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MINUTES
March 14, 2023

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission met in the North Platte Room at the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument Kearney, NE for the transaction of business, advance public notice having been given through release to news media and official public notice published in the Lincoln Journal Star on February 28, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. Chairman Cassels advised this meeting was being held in conformance with the State Open Meeting Act and the act was available for review on the table at the back of the room. Members present: Chairman Scott Cassels, Omaha; Pat Berggren, Broken Bow; Doug Zingula, Sidney; Rick Brandt, Lincoln; Ken Curry, Columbus; John Hoggatt, Kearney; and Donna Kush, Omaha. Bob Allen, Eustis was absent.

Minutes of the business meeting held January 20, 2023 were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Ms. Kush to approve the meeting minutes. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Berggren and Cassels; Allen was absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Financial vouchers for January and February were reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Brandt and seconded by Mr. Hoggatt to approve the financial vouchers. Voting aye: Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, Berggren, Brandt, Kush and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Director's Report

Stan Claus, Mayor of Kearney was present and welcomed the Commission to Kearney.

Director McCoy thanked SW regional Park Superintendent Laura Rose, Parks Assistant Division Administrator Bill Oligmueller and park staff that hosted us for meetings and tour at the Fort Kearny shooting range the day before.

Director McCoy reviewed some of the upcoming events on the NGPC calendar, including the next Commission meeting that will be held in Fremont at the Holiday Inn Express April 18 & 19, 2023.
End Director's Report

With some time before the public hearing, Chairman Cassels moved to item 13 on the agenda. Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed Spring 2023 park events.

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Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing to consider amendments to Chapter 4, Wildlife Regulations, Section 001, General Wildlife Regulations at 8:22 AM. Wildlife Division Administrator Alicia Hardin reviewed staff recommendations. There were no public comments received, and no public testimony was offered. The public hearing was closed at 8:27 AM.

Chairman Cassels moved to item #4 on the agenda and read staff recommendations to call for a public hearing at the April meeting to consider comments to Commission Order C03 Antelope, Deer, Elk.

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Mr. Brandt to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Berggren, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Curry and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing at 8:30 AM to consider amendments to Chapter 3, Boating Regulations, Section 012 Waters with Special Restrictions. Boating Administrator Jeff Clauson reviewed staff recommendations. No public comments were received, and no public testimony was offered. The public hearing was closed at 8:35 AM.

Motion by Mr. Berggren, seconded by Mr. Zingula to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Berggren, Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Cassels moved to agenda item #10. Parks Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for commission approval to designate the area formerly known as the Fort Kearny Shooting Sports Complex to the Kearney Outdoor Education Complex State Recreation Area in accordance with Neb. Rev. Statute §37-338 through 3741, and 37-441.

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt, seconded by Mr. Berggren to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Brandt, Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, Berggren, and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Park's Division Administrator Jeff Fields reviewed staff recommendations for Commission approval to establish fees for activities at the Kearney Outdoor Education Complex (KOEC) SRA.

Motion by Mr. Curry, seconded by Ms. Kush to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, Berggren, Brandt and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Chairman Cassels opened the public hearing to consider amendments to Commission Orders C06, Coot, Duck, Goose, and Crow at 8:45 AM. Waterfowl Program Manager John McKinney reviewed staff recommendations, which were primarily calendar date adjustments. There were a number of comments received in advance of the meeting, the majority requesting a later start date for Zone 4, although there were several eastern Nebraska Zone 4 hunters that prefer earlier dates. Comments from people for the record that did not also testify at the meeting include:

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Jay Lindner of Fremont: "Zone 4 duck season would like to except proposed season October 21 opener. Grandkids shoot more ducks in October than in January. Please don't move the opener latter in October. Thanks."

Justin Carpenter of Drake Waterfowl Olive Branch, MS "I'd like to have my input for season dates in Zone 4 included as a matter of public record. It is my experience in Zone 4, that as the season progresses, we see more and more birds, particularly mallards. We have much higher harvest numbers per person, per day in the month of January than we do in the early part of the season or during the month of November. It would be my recommendation/request to have the season dates later, rather than earlier for Zone 4. My experience in other zones is different, so please do not consider this feedback to be statewide. According to the proposal, Zone 4 will run from Oct. 21st – Jan 2nd. My recommendation would be to have Zone 4 open on Oct. 28th and run through Jan. 9th. I would also like to suggest that we add the two allowed veteran-only hunt dates to the weekend after the seasons end."

Testifiers at the hearing were as follows:

Hunter Runge-Whiskey Sloughs Outfitters Kearney prefers as late a season for Low Plains Zone 4 as possible, not ending until mid-January.

Matt John from Ord would like to see the Zone 4 season dates pushed back a week.

Randy Chin from Columbus voiced his support for staff recommendations for Zone 4.

Ken Fisher of Ravenna prefers that his area would be in Zone 2 instead of Zone 4. He would like to see a split season for all ducks other than mallards and a later season for mallards.

Chad Podalak of Columbus appreciated the season being earlier last year, so he will go with staff recommendations for this year. But he prefers the season to be even earlier.

Mike Mahoney from Louisville hunts the Ashland area, and he prefers moving the season up a week, or to create a different zone for the eastern part of Zone 4, perhaps moving part of it to Zone 2. He suggests starting the Zone 4 season on October 14th and ending on December 27th. His other preference would be starting on October 14 and Sunday October 15, then closing the season for 5 days and reopening it on October 21 until December 31, which would provide two extra weekend days to hunt.

Dane Johnson from Elm Creek prefers a later season for Zone 4.

Chuck Blaha of Ord prefers a later season for Zone 4.

Rich Osentowski of Kearney prefers a week later start date for Zone 4.

With no more public comments, the hearing was closed at 9:33 AM.

Motion by Mr. Curry to accept staff recommendations. Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion by Mr. Zingula, seconded by Mr. Brandt to approve staff recommendations for all duck zones, except to move the Zone 4 duck season dates a week later to October 28-January 9. Voting aye: Kush, Zingula, Hoggatt,

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Berggren, Brandt and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: Curry. Motion carried.

Chairman Cassels called for recess; the meeting was reconvened at 10:30 AM.

Public Comment Period

Chad Podalak made a comment that he thinks early landowner deer seasons should be changed include veterans and kids.

Mark Kruger of Tradewinds Marina Loup City asked about an improved method in the process of submitting complaints regarding concessionaires.

Planning and Programming Division Administrator Michelle Stryker reviewed the staff recommendations for Commission approval of the 2023-2025 NGPC Strategic Plan.

Motion by Mr. Curry and seconded by Ms. Kush to approve staff recommendations. Voting aye: Zingula, Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Berggren, Kush and Cassels; Allen was absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Big Game Program Manager Luke Meduna presented the 2022 Big Game Season Summary.

Committee Chairs gave their reports at the public information meeting the day before.

Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Hoggatt and seconded by Ms. Kush to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel at 10:54 AM, asking the Director to participate. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula, and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

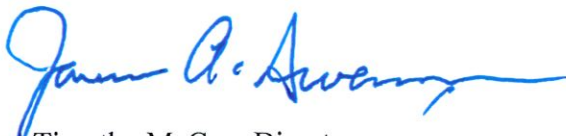
The Chairman called the meeting back into regular session at 11:42 AM.

Mr. Zingula moved, and Ms. Kush seconded, to leave executive session. Voting aye: Curry, Hoggatt, Brandt, Berggren, Kush, Zingula and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Berggren and seconded by Ms. Kush to adjourn at 11:45 AM. Voting aye: Hoggatt, Brandt, Kush, Berggren, Zingula, Curry, and Cassels; Allen absent; voting nay: None. Motion carried.

I hereby certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at its meeting held March 14, 2023.



Timothy McCoy, Director

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