledge.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

- Chairman Batie completed and announced appointments to the various NRC committees.
- Staff intends to complete Water Sustainability Fund application reviews by the end of May, the Application Review Committee will meet in June, with final scores and funding decisions set during the July 19<sup>th</sup> NRC meeting here in Kearney.
- Chairman Batie reminded commissioners to listen to the pod casts on the DNR's website as well as the one being conducted today. Davis mentioned that they will plan to conduct another pod cast in conjunctive with next meeting.
- Mountford passed along a thankyou from the Lower Platte North NRD for funding the Wahoo Creek Structures, (WSF #5323), and wanted Commissioners to know how appreciative the NRD is for funding that project. The project will be formally closed out at the July 19<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

  
Don Batie, Chair

  
Thomas E. Riley, P.E., Director