

# NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES – February 19, 2025

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

Chairman Batie called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. in the Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center, Kearney, Nebraska. The roll was called following the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Roll Call:

Commissioners		Absent	Present	Commissioners		Absent	Present
Rollie	Amsberry	X		Tom	Mountford	X	
Don	Batie		X	Doug	Reeves		X
Lawrence	Bradley	X		Keith	Rexroth	X	
Devin	Brundage		X	Lyle	Schroer		X
Mark	Czaplewski		X	John	Shadle		X
Lane	Darnall	X		Matt	Smallcomb	X	
Christopher	Dierks		X	Scott	Smathers		X
Brad	Dunbar		X	Jeff	Steffen	X	
Randy	Fox		X	Dan	Steinkruger		X
Nate	Jenkins		X	Dennis	Strauch	X	
Steve	Kelly	X		Greg	Wilke		X
Rick	Kubat		X	Vacant			
Kennon	Meyer	X		Vacant			
Larry	Mohrman		X				

#### **DNR staff in attendance:**

Jesse Bradley & Kent Zimmerman

#### **Others in attendance were:**

Scott Nelson, LBNRD; Kyle Hauschild, NNRD & Lyndon Vogt, CPNRD

### NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION

Chairman Batie asked everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of the newly elected members to the Commission; Lane Darnall, Christopher Dierks, Nate Jenkins and Doug Reeves along with a newly appointed member, Matt Smallcomb.

### 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.

**MINUTES**

**Czaplewski moved and Smathers seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, Commission meeting.**

**Motion Passed.**

Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent	Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Amsberry				X	Mountford				X
Batie	X				Reeves			X	
Bradley				X	Rexroth				X
Brundage	X				Schroer	X			
Czaplewski	X				Shadle	X			
Darnall				X	Smallcomb				X
Dierks			X		Smathers	X			
Dunbar	X				Steffen				X
Fox	X				Steinkruger	X			
Jenkins			X		Strauch				X
Kelly				X	Wilke	X			
Kubat	X				Vacant				
Meyer				X	Vacant				
Mohrman	X				<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

**DNR UPDATE & PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were offered, Acting NDNR Director Bradley offered updates on the following:

- Proposed changes to the Nebraska legislative budget for NRC programs will zero out all funds from the State’s General Fund and interest income; Transfer funding to the

Nebraska Environmental Trust lottery proceeds; and increase NSWCP funding to \$2.5 million and reduce WSF funding to \$5 million.

- DNR's agency budget hearing is scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- The proposed merger of NDNR and NDEE should provide additional focus on water by merging 1.) NDEE's Water Planning, Permitting, Source Water Well Head Protection & 319 programs; with DNR's Water Planning section; 2.) Water Well Standards and Groundwater Well Registrations and 3.) Data collection activities for water quality and stream flow. Also, there are anticipated efficiencies through merging the two agencies Administrative, Finance and Information Technology sections.

At the Leadership level, there would be a director of the merged agencies and a Chief Water Officer. The Chief Water Officer would report to the agencies director but would retain all of the current decision-making authority of the Director of NDNR and have the final decision on things like Orders. The original bill proposed eliminating the requirement for this person to be a Professional Engineer, however, that requirement will be reinstated through a proposed amendment.

### **PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

No updates were given. Chairman Batie asked staff to lead discussion on agenda topics pertaining to program activities. No unusual activity was reported.

#### **Resources Development Fund**

The status report showed business as usual. Lyndon Vogt, General Manager of the Central Platte NRD, gave a brief update of the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores project and noted the education facility should be completed in the spring of 2026.

#### **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.

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

The status report showed business as usual.

#### **Water Sustainability Fund**

The WSF status report showed business as usual. Individual Project Status Reports are due on or before April 1<sup>st</sup> and will be posted to the Commission's website as they are received.

Commissioners may view these and all previous reports (at: <https://nrc.nebraska.gov/water-sustainability-fund-reports> ).

It was noted that the Lower Platte South NRD's (LPSNRD) Deadmans Run Flood Reduction project (WSF #5253) is proceeding without the United States of America Corps of Engineers (COE) partner. LPSNRD is currently exploring options that will accomplish the same project objectives while reducing mitigation expenses required by COE if a project partner.

Brundage reported that Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's (CNPP&ID) Elwood Siphon project (WSF #5317) is moving forward. Work on seepage at the dam is complete; alignment and engineering planning is moving forward; and CNPP&ID will submit a reimbursement request for about \$750,000.

### **WSF #10066 Project Review**

Scott Nelson, General Manager , Little Blue Natural Resources District (LBNRD), gave an update of LBNRD's Public Water project. Nelson stated the project has incurred a six month delay due to a legal issue they encountered. LBNRD has applied for a groundwater transfer permit from NDNR. Once the permit is obtained, LBNRD will go out for bids and then begin construction.

### **WSF #10091 Project Review**

Kyle Hauschild, General Manager, Nemaha Natural Resources District gave an update of NNRD's Burr-Cook Paeovalley Aquifer Sub-Area irrigation efficiency project. This area has a somewhat confined aquifer that experiences significant draw down during summer months followed by recharge during the winter. This WSF project promotes water savings through irrigation efficiency improvements on existing center pivots by upgrading to more efficient sprinkler nozzles. The project proposed nozzle reductions that would reduce run-off to under 1% to meet NRCS efficiency standards.

Hauschild stated that with the topography in this area and the heavy clay soils, the improved efficiency nozzles only limit run-off to 1.8% or 1.9%. Hauschild requested to be on this agenda to give Commissioners an update and verify the Commission's willingness to proceed prior to spending any money. With this water use reduction, the NNRD is still hitting its water use reduction goals, just not the NRCS's efficiency standards.

After Commission discussion, the Commission felt the project was on track to meet its goals and had no objection to it moving forward.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Chairman Batie stated updates are being covered under other agenda items.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Chairman Batie announced that the Nominating Committee this year was composed of the past three Chairmen, Scott Smathers, Jeff Steffen and himself. Batie then opened the floor for nominations.

Committee Chairman Smathers brought forward the following motion.

**Smathers moved and Brundage seconded the motion to nominate Greg Wilke for Chairman and Dan Steinkruger for Vice-Chairman.**

Chairman Batie called for additional nominations from the floor, none were offered.

**Motion Passed.**

Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent	Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Amsberry				X	Mountford				X
Batie	X				Reeves	X			
Bradley				X	Rexroth				X
Brundage	X				Schroer	X			
Czaplewski	X				Shadle	X			
Darnall				X	Smallcomb				X
Dierks	X				Smathers	X			
Dunbar	X				Steffen				X
Fox	X				Steinkruger			X	
Jenkins	X				Strauch				X
Kelly				X	Wilke			X	
Kubat	X				Vacant				
Meyer				X	Vacant				
Mohrman	X				<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>

**ANNUAL SCHEDULING OF MEETING DATES**

Chairman Batie announced the following NRC meeting dates have tentatively been scheduled:

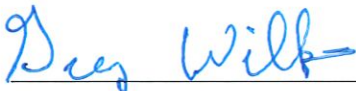
- April 9, 2025 (may include an additional day with tour)
- July 23, 2025
- September 30, 2025
- February 25, 2026

**OTHER BUSINESS**

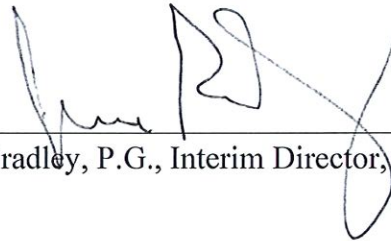
- Chairman Batie stated that staff will reach out to Commissioners to determine Commissioners' willingness to serve on any of the four NRC Committees. Chairman Wilke will then appoint members to each Committees.
- Smathers thanked Chairman Batie for his leadership as Chairman the past two years and all of his work on the Commission going back to work on the WSF Task Force.
- A new member orientation meeting will follow this meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.



Greg Wilke, Chair



Jesse Bradley, P.G., Interim Director, DNR