

MINUTES

Nebraska Environmental Trust Board
Fourth Quarter Meeting
Thursday, November 6, 2025
1:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair Quandahl called the meeting of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board (NET) to order at 1:31 p.m. in Suite 310, 2077 N St, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Advanced notice of the meeting and public hearing was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on October 23, 2025. The agenda and documents to be considered at the meeting were provided. The Open Meetings Act was posted near the meeting room entrance and on the Nebraska Environmental Trust website.

Roll call was conducted, and a quorum was present.

Members Present (10):

District I: Jeff Kanger, Lincoln; Ted Vasko, Papillion

District II: Garfield Coleman, Omaha; Roger Helgoth, Omaha; Chair Mark Quandahl, Omaha

District III: Eric Hansen, North Platte

State Agency Representatives: Jesse Bradley, Director, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment; Matt Manning, Chief Water Officer, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment; Tim McCoy, Director, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission; Ashley Newmyer, Interim Director, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Members Absent (4):

District I: James Hellbusch, Columbus

District III: Rod Christen, Steinauer; Josh Andersen, Edgar

State Agency Representatives: Sherry Vinton, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Staff Present: Holly Adams, Executive Director; Lana Merani, Grants Administrator; Madison Moe, Grants Assistant; Karen Plautz-Castro, Administrative Specialist

2. Consent Agenda

Background on Consent Agenda Items

The consent agenda included the August 7, 2025, Board meeting minutes, financial reports, approval to set financials aside for audit, the Grant Disbursement Report, the Nebraska Lottery Proceeds Allocation Report, and the Grant Administration Report.

Motion by Kanger, seconded by Bradley, "I move to approve the consent agenda."

Voting Aye: Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment

Ashley Garrelts, Sandhills Task Force, Broken Bow, spoke on behalf of their grant modification requests (Agenda Item #8.b.) which would enable the Sandhills Task Force to continue promoting grazing practices that improve rangeland health, benefiting both livestock and wildlife habitats.

4. Directors Report

a. New NET Staff

Holly Adams, Executive Director of the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), introduced new staff to the Board. The agency's new Grants Administrator is Lana Merani and Administrative Specialist is Karen Plautz-Castro.

b. Update on Five-Year Funding Category Review

Executive Director Holly Adams gave an overview of the upcoming Five-Year Funding Category public meetings scheduled for November 2025. A contract is in place with the UNL Public Policy Center, and they have set up in-person meetings in each of the three districts and one Zoom meeting for those who may not be able to attend in-person.

- District I, November 18th at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Denton
- District II, November 19th at Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wanahoo, Wahoo
- District III, November 20th at - Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce (Buffalo Room), Kearney
- Virtual on Zoom, Tuesday, December 2nd at the NET office in Lincoln.

The UNL Public Policy Center is advertising these reviews on behalf of NET and will be sending out publications and advertising in each district's newspaper, posting on social media, distributing emails and accepting written comments from the public. The UNL Public Policy Center will facilitate meetings, compile public comments, prepare the report, and present findings at the January 8, 2026, NET Board meeting.

5. Public Hearing on Proposed Eligibility Recommendations for the 2026 Grant Cycle

As presiding officer, Quandahl opened the public hearing at 1:42 p.m. to accept testimony on the eligibility recommendations for the 2026 Grant Cycle under consideration by the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 81-15,167 through 81-15,176.

Two written records were received and distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Testimony During Hearing

Elizabeth Elliott – City of Lincoln, gave an overview of timelines, described delays and is requesting NET Grant #25-111 for the Multimodal Transportation Center be extended one year six months due to federal administrative delays.

Nolan Lemna – Individual applicant, present additional details beyond those outlined within his grant application to the Board regarding NET Grant application #26-123. The goal of the proposed project is to create a reward system for agricultural producers who practice sustainable methods and to then donate food products (such as beef, eggs, poultry) to food banks and nonprofit organizations.

Katie Patrick – Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, described the benefits of their sustainability department (regift, resell, recycle) and how NET grant application #26-109 for the Hastings Campus would benefit from a new, energy efficient warehouse to expand and continue their recycling efforts.

Treaven Scheideler – Sandhills Biochar, outlined the issue posed by red cedar trees and described how grant NET Grant application #26-168 would offer landowners an on-site solution for removing invasive trees from their property while minimizing greenhouse gas emissions through a localized approach.

The public hearing concluded at 2:01 p.m.

6. Grants Committee Report and Recommendations for Grant Application Eligibility

After the September 2, 2025, grant application deadline, the Grants Committee received the applications after Holly Adams, Executive Director, reviewed them for completeness. The Executive Director presented her eligible recommendations to the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee reviewed 73 applications for eligibility at the Grants Committee meeting on October 16, 2025, and determined 71 were eligible.

After the Grants Committee makes its recommendations to the NET Board for consideration, the NET Board may adopt or revise the eligibility determinations. After the Board's final determination, all eligible applications will be referred back to the Grants Committee who will then use the project ranking and scoring system to determine the Committee's award and funding recommendations.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee:

26-101, 26-102, 26-103, 26-105, 26-106, 26-107, 26-109, 26-110, 26-111, 26-112, 26-113, 26-114, 26-115, 26-116, 26-117, 26-118, 26-119, 26-121, 26-122, 26-123, 26-124, 26-125, 26-128, 26-129, 26-130, 26-131, 26-132, 26-133, 26-134, 26-135, 26-136, 26-137, 26-138, 26-139, 26-140, 26-142, 26-143, 26-144, 26-146, 26-147, 26-148, 26-149, 26-150, 26-151, 26-152, 26-153, 26-154, 26-155, 26-156, 26-157, 26-158, 26-159, 26-160, 26-161, 26-162, 26-163, 26-164, 26-165, 26-166, 26-168, 26-169, 26-170, 26-171, and 26-173."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-108, 26-120, 26-126, 26-145, and 26-172."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Quandahl

Abstaining: McCoy

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

9 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by McCoy, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following project be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-141."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Coleman, Hansen, Quandahl

Voting Nay: Helgoth

Abstaining: Manning, Bradley

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

07 Voted Aye. 1 Nay. 2 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-167."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Helgoth, Quandahl

Abstaining: Hansen

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

9 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be ineligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-104 and 26-127".

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

7. Closeout Report of Grants

A list of projects that either expired or closed out early was reviewed by the Board.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Kanger, "I move to approve the report provided and presented by NET staff, for the closeout of the projects presented in the report."

Discussion: It was noticed that some projects did not use all their allotted funds. Executive Director Adams explained that it is common for applicants to find more cost-effective methods to complete tasks or they may have overestimated the amount of funds needed to complete their project. Any funds not used are returned to the NET.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

8. Project Modification Requests

a. Extension Request – 25-111 – City of Lincoln, Lincoln Multimodal Center

The City of Lincoln requested a one year and six-month extension to their project due to a delay in receiving the execution of the federal RAISE grant agreement. Due to this, the grantee postponed construction start date. They're expecting the contract to be approved by the end of 2025 with construction beginning in July 2026.

Motion by Vasko, seconded by Hansen, "I move to approve the City of Lincoln's request to extend project 25-111 until December 31, 2027."

Discussion: Brief clarification that 25-111 is a 2025 grant still in their first year.

Voting Aye: Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

b. Project Modification Request – 23-166, 24-175, 25-161 – Sandhills Task Force

The application and proposed budgets of these applications did not define the specific project activities, for their project objective “Planned Grazing Systems”. Sandhills Task Force is requesting a modification of NET grant applications #23-166, 24-175, #25-161 to include the following items under this objective: drilling livestock water wells, installing livestock water pumps, livestock water tanks and water pipeline, and installing or relocating livestock fence.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Bradley, "I move to approve the Sandhills Task Force's request to modify projects 23-166, 24-175, and 25-161 to include drilling livestock water wells, installing livestock water pumps, livestock water tanks, and livestock water pipelines, and installing or relocating livestock fence."

Discussion: These projects which mostly involve work on private land were discussed. NET encourages all applicants to apply, including individuals, if the public benefit outweighs the private benefit. To be eligible for reimbursement, applications must include detailed descriptions of contractual services and equipment. According to current policy and prior discussions, items such as fencing, pipelines, tanks, and wells are not classified as real estate improvements.

Voting Aye: Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer

Abstaining: Hansen, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

8 Voted Aye. 2 Abstained. Motion carried.

9. Next Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2026, at Nebraska Environmental Trust, 2077 N St, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE 68510, 1:30 p.m. A public hearing will be held by the Board to accept testimony on the proposed funding list for the 2026 grant cycle.

10. Adjourn

Chair Quandahl adjourned the meeting at 2:27 p.m.



Holly Adams
Executive Director