

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force
Meeting Minutes
NACO Western Headquarters
Ogallala, NE
July 30, 2025
1:00 p.m. MT**

1. Call to order

- Reed called the meeting to order at 1:11 p.m.

2. Introductions

Task Force Members Present:

T.J. Walker	Ryan Chapman
Andrew Tonnies	Mike Reed
Tammy Zimmerman	Brent Meyer
Katie Hickie	Shuhai Zheng

Task Force Members Absent:

Kevin Adams	Jeff Kanger
Mike Sarchet	John Erixson
Rich Tesar	Eli Goff
Tala Awada	David Zorn
Lance Philben	Larry Heyen
Brad Edgerton	Tyler Weishahn
NARD Representative	

Guests:

Trevor Johnson – Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Matt Manning – Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment

3. Review and approval of November 20, 2024 meeting minutes

- Motion by Tonnies, 2nd by Meyer

4. Department of Water, Energy, and Environment Perkins Canal Project

Presentation by DWEE Chief Water Officer, Matt Manning, on the Perkins Canal Project. He gave the history of the water compact and reasoning behind the construction of the canal.

5. Public Comment

No public comment.

6. Platte River Drone Survey of Canal Project Area

Zheng presented a 20 min drone flyover video of the South Platte River near where the Perkins County Canal Project will occur. There was discussion on the types of vegetation present and where the Western Canal feeds into the South Platte River.

Discussion continued with Manning on the Governor's Water Quality and Quantity Task Force. Hickle suggested that the RVMTF discuss invasive vegetation and consumptive use of water with them. Walker suggested Nebraska Invasive Species Council be a part of the conversation as well. Manning said their focus is on education, innovation, and regulation. Conversation will continue on how and when that collaboration may occur.

7. Department of Agriculture Grant Riparian Projects 2025

Johnson presented summaries of projects from the six applications received in 2025. Three applications were awarded out of the \$353,000 available. Zheng remarked on the importance of maintaining the matching funds from CO and WY via the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP). Reed discussed the reduction in funding and that other sources, like NET, do not necessarily make up for the reduction in riparian funds. He also noted that education and administration are no longer approved uses of the funds. Hickle asked why education is no longer allowed. Johnson said it was a decision made above his head and he wasn't given a reason why. Walker asked if the awarded entities still had coordinators. Platte Valley has a coordinator paid by The Nature Conservancy, Southwest has a coordinator paid by other grant funds, and Twin Valley does not have a designated coordinator right now.

8. Legislative Resolution 168 (Ibach)

Meyer discussed LR 168 which was introduced by Sen. Ibach in the 2025 legislative session. He said a meeting will be held in early August, led by Rick Leonard. Several senators signed on to the LR. Meyer continued that the Governor did not include the \$353,000 in the NDA budget, the senators did. He said that education needs to be included in the grant budget categories. There was a discussion on more control in the tributaries. Reed said there is broad support in the legislature because the bill to increase funding made it to final reading in 2024 before Sen. Ibach withdrew the bill. Walker asked what role we play in the LR? Meyer said we need to tell success stories and show the partnerships. Reed said he will be presenting at the NARD conference in September. He said the Task Force needs to show the footprint of the invasive species in the river and provide information with graphics. Zheng said we need

digestible fact sheets for new senators. He also said we need to show how much money is lost via invasive species in our waterways. Chapman remarked that the Task Force lacks a coordinator to produce these educational materials. Walker said that NGPC stuff could potentially create infographics. Reed said a 1 or 2 pager should be created. He will send the LR to the Task Force. He asked the Task Force to look at management objectives and help set objectives for future riparian grants. Walker asked if Johnson could be used to assist with the LR. Johnson raised concerns about necessary permissions to engage with legislature by NDA staff. Hickie and Zheng both discussed change at the federal level that could impact funding. Zheng said the RVMTF Education Committee needs to demonstrate the need. Zimmerman remarked that it seems we must reinvent the wheel with each new administration and group of senators.

9. Determine October Task Force Meeting Date/Location

Reed paused to recognize Shuhai Zheng's contributions to the Task Force. This was his last meeting due to the merger of DNR and DEE. Thank you Shuhai!

Tonnies suggested the new Lower Platte North NRD building in Wahoo for the next meeting. Tentatively planned for October 21.

Meeting adjourned.