

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES – February 15th, 2023

CALL TO ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL

Chairman Steffen called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m. in the Younes Conference Center South, 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	Kelley		X	Greg	Wilke		X
Tom	Knutson	X		Vacant			
				Vacant			

DNR staff in attendance:

Kent Zimmerman and Jill Richters.

Others in attendance were:

None

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION

Chairman Steffen asked everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of five newly elected members to the Commission; Rollie Amsberry, Randy Fox, Steve Kelley, Tom Mountford and Keith Rexroth along with a newly appointed member, Dan Steinkruger.

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

Czaplewski moved and Reynolds seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the October 19th, 2022, 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			
Kelley			X		Vacant				
Knutson				X	Vacant				
Krause	X				TOTALS	17	0	3	5

DNR UPDATE & PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comments were offered.

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. Although this fund no longer receives an appropriation, it was formerly funded through the state's general fund. Reynolds reported the Central Platte NRD board will, at its next board meeting, be voting to go 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. The state's general fund formerly funded this program.

Soil & Water Conservation Program Fund

The status report showed business as usual. This program is funded through the state's general fund. A request was just sent out to NRD managers asking if they have any unspent funds which will later be redistributed.

Natural Resources Water Quality Fund

The status report showed business as usual. This fund is cash funded by a portion of pesticide applicator fees collected through the Department of Agriculture. Usually, this amounts to about \$1.1 million dollars per year and it goes directly to the NRDs for their water quality program. Distributions are made twice per year and the next distribution of about \$800,000 is about ready to go out.

Water Well Decommissioning Fund

The status report showed business as usual. This fund is cash funded through a portion of well registration fees and amounts to about \$60,000 per year. The fund operates on a reimbursement basis.

Water Sustainability Fund

The status report showed business as usual. This program is funded by the state's general fund, and the rate of project progress has picked up this year since slowing down during the Covid pandemic. Also, Alexa Davis will be assisting with updates to the fund's Story Map which is found on the Commission's website at: <https://nrc.nebraska.gov> along with a lot of other information related to the Commission. Several specific project progress updates were

discussed. Annual project update reports are due April 1st and will be available on the Commission's website.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Steffen stated the Executive Committee met prior to this meeting. The Committee wanted to relay that Governor Ricketts signed the recent revisions to Title 261, the Rules governing the Water Sustainability Fund prior to leaving office. One of those revisions changed the filing date for grant applications from July to March so the 2023 applications will be coming in soon.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman Steffen announced that the Nominating Committee this year was composed of Dennis Strauch, Garry Anderson and Stan Clouse. Steffen then opened the floor for nominations.

Committee Chairman Strauch then brought forward the following motion.

Strauch moved and Reynolds seconded the motion to nominate Don Batie for Chairman and Greg Wilke for Vice-Chairman.

Chairman Steffen called for additional nominations three times. None were offered. Chairman Steffen asked for a motion to cease nomination and call the vote.

Strauch moved and Smathers seconded the motion nominations cease and the Commission cast a unanimous ballot.

(Note: The motions were combined into one and the roll call vote was called.)

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	
Kelley	X				Vacant				
Knutson				X	Vacant				
Krause	X				TOTALS	18	0	2	5

Batie took over as Chairman. Batie described the Executive Committee make-up and the five committees of the Commission. Batie appointed Rick Kubat chair of the Program Committee, Mick Reynold chair of Comprehensive Planning Committee, Scott Smathers chair of the Legislative Committee and Dan Steinkruger chair of the Applications Review Committee. Batie passed a sheet around asking each commissioner to indicate whether they would be willing to serve on a committee. Committee membership will be announced at a later date.

ANNUAL SCHEDULING OF MEETING DATES

Chairman Batie announced the following meeting dates were scheduled. All meetings were planned for Kearney except possibly the December meeting which may be a two-day meeting including a tour of projects. Commissioners were invited to email ideas for tour locations. Some of the projects discussed were the CNPP&ID's Elwood Siphon, Hasting's municipal project and a couple other locations with projects funded by the Commission.

- April 5th, 2023
- July 19th, 2023
- December 6th, 2023

- February 21st, 2024

OTHER BUSINESS

- Kubat reminded commissioners the Accountability and Disclosures forms are due by April 1st.
- Bradley discussed concerns about Crypto Currency organizations setting up shop in Nebraska. Clouse described multiple benefits that will be derived from the business setting up shop in Kearney.
- Oath of Office forms were distributed to Commissioners for signatures.
- Steinkruger led a discussion on the issue of cover crops and the need for a coordinated effort at the state level for cost share that could tie together Federal and NRD programs with farm groups and industry in general noting cover crops provide broader social benefits to the land, water, carbon, wildlife and more in addition to the farmer and landowner.
- Strauch noted a bill in the legislature to provide funding to the SWFCF.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m.


Don Batie, Chair
Thomas E. Riley, P.E., Director