

SPRING 2025

# NWCA TIMES

The Nebraska Weed Control Association

2807 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Grand Island, NE 68803



Photo: Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary Website

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## Ian Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary is dedicated to the conservation of Sandhill Cranes, Whooping Cranes and other migratory birds, and their habitat along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska.

Owned and managed by the National Audubon Society, the original purchase of 782 acres in 1974, which was funded by Lillian Annette Rowe of Trenton, NJ, included 2.5 miles of river channel, wet meadows, and some agricultural fields. Additional land acquisitions have increased the current size of the sanctuary to 3,000 acres and 5 miles of river channel. Along with preserving habitat for wildlife, nature-based education is a major focus at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center, where year-round education opportunities exist for local schools and the general public.

# Association Update

By Executive Director - Rob Schultz



The Nebraska Weed Control Association held their 78th Annual Conference and Trade Show at the Holiday Inn Conference Center on February 3-5, 2025. Guest speakers included: Chris Helzer with The Nature Conservancy updated us on the increase of Clonal Shrubs in Nebraska, Kaitlyn Quincy with the SeaPro Corporation gave us an update on some basic aquatic systems management, Leah Peterson gave us an overview of the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, Craig Romary with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture discussed endangered species protection, Kyle Schumacher gave us an overview of the Society for Range Management, Mick McDowell with Milletta Vista Winery discussed the use of herbicides near vineyards, Scott Erthum is the Brown County Weed Superintendent and he gave us an update on the Western Weed Coordinating meeting that he attended, Todd Boller-Fillmore County Weed Superintendent spoke on the NAISMA Weed Free Products Program, Jarod Dendinger with Applied Connective Technologies updated us on Cyber Security, Kevin Steele with UNL showed us his research on the detection of phragmites using drones, and Brent Meyer gave us an update on the Nebraska Legislative process and a few things that are happening in the legislature right now.

The Wednesday Luchon/Business Meeting was held and it was voted to have the 2027 NWCA Annual Conference in Norfolk, Nebraska. Brent Meyer, Lancaster County Weed Superintendent, was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Nebraska Weed Control Association.

The banquet and awards ceremony was held on Tuesday evening. The following individuals were recognized for their outstanding service:

Region 1 – Randy Group  
Region 2 – Kurtis Mizner  
Region 3 – Larry Klahn

Region 4 – Brian Pedersen  
Region 5 – Melissa Grover  
Region 6 – Mike Dolezal

Board member and Superintendent Years of Service Awards were given out, the higher longevity award winners are as follows: board members receiving 10 year awards were Ron Schmidt-Madison County. Board members receiving 15 year awards were: Rick Freshmen-Otoe County. Board members receiving 20 year awards were: Marvin Kohout-Saline County, Jack VanSlyke & Helen Cullers of Valley County.

Superintendent Years of Service Awards were as follows: 10 year awards to Mitch Dzingle of Sherman County. 15 year awards went to: Bryan Schardt-Thayer County and Todd Boller-Fillmore County. 25 year awards went to: Darrell Kaminski-Valley County. 35 year award went to Ed Sladky of Saunders County.

Outstanding Rookie Superintendent of the Year Award: Josh Nelson, Sarpy County

Outstanding Weed Superintendent of the Year: Brent Meyer, Lancaster County

President's Awards: Tim Tunnel – Land Manager at Headwater's Corporation  
Jon Cannon – Executive Director of NACO  
Teresa Ibach – Nebraska State Senator in District 44

# Association Update Continued

The NWCA Spring Training will be at the Norfolk Lodge and Divot's Convention Center in Norfolk on March 26-27, 2025 with the New Superintendent Training being held on March 25th. The 2025 NWCA Fall Training will be held in Norfolk on August 6-7, 2025 with a new superintendent training being held on August 5th. NACO Conference will be held in Kearney on December 17th and 18th.

The NWCA and NDA continue to have a display booth at the Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days. A big "Thank You" goes out to those who signed up and helped work the booth last year. It is a great place to talk to people from Nebraska and across the United States about noxious and invasive weeds. If you are interested in helping out this year, please let me know and I will get you scheduled in.

Here at the NWCA Home Office in Grand Island, there is an assortment of educational materials: brochures, weed watch magazines, thistle guides, and weed ID guides. Please stop by or get a hold of me if you are in need of anything. If you are in need of Weed Free Forage Hay Tags, let me know and I will mail some out to you. If you have any questions about the NWCA feel free to get ahold of me at any time. The office phone number is 308.385.5097. Thank you and Stay Safe!



## Nebraska Weed Control Association

*78<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Conference & Trade Show*





# NDA Spring Discussion

By Trevor Johnson, Program Manager

It seems winter may be easing as I type this update. The snow has melted, 60-degree days abound, and we already had our first thunderstorms of the year. I hope there are many more to come as moderate to extreme drought conditions persist across Nebraska. As the season changes, so too do the activities of the NDA Noxious Weed Program. Inspectors are finished grading annual reports and setting their sights on Seed Program inspections. Before we know it, the growing season will be upon us and noxious weed inspections will be in full swing.

There are a few changes to discuss heading into the 2025 season. One change that you've heard about from me over the last year is the change to Invasive Plant Watchlist reporting. In 2025, Watchlist Infestation Reports will be regional. As I discussed in my last newsletter article, the idea is to increase participation and better monitor species that have the potential to be very problematic for our state. Thank you for all your input to make this happen. I will be going over this topic in more detail at Spring Training and I hope you are able to attend.

Another change, which continues to impact our Weed Management Areas, is the lack of disbursement of funds from the Riparian Vegetation Management Grant Program. I don't have much new to say on the topic, except I don't expect the funds to be disbursed this fiscal year. On a positive note, I would like to commend the WMA's who searched out other funding opportunities to continue to enhance invasive species control efforts statewide. Congratulations to Panhandle, Southwest, Twin Valley, and Sandhills WMAs on their Nebraska Environmental Trust awards! I would encourage other WMAs to apply for NET funds in 2025.

We are in the process of hiring an inspector for NDA Region 3 (Northeast). By the time you're reading this, the application period has closed and we are likely finishing up interviews. We hope to have the new inspector onboard prior to the growing season so that they can hit the ground running doing survey and follow up inspections.

I'll end this with a reminder that NDA staff are here to help. If you have a question about the Noxious Weed Control Act, if you can't get the Infestation Report to function correctly, or if you just want to vent about a recent 10-day notice recipient, call me. It doesn't matter what it is, the inspectors and I want to hear from you. Although our roles may be different, we share a common mission, the prevention and control of invasive plants throughout Nebraska.



Photo: NDA Website

# South East Weed Management Area

By Jeff Walters

Rebuilding a Weed Management Area is a lot of work and has had many hurdles. Initially, I was told it could take up to a year to get things up and running. It took that amount of time because we had a group of people that worked hard to get this thing done. Without that help it was going to be significantly longer. In the first meeting, an abundance of information was shared from who is involved to finding a place to house the WMA. Mike Reed from Douglas County was a big help on who and what direction to go and the next steps to take. Jane Kuhl from the Nemaha NRD also was a big help in getting things going the right direction. Getting the counties to act as one has been a smooth process as they are aware of the advantages. Being part of the Southeast WMA provides resources to the landowners in Southeast Nebraska. It has been a lengthy process getting the interlocal created, but we are progressing onward. Josh Black from Pawnee County has also been a huge help in getting the organization operational and functioning smoothly. We have also had several local County Commissioners attend meetings and have been great help by providing administrative guidance. We are going to be able to apply for our first grant this year! We are very eager to assist Southeast Nebraska with weed management. I'd like to extend my appreciation to everyone that has helped thus far. Individuals including Nebraska Game and Parks, County Commissioners, County Attorneys, Weed Superintendents and Nemaha NRD staff. We are excited to have Cass County as our newest member. Randy's knowledge and leadership will help create a better future. I encourage counties to join their local WMA.

Otoe County Weed Control  
Jeff Walters, Superintendent  
402-873-9585  
[jwalters@otoecountyne.gov](mailto:jwalters@otoecountyne.gov)





## Register now for the 2025 NAISMA Annual Conference



Hosted By:



We're thrilled to announce that registration is now open for the Annual NAISMA Conference, taking place this November! Early bird rates are available, but only for a limited time—register now to secure your spot!

## 2025 NAISMA Conference Agenda

# In the Field: Valuable Apps and Books to Help You ID Plants

By Shannon Smith, Coordinator, Nebraska Invasive Species Council

Struggling through the first week of Daylight Savings can only mean one thing: the ground is warming up, the rain is (hopefully) coming, and Spring is nearly here. Before you know it, you'll be back in the field, confident or confused by a new plant emerging from the soil. There are a lot of valuable resources out there to help you identify plants during those times of confusion, either free or for a very low cost. Here's some great budget options to get you through a warm, humid, and prosperous field season, minimizing your frustration while maximizing your plant ID skills:



**App:** Nebraska Wildflowers

**Cost:** Free!

**Where to Get It:** Search "Nebraska Wildflowers" in your phone's app store

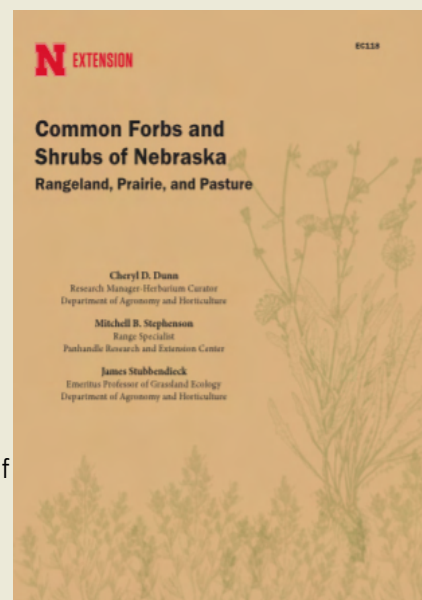
**Why It Works:** This app allows you to input the plant type, color, number of petals, leaf arrangement, habitat type, and the time and place in Nebraska to narrow down your search to the most viable options. It also includes pictures to help you determine these characteristics from the plant you're looking at. You can also search by plant name and create a list of all the plants you've identified in the field, making it easier to come back and reference plants you've already seen.

**Book:** Common Forbs and Shrubs of Nebraska: Rangeland, Prairie, and Pasture

**Cost:** \$12.50

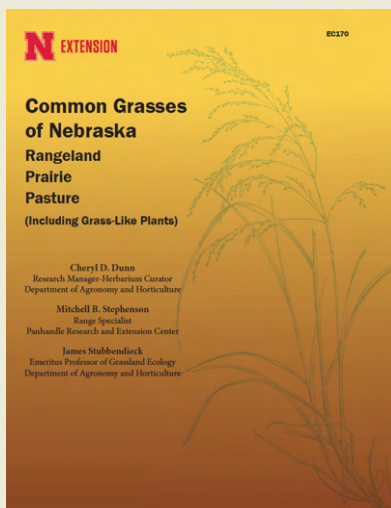
**Where to Get It:** Online on the UNL Marketplace

**Why It Works:** This 260-page paperback book is lightweight and easy to keep with you out in the field. With plant illustrations, distribution maps, and key details, including common/species name, growth form, life span, origin, flowering period, height, inflorescence/vegetative characteristics, habitat, and uses, the book makes it easy to figure out if you're observing a common plant of the state or something more unique to Nebraska. The front of the book also has some valuable illustrations to help you determine what type of plant characteristics you're looking at.





## Valuable Apps and Books to Help You ID Plants Continued



**Book:** Common Grasses of Nebraska: Rangeland, Prairie, and Pasture (Including Grass-Like Plants)

**Cost:** \$5.00

**Where to Get It:** Online on the UNL Marketplace

**Why It Works:** Organized in the same way as the Common Forbs and Shrubs of Nebraska book, this 178-page paperback illustrated identification guide is also lightweight and contains key information and characteristics for 125 grasses and grass-like plants in Nebraska.

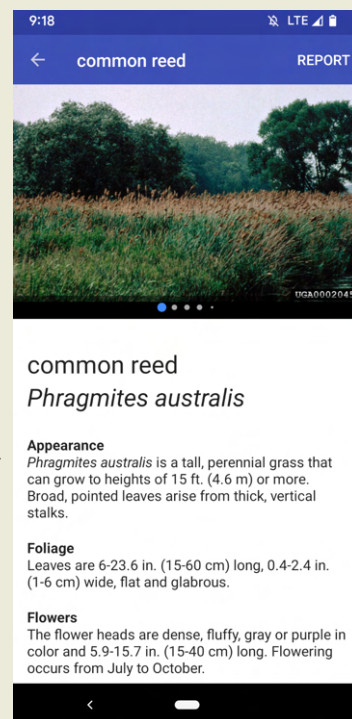
**App:** Wild Spotter

**Cost:** Free!

**Where to Get It:** Search “Wild Spotter” in your phone’s app store

**Why It Works:** For when you’re fairly certain you’ve got an invasive plant or noxious weed in front of you, this app is linked to EDDMaPs (Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System) to document invasive species introduction, distribution, and spread. With helpful pictures and characteristics, Wild Spotter also has certified verifiers to determine if your reported species is correct. The app is designed for mapping invasives in America’s public wild places, which includes trails/trailheads, rivers, streams, lakes, campsites, rest areas, boating/fishing/swimming access points, nature viewing areas, and historical sites, so reporting invasives on private lands isn’t recommended. However, it can still be used as a helpful invasive plant ID tool.

Speaking of invasives, the Nebraska Invasive Species Council invites you to join our monthly meetings on the second Friday of each month from 10 am – 12 pm CST to discuss all things invasive going on across the state. Visit <https://neinvasives.com/> to learn more; we hope to see you soon! Happy field season!





# Bio Control

Spring 2025

This spring and summer will prove to be a busy one for the Research and Bio Control Committee. On April 14 -17th, I will be traveling to Annapolis, MD to attend the 2nd National Forum on Biological Control hosted by the National Forest Service and NAISMA. This conference is always so interesting as it provides a forum for the researchers in bio control to meet with the people working in weed control for guidance on where to push for the next bio control targets. I will get a preview of what is coming out soon to see if any of the new systems will benefit us in Nebraska.

I am working on our first in- state collection of leafy spurge flea beetles in Custer county this summer. This event will serve as our Leafy Spurge Working Task Force Field Day and Conference this year. We anticipate this happening late June or early July.

I applied for and received a grant specifically for bio control in the Sandhills Weed Management Unit through the Nebraska Environmental Trust. This grant will provide up to \$10,000 a year for the next three years to purchase and pursue establishing insectaries in the Sandhills Weed Management Area for invasive weeds such as common mullein, poison hemlock, and houndstongue. Its important to note that this money can not be used to control noxious weeds.

There will be a lot of work being done this year and am really hoping 2025 can be a year that we see positive changes using bio control.

Scott Erthum  
Brown County Weed/BioControl Chair  
weeds@browncountyne.gov  
402-760-0093



Photo: Gary McDonald iNaturalist



Photo: Eric Coombs, Oregon Department of Agriculture

The larvae of the European palearctic moth *Agonopterix alstroemeriana* feed on the foliage, buds, and flowers of poison hemlock in spring and early summer.

# NWCA Legislative Committee, LB145 Update

**LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA**  
**ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE**  
**FIRST SESSION**  
**LEGISLATIVE BILL 145**  
**Introduced by Ibach, 44**  
**Read first time January 13, 2025**  
**Committee: Agriculture**



A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Noxious Weed Control Act; to amend section 2-958.02, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to require the Director of Agriculture to administer a grant program relating to noxious weeds; to change provisions relating to intent to appropriate funds; and to repeal the original section. Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

LB145 updates wording changes to the Noxious Weed Control Act in the Grant Program 2-958.02 changing “may” to “shall” and increasing the funding amount from three to six million dollars annually for the management of vegetation in riparian areas.

## **January 28th, 2025, hearing in front of the Agriculture Committee**

### **In person:**

8 Testifiers – all proponents

0 opponents

### **Letters submitted:**

21 proponents

0 opponents

## **Where we currently stand**

Senator Ibach's office is still working on the legislation and will continue to work with the Department of Agriculture to find a solution to the holdup with the grant program.

## **Current State Budget**

The current budget proposal from the Governor did not include riparian funding. Since the appropriation would be from state general funds, the appropriations bill couldn't be acted upon until the budget is adopted. The budget bills have to be on the floor by the 70th day (April 29 this year). Senator Clements said the shortfall is \$189 million so they will have to look at cuts. That doesn't bode well for new funding, but the forecasting board will meet again before they start making final decisions.

# LB145 Continued

## Other funding opportunities

It's been suggested that the WMA's apply to Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) for grants, and some have and were successful. This is a great avenue and has been used in the past. A couple challenges over the years has been the Trust pulled out of awarding grants for riparian work. This is why we worked with Senator Dan Hughes to get the State funding in 2016. The other challenge is the WMA's have to take out an operating loan to pay contractors and then get reimbursed by NET. Legislation provides statewide projects, and NET will provide only a hopscotch approach depending on what WMA's get funded on a given year.

## What you can do

I challenge each of us to do 2 simple things:

- 1.Reach out to your Senator and make the connection.... Just introduce yourself and let them know you're available if they ever have any noxious or invasive plant issues.
- 2.Let them know the importance of water statewide and how supporting LB145 is crucial in maintaining the flows of Nebraska's rivers.

We are all aware of the positive impacts this program has achieved over the years, and I feel it is the State's responsibility to fund the projects to manage the "waters of the state" This has always been overwhelmingly bi-partisan supported legislation so we will keep working with the Legislature.



Mike Reed



Brent Meyer



Todd Boller



NWCA Legislative Comittee



# Presidential Address

Good day from Garfield County,

With the weather outside it sure feels like spring but like they say if you don't like the weather in Nebraska wait awhile and it will change.

The Legislative Committee has been extremely busy in working on the state's NDA grant. Until I got in this position, I had no idea the amount of man hours that went into this committee, I applaud all members for their work they are doing on this. There were a few WMAs that received the NET grant so hopefully we can still get some work done.

We have some good speakers coming up at our spring training on the 26th and 27th with new superintendents training on the 25th, the second opportunity to get your continued ed hours in and remember you need to answer roll call in the morning and after lunch and take and pass a test both days in order to get your hours. Time will go fast, and we'll be chasing weeds in no time so stay safe and I hope to see you all in Norfolk in a couple weeks.

Jimmy Petersen  
Garfield County Weed Control  
(308)-214-0301



***Nebraska Weed Control Association***

# Region Directors



## Region I

Hello from Region 1

It was good seeing everyone at Conference this year in Kearney. I thought everything went smooth as usual and really enjoyed Bill Busch the speaker for the evening. Congrats out to all the deserving award winners for 2024. Getting closer to another busy noxious weed season. If you have not done it yet, it is time to get those spray rigs ready to go. Region 1 will hold its spring meeting at our Southeast District NACO meeting on March 13 in Lincoln. We will schedule our monthly meetings for 2025 and hear from Trevor Johnson and NACO at our Round table Discussion

LPWMA has been busy sending out invoices for cost share on phragmites spraying on the river and tributaries for 2024. Acres seemed to be higher this year than past years so we are anxious to get out and see the results of our work. It was great to see our new Weed Management Area get off the ground. Southeast Weed Management Area consist of Otoe, Johnson, Pawnee, Nemaha, and Cass Counties in the Southeast part of the State. They recently hosted a landowner meeting on Feb 28th at the Nemaha NRD office with Landowners, Vendors, and Governmental Groups involved.

On the Legislative side it sounds like LB145 is still in committee. Appropriations Chair Senator Clements indicated that Nebraska is looking at a 190 million dollar shortfall and cuts will be needed. Sounds a lot like last year and we all remember what that was like. Make sure you let your State Senator know your support for LB 145. As I always say, usually the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Hope to see everyone at Spring Training in Norfolk on March 26-27.

Max Birkel



## Region II

Spring is just around the corner and we are actively planning for the upcoming season. We applied for some grant money through the Nebraska Environmental Trust and have received money to get some projects done. All of Region 2 is part of the Sandhills WMA. We have received funding to continue the Weed Watch for the next three years. This is an exciting development for us all. We also received money to continue our very popular chemical cost share program.

Scott Erthum applied for \$10,000 a year for the next three years to expand the biocontrol program in the Sandhills Weed Management Area. The grant specifies that he will be working on biocontrol agents in the Sandhills Weed Management area focusing on poison hemlock, common mullein, and field bindweed. The goal is to establish sustainable insectaries in the Sandhills that can provide insects to all parts of the state down the road.

Since the first of the year, we have lost Cherry County Weed Superintendent, Dave Leonard, and another weed superintendent, Doug Reiter, of Wheeler County has suffered two strokes. This is a good reminder that as new people enter the world of noxious weed control in counties that surround us, we need to band together and help those new people in their jobs. I believe that the strength of the Nebraska Weed Control Association is that we are a group that will work across county lines to help and lift up the newest members to help them get over the learning curve as quickly as possible.

Have a good Spring,

Kurtis Mizner

## Region III

Hello from Region III,

There hasn't been much to update on in this area. The hope is that there is a NDA inspector hired before the start of the growing the season. The NACO Northeast district meeting went well. Our region meetings are held during NACO. Updates were provided from all the local counties. Spring Training is right around corner! There should be quite a few of us attending. We look forward to the active growing season keep an eye of those rosettes.

Have a safe Spring!

Mark Borchers



## Region IV

Hello to all from Region 4.

Well, the football bowl games are all over and the Eagles are the new Super Bowl Champions, so with that being said, spring is quickly coming our way, and it will be time to start spring inspections soon. Many of us will be gearing up for our annual meetings with the FSA CRP boards here in March. New for 2025 will be the NDA and our region decided what our regional invasive weeds would be, so we will want to focus on those going forward. I believe we will learn more about that during spring training here in a couple weeks.

It has been discussed at our regional meetings that we need to do a better job of following up on our initial inspections and document that follow up and the course of action by the landowner. Let's all make the effort to be the best and most professional in the country.

It was great to see many of you at the annual conference in Kearney. Congratulations, goes out to our very own Webster Co. Supt. Brian Pedersen, Brian had the honor of receiving Region 4 Supt of the Year as well as the very first NDA Region 2 award presented to him by our state inspector Paul Moyer. Way to Go Brian!!

Also, congratulations to all the other award winners. I would also like to welcome our newest superintendent in Region 4 from Greeley Co. Jeremy Straka. Make sure to introduce yourself when you see Jeremy at meetings or trainings. Welcome Aboard.

Region 4 does a great job hosting monthly meetings and we have a great turn out for them. I do appreciate you all taking the time to come, as this is a great time for us to share ideas and keep information updated for our counties. In closing, thank you for allowing me to represent you as your director.

Jeremy Brandt – Director

## Region V

Hello from Region 5!

As the days get warmer, it feels like Spring might be around the corner. So now is a good time to get equipment ready for the upcoming season. As you all know, (or will soon find out, if you're a new superintendent) every county is different in how there weed dept. is run. Some counties have dedicated weed superintendents, some are part time employees, some have dual duties road dept etc, and some have private contractors. Each counties budget reflects how they want their counties weed dept to run. Some spray thousands of gallons a year, some don't spray at all. It always amazes me how different each counties weed departments are run. This is all neither here nor there, just an observation.

Ok, on to other things. This year's conference in Kearney was a great success, with good speakers, food and entertainment. It seems that this year's entertainment was received very well, I talked to several people who enjoyed Bill Bushes motivational speech, and the fact that he went to the hospitality room and answered questions for two hours afterwards. I believe the spring training agenda has been finalized, so hope to see you all there. It takes a lot of people to line up speakers and facilities for our trainings, so a shout out to all the people who make these happen.

Region 5 has received some funding from NET, so it looks like we will be able to get some projects done this Summer. Again, hope to see you all at Spring training.

Dan Wordekemper

## NWCA Spring Training - Norfolk, NE

### Wednesday March 26, 2025

- 8:00 Welcome, Announcements and Roll Call
- 8:15 Biocontrol update – Scott Erthum, Brown County Weed Superintendent
- 8:45 Infestation Data – Trevor Johnson, NDA Noxious Weed Program Manager
- 9:15 Kansas Department of Ag. Update – Scott Marsh
- 10:00 BREAK
- 10:30 Ventenata Grass – Jeremiah Phillips- South Dakota Dept. of Agriculture
- 11:00 Sandhills Task Force – Shelly Kelly – Executive Director
- 11:30 NIRMA Update – KC Pauling
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:50 Roll Call & Announcements
- 1:00 TBD
- 2:00 Region Meeting Planning for 2025 breakout session
- 2:30 TBD
- 3:00 BREAK
- 3:30 Kudzu Update – Paul Moyer
- 4:00 EXAM (Will follow last presentation)

### Thursday March 27, 2025

- 7:50 Welcome, Announcements and Roll Call
- 8:00 Regional Watchlist Update– Trevor Johnson
- 8:30 Dealing with Difficult Landowners – Panel Discussion – Jimmy Petersen
- 9:15 BREAK
- 9:45 Weed Free Products Update – Todd Boller
- 10:30 WeedMapper Update – Jeremy Brandt
- 11:00 Migratory Bird Update - NGPC
- 11:30 Drone Technology – Doug Deck
- 12:00 LUNCH
- 12:50 Roll Call
- 1:00 TBD
- 1:30 WMA Needs Assessment – Mike Reed
- 2:00 Apps for Weed ID – Margaret Valladeo
- 2:15 10 & 15 Day Notices – Rob Schultz
- 2:45 EXAM (Will follow last presentation)