NETWS Annual Business Meeting

Holiday Inn Convention Center, Kearney, NE

25 Feb 2020, 3:15 pm

Meeting was called to order at ~3:15 pm by President Shaun Dunn. Meeting began by passing the microphone to each board member, allowing them to introduce themselves. Shaun will be serving as Past-President, and is the Natural Heritage Zoologist for NGPC. Shelly McPherron, President, Biologist with U.S. Army Corp of Engineers; Matt Steffl, outgoing Past-President, NGPC District Manager; Jessica Jurzenski, outgoing Treasurer, Environmental Scientist with Felsburg Holt & Ullevig; Mel Nenneman, secretary, wildlife biologist at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge; Andrew Little, board member, Assistant Professor of Landscape Ecology and Habitat Management at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Erin Considine, outgoing board member, wildlife biologist at the USFS Pine Ridge Ranger District. Outgoing board member Mike Gutzmer and current board member Mercy Manzanares were not able to attend. Elections are currently underway to elect a new Treasurer and two at-large board members.

Dunn asked for input (specifically from students) as to what more the chapter can do for students. Andy Little followed this up by mentioning that he had interest in getting student input as to how the annual meeting could be more useful/interesting/relevant to students.

Secretary’s Report: Nenneman provided a summary of the 2019 Annual Business Meeting with the notes projected for members to read. At the end of this summary, Nenneman asked if there were any additions or discussion of the minutes as presented. Seeing none, Matt Steffl moved to accept the 2019 Annual Meeting minutes as presented, Dunn seconded and the motion passed.

Treasurer’s Report: Jurzenski reviewed the 2019 budget, explaining the actual income and expenditures and income as compared to the approved 2019 budget. The NETWS chapter ended 2019 in good financial shape, with $23,096.48 in checking, $1,761.33 in Paypal, $5,532.35 in savings, and $4,756.73 in the Joe Gabig CD (account balances as of 2/24/20). She explained the differences between our estimated budget income and expenditures, and the actual budget income and expenditures. Pointed out that some of the line items we budgeted for in 2019 ended up not being used, so the initial estimated annual budget shortfall ended up with the chapter $846.88 in the black for 2019. There was no additional discussion on the 2019 budget.

Jurzenski then presented the proposed 2020 budget to membership. This budget included projected income and expenditures based on projections from recent years and some actual costs that the chapter has already incurred for the year. Jurzenski noted that the board had approved moving several of the line items included in last year’s budget (e.g. professional travel expense, membership development [TWS certification reimbursement], TWS donation, student travel award) into a line called discretionary funds considered annually. If the discretionary funds are not used, the projected annual income exceeds the projected annual expenses. However, if the discretionary funds are fully utilized, the chapter would run a deficit for the year. Our current balance is well in excess of these projected values, but deficit spending is obviously not sustainable.

Len McDaniel asked about the budget expense line for the Joe Gabig Scholarship as the money is in a CD. Jess explained that we don’t use money from the CD to award the scholarship, but use money from an item at the auction designated for the Gabig scholarship, with the proceeds going to make the scholarship award, and any extra money deposited into the CD. It is hoped that eventually there will be enough money in the Gabig fund that the scholarship award could be made off of income from the CD (or other investment) without dipping into the base fund.

Scott Wessel suggested that the estimated auction income in the budget may be a bit optimistic.

Seeing no more discussion, Dunn moved to approve the 2020 proposed budget, Zach seconded and the motion passed by voice vote.

Committee Reports:

* + Nominating - (chair Matt Steffl) Steffl thanked those individuals who had stepped up to run for the open board positions, and noted that the slate of candidates had been posted to our Google groups, with voting taking place until 23 Mar 2020. So far, about 35 of our members had voted on SurveyMonkey.
  + Membership - (chair Shaun Dunn) Dunn reported that current NETWS membership stands is around 94 members, which is down slightly from the past. This is likely because of a dip in student membership, as well as the usual attrition that occurs as students graduate and people move out of state. Dunn is also looking for a new chair for the membership committee.
  + Programs – (chair Shelly McPherron) McPherron wanted to give a big thanks to Matt and Katheryn for their help today (making registration go smoothly!), and thanked everybody on the programs committee for making the meeting possible.
  + Conservation Review (co-chairs Eric Zach and Bill Vodehnal) Zach submitted the following report by email. He stated that it has been a rough year in both the State and at the National level in terms of legislation regarding wildlife, natural resources, and environmental issues.

**April 2019** – Submitted a comment letter on “Proposed Rule on the “Revised Definition of “Waters of the United States.” Zach said this bill has stalled in committee.

**LB126**, NETWS Opposes (The chapter submitted testimony when the bill was introduced in 2019) - This bill was amended during the last round of debate and moves forward for a final reading and vote. The amendment requires a $5 fee for landowner permits valid during a three day season, Saturday-Monday the week prior to the November rifle deer season. There is still time to contact your state senator to voice your opposition, although this bill may have reached its final reading and an up/down vote at this time.

**LB1173**, NETWS Opposes- This bill would provide transferable deer, elk, and pronghorn permits to landowners. A letter was submitted on behalf of the chapter to be included in the hearing testimony. This bill has not been voted out of committee.

**LB1071**, NETWS Opposes- This bill would create the Wildlife Damage Recovery Act. As written, the bill would take money from NGPC to create a fund to pay landowners for damage caused by big game (deer, elk, pronghorn, turkey). A letter was submitted on behalf of the chapter to be included in the hearing testimony. The bill's sponsor, Senator Hughes, does not wish to move this bill any further this session and would like to try to work on a solution after the legislative session is over.

**Jenny Prenosil** drafted a letter regarding the actions the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board took at their February meeting, selectively zeroing out several projects that had been previously approved for funding by the Grants Committee. A draft letter is with the NETWS board for review. The next Nebraska Environmental Trust board meeting is in April. The NETWS board voted to approve sending the letter drafted by Prenosil to the Nebraska Environmental Trust board (motion to approve sending letter made by Dunn, seconded by Steffl, motion passed by voice vote).

Additional information – Zach said that the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act did pass out of House committee, but has not come to the House floor for debate, and that there has been no action in the Senate. Bill Vodehnal reported that the BLM is undergoing revisions to their grazing fees, and that CMPS was going to send a letter to BLM. Bill added a reminder that NETWS should submit letters that the chapter sends to Marriah Simmons.

Issues to follow in the coming year – attempts to weaken the ESA, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Clean Water Act.

Eric indicated that the Conservation Review committee is always looking for folks to help draft and review these letters. Talk to Eric Zach if you want to volunteer.

* + Information and Education – (chair Erin Considine) Former chair of the committee Mark Lindvall moved to South Dakota, and stepped down as chair. Erin Considine agreed to chair the committee. Erin said that she would like to work on getting our chapter information into better condition (e.g. consolidate into one place information on past award winners, letters written and submitted) so we have a better record available to our members. Jen Grauer has taken on the newsletter editor position, and will continue to work with Jason Clark (contacting student chapters) and David Baasch (helping gather stories for the newsletter) to provide a newsletter to chapter members. Members are reminded (and encouraged) to submit items to Jen Grauer for inclusion in the NETWS newsletter. The NETWS website is hosted on the TWS web platform, and items to be posted on the website are sent to Marriah Simmons, who is incredibly efficient at getting updates posted. Jess Jurzenski is the NETWS Facebook page administrator. Our student chapters and most of the Universities also have Facebook pages, and these can be a good way for members to reach student members with items like job announcements. Jessica Barrett administers the Google Group, and any member can use this email to communicate with NETWS members.
  + Awards – (chair Andrew Little) Andy Little finished his first year as chair of the committee, and noted it was difficult to get nominations for awards. There are many wildlife professionals in the state worthy of these awards, and as a community, we should recognize our peers. Two ways that are not valid to nominate someone for an award – submitting a CV does not constitute a nomination, nor does submitting a list of names to the nominating committee. Instructions for how to submit a nomination for NETWS awards can be found under “Awards” on the NETWS website. Andy also asked students presenting posters to be at their poster during the social as this is a great opportunity to engage with wildlife professionals at the meeting.
  + Certification – (chair Carl Wolfe) Wolfe didn’t have much to say about Certification, other than that you should do it. He did however say that it is a critical time for wildlife and wildlife conservation in our country. He stressed the importance of communicating the message of wildlife conservation to both decision makers in the legislature and of being able to reach the public. Raising awareness of what we in the wildlife community are doing, why it is important, and developing the appreciation of wildlife by the public are extremely important. Carl urged everybody present to begin by writing letters to their elected officials, starting with the Clean Water Act. Hand-written letters are the best way to reach your representatives as they know if you take the time to actually write that you are invested (vs an email or phone call).

Len McDaniel related a time he was asked to testify in court, and the judge asked him what qualified him to testify. Len told the judge he was a Certified Wildlife Biologist with TWS, which is the wildlife fields equivalent of the bar exam. Len said the judge paid attention to his testimony after that, so certification is important.

Dunn said there are about 25 AWBs and CWBs in Nebraska, and that he is willing to meet with University chapters to assist with the application process.

* + Student chapter reports

UNL – Andy Little reported that there were no UN-L students attending the meeting. One student had planned to attend, but was unable to do so due to a time conflict.

UNK – Dustin Ranglack, UNK professor and student advisor spoke for the UNK chapter. Dr. Ranglack said that the chapter had about 12 active members, with an email list of about 70 students.

Wayne State – four Wayne State undergrads were at the meeting, and reported that none of their officers could make the meeting. The students said that they had held a couple of social events on campus to try to attract new members.

Chadron State College- No one from CSC was present at the meeting, and no report was available

The NETWS board made a request to the student advisors at each school to see if the student chapters could coordinate to find a chair for the Student Chapter committee.

Ranglack asked the membership how can we make the meeting more relevant to students, and Little followed in a similar vein with how can we get more students involved. Little is interested in developing a survey to get input from students as to what they would like to see at an annual meeting that would engage more interest from student chapters.

McDaniel asked if the student chapters and wildlife professionals were engaging in the classroom. Little and Chris Chizinski (both from UN-L) indicated that the wildlife club and professors bring in speakers from different agencies to speak to the students about their jobs. Steffl said that he knew that Frink (CSC) regularly has resource professionals come to the classroom to speak to her students. All schools encourage their students to work deer check stations and become involved in other activities.

Cassidy Wessel asked about the possibility of a student conclave, and if there was interest among the NE schools. Little said that there is interest at UN-L, but varies to some degree on the interests of the students currently active in the club. Mark Hammer indicated that a conclave for students from the Nebraska wildlife clubs could be possible.

Caroline Jerzierski asked if grad students were involved at the student chapter level. Student advisors indicated that their clubs were typically led by undergraduates, but that grad students were involved. Jess Jurzenski said that NETWS generally does get good engagement with graduate students (posters, presentations) at our annual meeting.

TWS Report – Nobody from TWS attended the NETWS meeting this year, so there was not much to report. Here are a few reminders for NETWS members:

NETWS members can apply to CMPS to obtain travel assistance to attend the TWS meeting.

The 2020 Annual Conference is in Louisville, KY Sept 27 – Oct 1, 2020.

The Central Mountains and Plains Section (CMPS) annual meeting is hosted by chapters within the section on a rotating schedule. Wyoming will host this year’s meeting, with the date and location to be determined. The Nebraska Chapter will host the CMPS meeting in 2025.

The Wildlife Society is now accepting applications for the Leadership Institute’s Class of 2020. Please submit all application materials to leadership@wildlife.org by **March 16 at 11:59 p.m. EST.** The Dallas Safari Club funds the Leadership Institute, which annually provides leadership training for 10-15 early career professionals who are 2-3 years out of school. Acceptance into the Leadership Institute includes a trip to the TWS Annual Conference. NETWS members are encouraged to apply for the Leadership Institute.

TWS created a new award for 2019 – the Best Wildlife Restoration Award. This award will recognize outstanding projects supported by Wildlife Restoration funds (also known as Pittman-Robertson funds) and associated non-federal matching funds.

Old Business

* At the meeting 2019 annual meeting, the board and membership approved the idea of providing a reimbursement of 50% of the cost for chapter members to apply to become an AWB or CWB. At the board meeting on 24 Feb 2020, the following criteria for the NETWS board to consider providing these reimbursements were established: 1) application received from a NETWS member in good standing. 2) applicant must be a resident of Nebraska, or attending school in Nebraska. 3) NETWS will limit these awards to $1000 per year on a first come, first serve basis. Applicant would need to send the NETWS board a receipt indicating that they had applied to become an A/CWB with TWS to receive a reimbursement. NETWS would only provide this benefit once to each applicant, so we encourage applicants to work with currently certified members so that they can submit the best application possible.
* Formation of an ad hoc committee to develop a structure for NETWS to distribute funds for research and outreach projects

New Business

* NETWS board agreed to resume providing funds for student rooms at the annual meeting to encourage student attendance. NETWS will provide up to 6 rooms at the hotel for student use. The board would like a the student chapter committee representative to take the lead on figuring out how many students will be attending and then assigning students to rooms (e.g. how many rooms will be for men, for women, have students from different universities share rooms to best use space available). Ranglack said that there might be some additional layers of University policy that need to be taken into account in terms of numbers of students allowed in a room, maintaining same sex rooms, and other restrictions to maintain student safety.
* In 2020, NETWS will be reviewing and updating the chapter’s strategic plan of operation, and board will be seeking input from membership. Dunn and Considine started work on this document, and the board will take up revisions at the next board meeting.
* The chapter is in need of a policy on providing reimbursements for the registration costs at the annual meeting. The board put forth the policy of providing a full refund to members who cancel their registration >7 days before the meeting. If the request is made <= 7 days before the meeting, no refunds will be made. This decision helps the programs committee plan for the number of meals to cater, and helps prevent the chapter from having to absorb a large cost of meals that don’t get used (but that still need to be paid for).
* An idea to increase student interest and participation was suggested, based on an observation of the activity at the Society for Range Management meeting. At that meeting, student took a test, with the highest scoring individuals receiving a cash prize, and the university with the highest average scores receiving a plaque and bragging rights for the year. A UN-L student suggested the competition could include some sort of practical skills competition (e.g. which team can put up mist nets most quickly and efficiently, use of blowdarts, etc). Another idea floated was to provide the student chapters with a topic around which to develop a poster providing a solution. One example was to create a poster on “how to feed the worlds human population?”, with all groups developing their ideas.
* The programs committee is seeking ideas for the location and topic of the 2021 annual meeting. McPherron asked members to provide feedback on the idea of selecting a permanent location for the annual meeting versus continuing to rotate the meeting to different locations around Nebraska. Members are encouraged to provide topic/theme ideas and potential meeting locations.

Dunn asked if there was any other business, and seeing none asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eric Zach so moved, seconded by Gerry Steinauer, and the motion carried by voice vote of the membership. Meeting declared adjourned at 4:50 pm.

2020-2021 NETWS Board Members

President-elect: Will Inselman (2020)

President: Shelly McPherron (2020)

Past President: Shaun Dunn (2020)

Treasurer: Matt Gruntorad (2020-2021)

Secretary: Melvin Nenneman (2019-2020)

At-Large members: Andrew Little, Mercy Manzanares (2019-2020)

Sarah Nevison, Jenny Prenosil (2020-2021)

\*These board positions will be filled at the close of the elections on 23 March 2020

2020 NETWS Award winners

Career Professional – Gerry Steinauer

Professional of the Year – Juancarlos Giese

Joe Gabig Scholarship – Matthew Hinrichs

Poster awards

3rd place – Effects of rainfall and cover-object size and material on herpetofauna detection in South-Central Nebraska. Mikalah Brown

2nd place- Nebraska’s prairie grouse: Abundance, production and their historical drivers. Danielle Berger

1st place- Transect survey biases and correction methods in southern Africa. Erika Swenson

Photo contest: Plants and Scenery – Sarah Nevison

Pollinators, Wildlife, Best in Show – Ben Wheeler

New Legacy Member: Mike Gutzmer

President’s award – Shaun Dunn, past-president Matt Steffl presented with his president’s plaque