

**NORTH DAKOTA NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

MAY 8TH, 2025

TEAMS VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL/NDNRT CONFERENCE ROOM – BISMARCK, ND

Board members present:

Randy Renner, Board President, North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society representative
Gene Veeder, Board Vice-President, Gubernatorial appointee
Kristal Stoner, Board Interim Secretary/Treasurer, National Audubon Society representative
Dave Dittloff, National Wildlife Federation representative
Scott Peterson, Board Ex-officio, North Dakota Game and Fish Department representative

Trust staff present:

Keith Trego, Executive Director
Terry Allbee, Business Manager/Biologist (remotely)
Jesse Beckers, Energy Program Manager
Eric Rosenquist, Conservation Program Manager
Heather Husband, Meadowlark Initiative Coordinator
Rick Warhurst, NAWCA Staff/Biologist
Brenda Newton, Administrative/Conservation Specialist

Others present:

John Hagan, SEI Investment Company
Pete Carlson, Haga Kommer, Ltd.

9:00 AM

Randy called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken. Randy asked for any announcements. Hearing none, Randy called for any changes to the agenda. Keith asked if Bylaws Clarification could be added to Old Business. Randy recommended having a closed session during the lunch break. **Dave moved to have a closed session at 12:30.” Gene seconded. All in favor, motion carried.** Hearing no other additions to the agenda, **Dave motioned “to approve the agenda with the changes mentioned” Kristal seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.** Keith reviewed the action items list from previous meetings that was posted on the website. He noted which items were complete and which will be discussed later in the meeting. Randy asked for any additions or corrections to the January board meeting minutes. Hearing none, Randy called for a motion. **Kristal motioned “to approve the meeting minutes.” Dave seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.**

Goal E: Trust Administration & Efficiencies

John Hagan of SEI Investments presented the Trust’s first quarter investment portfolio performance review and the overall market performance. The Trust’s Consolidated Portfolio was up 1.5% for the first quarter of 2025. All active strategies the Trust uses outperformed in the first quarter. An asset allocation study will be done as soon as the Trust can get SEI expected future federal funding numbers. After the study, SEI will look at rebalancing the portfolio. The board will be notified if they foresee any changes. The Trust portfolio is currently \$37.6 million. John indicated that 2025 investment income should be around \$2 million.

Peter Carlson from Haga Kommer presented the 2024 audit report. Pete reviewed the audit letter which states all material presented fairly and the audit was clean. He presented the audit report in detail to the board. Overall, no issues of noncompliance were found and there were no difficulties performing

the audit. The Trust had to conduct a single audit since 2024 federal awards were over \$750,000 threshold. There were no federal findings. Pete reviewed the financial statements of the Trust and noted everything is in good standing and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The concern of segregation of duties is always identified, due to the small size of the office. The Trust has several internal controls in place to address these concerns. The audit will be sent to the board by email for approval once the federal tax return is complete. It was suggested to increase the Trust's capital depreciation increase from \$750 to \$1,000. **Dave motioned "to increase the capital depreciation limit to \$1,000." Gene seconded. All in favor, motion carried.**

Terry next gave a financial review of the first quarter of 2025. Terry gave a brief financial synopsis of the last few years, regarding investment earnings and cash flow. Investment income has driven program activity. This year, the Trust has not had to use any investment income to date, as grant reimbursements have all been received through the end of April. With the current cash holding, the Trust will not have to use any investment income until the second half of the year. This year the Trust will again focus on processes and efficiencies. Terry reviewed the Trust's first quarter financial report. Efficiencies and organization will continue to be a priority throughout the year.

Randy presented Scott with an appreciation award for his time on the board. Scott started on the Trust board in 2001 as the representative for the ND Chapter of the Wildlife Society until 2014. He then served in the ex-officio position for the ND Game and Fish Department (should we list the dates served?)

Goal A: New & Existing Programs

Eric reviewed the OHF grant proposal he submitted for Round 26. The proposal, Grazing Resiliency in North Dakota, is an extension of GRB2, which was only in western ND. This new program will extend to the entire state. The proposal requests \$2,110,000 from OHF, for a total project cost of \$2,845,000. There are over 30 landowners interested in grazing infrastructure. If the Trust receives the grant, half of the funds could be obligated this year. Rick also submitted an OHF proposal. He is requesting \$445,000 from OHF for Wildlife and Livestock Dams 3. The total project cost is \$890,000. Jesse mentioned that OHF received 18 proposals, totaling \$14 million. OHF only has \$8 million available.

Keith reviewed Outdoor Heritage Fund legislation from this session. He helped introduce HB 1554, to fix the number of advisory board votes needed to approve grant funding. The bill was successful and even included an emergency clause so it would be in effect for the upcoming grant round. Keith and several partners also met with the governor regarding the OHF cap that has been in place for several years and to discuss action items following the NDGF's habitat summit. The board discussed ways to keep pushing the importance of the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Jesse discussed his recent NFWF grant proposal submission. The Trust asked for \$984,000. Funding covers carbon research activities, staffing time, juniper removal, grass seeding, wetland restorations and support for the ND Grazing Land coalition and ND Wildlife Federation. This round there were more requests than available funds. Jesse will find out this month if the Trust was awarded the grant.

Goal B: Convene Stakeholders to Address Grassland Loss

Heather informed the board of plans to hold a policy tour next year. The tour would be led by the ND Grazing Lands Coalition. So far there have been two preliminary meetings with NDGLC board members. A tentative plan is to have a one-day tour at Black Leg Ranch with a farm to table theme and dinner in the field. There could also be a social the night before in Bismarck with some kind of video viewing. One outcome of the tour would be to leave attendees with an action item. There are ongoing discussions of the exact action item and messaging of the event.

Jesse gave an update on the Carbon Project. The study was able to show that well managed grazed pastures can increase carbon storage by 63%. There are plans to continue the study with NDSU and move the study site near Epping in western ND. Jesse plans to put in another Oil and Gas Research Program grant application to the Industrial Commission this fall. The Trust will be the project administrator and primary applicant, and NDSU will conduct and oversee the study. There are plans to incorporate e-collar grazing on the study site. The board discussed the pros and cons of working with a university and the site location.

The board took a break for lunch and held a closed session.

Jesse next updated the board on his work with the Bank of ND, regarding a state regenerative grassland program. This would be a verifiable carbon credit program. A private company would need to be procured to verify the credits every five years. The potential start date would not be for two years. The board discussed how carbon is monetized and the verification process.

Goal C: Financial Support of Natural Resource Education

Brenda presented an overview of the 2025 Small Grant Program budget and applications. In January, the board approved \$86,000 for 2025 grants. There were 10 applications received with a total funding request for year-1 funding of \$106,303.04. Four applications requested year-2 funding totaling \$32,723.04. Staff recommended funding eight applications with a year-1 funding request of \$85,980, and two applications with a year-2 funding request of \$16,400. The board agreed with the recommendation and **Dave moved “to approve the small grant program recommendation as presented.” Kristal seconded. There was no discussion. All were in favor, motion carried.**

Goal D: Existing and New Partnerships

Keith discussed the handling of restricted funds. He reviewed the list of restricted funds we have received from private donors and energy companies. Private funds are expected to be spent this year. Jesse discussed how many of the energy funds came to the Trust. Eric updated the board on the amount remaining in each fund and what the funds were spent on. He noted that the Trust makes every effort to leverage the funds at a 2:1 ratio. A handout was given to the board that shows what types of projects the energy funds were spent on. The board felt the handout was very informative and could be useful when engaging with energy companies.

Keith next updated the board on the status of federal funds. The Meadowlark Initiative RCPP Supplemental Agreement funds have still not been approved. Keith has been in touch with Senator Hoeven’s office to see if they can help. Heather reviewed notes from her recent AFWA meeting and discussed the program cuts proposed in the President’s budget.

Old Business

Keith informed the board that there has been no new information regarding the Dakota Water Resources Act Amendment. He continually reaches out to Hoeven’s office for updates.

The board discussed funds for the ND Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Keith mentioned that their annual meeting was in February. At the meeting, the membership discussed the Chapter’s Legacy Fund and what to do with it. The majority of the membership would like to hire a lobbyist/executive director. The Chapter is planning to create an action plan from the membership feedback. The Trust board is favorable to donating funds to help initiate raising funds for the Chapter’s Legacy Fund. The board would only approve donating funds if the Legacy Fund was converted to a true endowment. Currently it is not an endowment.

Keith reviewed this year's salary survey results. Dave reviewed the survey process with the board. The surveys are done every five years. Currently, the Trust salary ranges are trending ahead of the comparables, therefore no changes were made to staff salary ranges apart from annual COLA adjustments.

Keith proposed hiring a new part time position to the board. He reviewed that the Trust finances have increased over the years and there needs to be a rebalance of business processes. He proposed to move some of Terry's financial responsibilities to Brenda. The admin duties that Brenda would divest would be performed by a new part-time administrative position. This position could also take on some communication duties. The board was in favor of the proposal and felt there was no need to wait. It was discussed that Keith should write up the proposal with the cost of the changes and send it to the Finance Committee who will make a recommendation to the full board. The board will then vote on the changes by email.

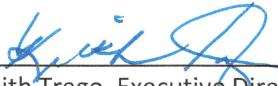
Keith informed the board that there has been no action on appointing a new gubernatorial board member. Brenda reached out to the state Boards and Commissions office, who replied that they have not yet appointed anyone.

Brenda reviewed the new training portal and disclosure form with the board. The board and staff were informed to complete the training and read the materials listed on the form. Once completed, the form can be returned to Brenda.

Keith presented a proposed change to the Bylaws. He noticed that the voting majority language was not very clear. Keith reached out to Paul Myerchin to clarify what the correct language should be. He displayed the recommended wording changes related to the wording of a voting majority. Modifying the wording would not change how the board currently votes. The board agreed to make the changes. **Dave motioned "to change the Bylaws as presented." Gene seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.**

New Business

Dates for the summer board meeting were addressed. The board decided to have a one-day meeting on Wednesday, August 20th. **Dave motioned "to adjourn the meeting at 4:14 pm." Kristal seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.**

Submitted by 
Keith Trego, Executive Director

Dated 8/21/25

Approved by 
Randy Renner, President

Dated 8/21/25