

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
June 16, 2021  
10:00 a.m. CST  
Niobrara State Park  
In Person & Virtual**

1. Call to order – Mike Reed called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Reed welcomed all members and guests and asked for introductions.

Task Force members present:

Ryan Chapman  
Nate Munter  
Tammy Zimmerman  
Mike Reed

Brent Meyer  
Rich Tesar  
Larry Heyen

Task Force members present-virtual:

TJ Walker  
Dr. Shuhai Zheng

Mike Sarchet

Task Force members absent:

John Orr  
Dennis VanWey  
James Skavdahl  
Kevin Adams  
Zac Peterson

David Carr  
Dr. Tala Awada  
John Erixson  
Dave Zorn

Guests:

Scott Wessel  
Kyle Shumacher

Scott Erthum

NDA Staff:

Mitch Coffin

2. Member Introductions

Everyone in attendance and virtually introduced themselves.

3. Review and Approval of March 17, 2021 Minutes:

Meyer moved to approve the minutes, Tesar second, motion carried.

4. Scott Wessel, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission presented an overview of activities in the Niobrara area. Game and Parks participates with Northeast Nebraska Weed Management Area. They have assisted with the saltcedar search and destroy as well as purple loosestrife biocontrol in the Niobrara Valley. Phragmites is a growing problem and Canada thistle continues to be problematic in many areas. Scott stated that Doug Smith was the driver to get so many things done.

Kyle Schumacher reported that he is working with private landowners in outlying drainages to protect riparian corridors. They are promoting the use of fire to control eastern red cedar. Also working with CRP contracts to reduce Canada thistle pressure.

5. Scott Erthum provided an update of the activities of the Middle Niobrara Weed Awareness Group (MNWAG). They cover 76 miles of the Niobrara River through Brown, Rock, Keya Paha and part of Cherry counties. They rely on active partners like The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service. They have used helicopters and airboats for surveys and herbicide applications.

The groups original focus was purple loosestrife but non-native phragmites and some yellow flag iris has appeared on the river and tributaries. There has also been some focus on Russian olive in drainages. Scott has been instrumental in promoting the use of Canada thistle rust. Several releases were made across the state last fall and plans to move the rust to additional sites year.

6. Public Comment:

None

7. Old Business:

None

## 8. New Business:

### a. 20/21 Grant Summary

Mitch provided a handout outlining that \$509,716.01 (72.2%) has been spent to date with a remaining balance of \$196,283.99 (27.8%). The 20/21 grant funding cycle ends on June 30, 2021.

### b. 21/22 Grant Awards

Mitch provide handouts outlining the department only received six applications for FY21/22. These six requests totaled \$651,179.00 which means that \$54,821.00 will not be allocated. Task Force members are concerned as to why more groups don't apply.

### c. Goals and Objectives

Reed provided the "Goals and Objectives" handout created in 2018. He believes funds should be used for surveys to collect data. It was suggested that projects use before and after photographs and more documentation should be provided by the projects.

## 9. Open Discussion

Task Force members would like to visit projects and possibly incorporate a tour before or after one of their quarterly meetings.

Tesar stated that the NARD conference will be September 26-27, in Kearney.

## 10. Schedule next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to be in person on Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup> in the Valentine area. There may also be a tour the day before on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Reed and Walker will select a meeting location in the area. Meeting adjourned.