NMNF NMNP Joint Meeting April 9, 2021

NMNF present: Mike S, Bob, Sandy, Mike M, Leslie, Vicki

Absent: Bruce, Kristal, Kevin

NNMNP present: Dennis, Matt J, Dayna, Tisha, Denise, Dawn, Brice, Tim, Heidi, Jocelyn, Austen, Karen, Olivia

Absent: Andrea

Mike S called the meeting to order, then turned it over to Brice. Brice welcomed Dayna and the board members introduced themselves and Dayna told us a little about her.. Minutes approval for the last NMNP board meet was deferred.

Matt’s report

A cumulative report from 2010-2021 is being completed, and the total number of volunteer hours that have been logged is 94,000.

Volunteer hours logged for the first quarter of 2021 was lowest since 2013, due to a lack of events due to Covid.

Challenges in rebuilding our server because the University is centralizing and while the new tracking system is finished, cleaning up the data is time consuming.

Noon talks and new Bat programs are some of the activities going on now. Doug and Matt found events that have been shared to the NE MN website and calendar.

Matt will be doing outreach describing NE MN program at a Conservation Nebraska event.

The newsletter, 'the Naturalist’ is ongoing.

3 trainings scheduled, 2 are already filled, waiting lists. October’s training is at The Crane Trust

NET grant includes new money to pay for the MNJr Coordinator, Dayna Berry. The Junior program committee is comprised of Matt, Austen, Dayna, Jocelyn, Tisha, Olivia, Dawn and Carly. Those present gave an update on the program which is progressing nicely with the hire of Dayna. She has been on the job for three weeks and is currently working on updating/reviewing and standardizing the curriculum that has been completed to this point. She will then start development of new curriculum. Dennis asked that the NET logo be twice as large as anyone else’s so we can show their great support for this program. The Junior committee is hoping the program can be piloted in 2-3 schools at the start of the next school year this fall. This is hopeful as Fontenelle and Henry Doorly are already working with schools. It was suggested that a Junior update be provided at least quarterly to the Boards and when significant events occur.

Vicki gave a financial update. As of April 9, 2021, the NMNF has $28,716.62 in the bank, with an outstanding expenditure of $300 for grant writing to Liz Lange. Next known expenditures are $17,500 to UNL for NET grant and $7,500 allocated to Junior Coordinator. Dennis stated he was reviewing the past NET grant to see what funds were still available as it expires on June 30, 2021. He told us that any funding requests under this grant must involve conservation of at risk species, water quality and waste management, and could not be used for people things. He feels confident we have received the new grant which was discussed at NET board meeting yesterday. We should know for sure within a few days.

Jr Master Naturalist Coordinator is doing curriculum development, and branding. One Ed Committee meeting so far and Matt working with Dayna weekly. Committed to piloting program in the Fall.

Dennis clarified that the new NET grant has to be used for monitoring equipment for youth.

Lauritzen Gardens, Vicki spoke with Matt Darling, Mike spoke with Pheasants Forever. Cooper Foundation letter of intent submitted April 1st. Three grants submitted for $10,000 each, and hope to know by the 1st of May. Prospects good with Cooper, Lauritzen and Asbergan. Liz will resend the application for the Pegler Foundation. Turner did not respond.

Mike facilitated a discussion about chapters. Chapters were first considered when there were financial concerns about losing funding for Matt’s salary, to ensure that the entire program wouldn’t sink. Because Matt is there, the people within the River City Chapter can get their information from Matt instead of going straight to the Chapter. What do you want the chapters to do? Bob gave a good example regarding the 2nd Thursday of every month. Consistency of the group meeting. Leslie reminded us that email isn’t the best method to get involvement within the Chapter. Tim suggested that when you have a certain thing going on in Lincoln, who would we contact to get that going? Tisha mentioned as far as she knows that the equipment for research projects is not being used within the River City Chapter.

 There was a consensus that thinks Bob’s idea is the best method for a group to stay cohesive. Dennis doesn’t care whether there are chapters or not. Matt thinks a lot of people are repelled by the administrative side, the elected officers work, because they didn’t sign up for that. However, it’s incumbent on the volunteer to find their fun. Good discussion about getting a matchmaker at the Chapter level, and its a good idea to adopt a project, like Lincoln has with their wetland Urban Wildlife project with camera traps.

Ideas to volunteer and research were presented by Jocelyn, there is an upcoming push for determining the abundance of coyotes and foxes in urban areas, and she has information of specific Citizen Science opportunities. Community Scientists of NE are putting together a hub that is an event organizer.

Mike presented an analysis that was completed by Brice, Tisha and himself where they reviewed the Strategic Plan progress as compared to the Program’s current status. One takeaway was that we need to look at updating short term partner needs and reorganize how members will have access to those needs and how our members strengths/Interests can support those needs, to include updating current volunteer interests/skills on website. Are there additional tools we can use to assist us in meeting our objectives to members and partners? It was emphasized that communication must be open and ongoing at all times.

We had lots of great discussion and interaction between all board members. Meeting was adjourned.