

Minutes of a Meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board
Held on June 3, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. CST
Room 327 E, Judicial Wing, ND State Capitol Building

Present: Tyler Dokken, OHF Advisory Board Chairman
Brian Amundson, OHF Advisory Board
Patsy Crooke, OHF Advisory Board
Dr. Joseph Carlson, OHF Advisory Board
David Dewald, OHF Advisory Board
Jeremy Eckroth, OHF Advisory Board
Tyler Stafslie, OHF Advisory Board
Tyler Jacobson, OHF Advisory Board
Randy Kreil, OHF Advisory Board
Rachel Retterath, OHF Advisory Board
John Weinand, OHF Advisory Board
Tom Claeys, OHF Advisory Board (Non-voting)
Rhonda Kelsch, OHF Advisory Board (Non-voting)
Jeb Williams, OHF Advisory Board (Non-voting)
Cole Garman, OHF Advisory Board (Non-voting)

Others Present: Brenna Jessen (NDIC), Erin Stieg (NDIC)

Also Present: A complete list of attendees is available in the Commission files. The meeting was also available by Microsoft Teams so not all attendees are known.

Dr. Joseph Carlson, OHF Advisory Board was absent from the meeting.

Chairman Tyler Dokken called the meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board (“Board”) to order at 8:35 a.m. CST with a quorum being present.

It was moved by Rachel Retterath and seconded by Brian Amundson that the Board approve the May 29, 2024, OHF technical committee meeting minutes and the June 4, 2024, OHF advisory board meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Brenna Jessen presented the Outdoor Heritage Fund project management and financial report. There has been a total of 243 cumulative projects and 68 of those are currently active through the program. OHF currently has \$28,577,823.83 in funds committed, and \$12,840,212.18 available to commit to new projects.

Chairman Dokken asked the Board to complete their Conflicts-of-Interest Forms.

The Grant Round 26 Presentations began.

26-1 (B): ND Statewide Tree Planting Initiative, ND Conservation District Employees Association – OHF funding request: \$2,500,000, Total Project Costs: \$3,510,000. Project Summary: To encourage and provide financial assistance to implement agroforestry practices including farmstead, feedlot and field windbreaks, wildlife and riparian plantings, buffers, and living snow fences.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: It was rural farmstead plantings – it's maybe 30% that are actually around a farmstead, and they do not do subdivision plantings. They also don't do plantings if it's a planned subdivision or city plantings. Wind erosion is a concern for many people, and many of these tree plantings provide habitat for many different species.

26-2 (B): ND Statewide Windbreak Renovation Initiative 5.0, ND Forest Service – OHF funding request: \$900,000, Total Project Costs: \$1,200,000. Project Summary: Continue to offer a financial assistance program for landowners to renovate their windbreaks thereby protecting, enhancing, and preserving essential forest resources.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: They are finally starting to see a breakthrough of getting field windbreaks back into the ground. People are making that hard choice – it is difficult to do it on their own as it's very expensive. Their program is really what is driving it. The Cash match is the landowners portion (25%). The In-kind is average rental rate for that county. The project doesn't always go into that same footprint. It's historically been cropland in the field windbreak sense. It would be similar to an FSA CRP program "rental rate". These trees are going to be out on the landscape for 50-60 years. The first 10 years of establishment we want to give the landowners the credit. Sometimes site prep is usually in-kind. They have discussed other avenues for funding for projects and they have match through the state of North Dakota with the staffing that goes out to do this. The legislators are looking for one-time asks. They did have an EAB request this last legislative session.

26-6 (C): Lost Lake Dam Fish Passage, McLean County Water Resource District – OHF funding request: \$51,599 Total Project Costs: \$74,802. Project Summary: Lost Lake Dam is upstream of the Missouri River and is a complete barrier to fish passage. There is a former meander bend at the Lost Lake Dam that provides a natural location for fish passage and a relatively cost-effective means of constructing the required improvements.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: ND Game and Fish have been stocking the lake for a number of years now. There have been lots of walleye being caught. The plan is to do the construction in late August/early September. It's a low flood plane, so they have to wait for it to dry up, but they want to be done at end of September. This is a continuation of the grant round 23 project. They had a final design and bid costs came in higher than what was anticipated.

26-7 (A): Pheasants Forever Public Access to Habitat (PATH) Program, Pheasants Forever – OHF funding request: \$1,089,375 Total Project Costs: \$1,452,500. Project Summary: Increase new wildlife habitat development and expand public hunting access in 38 counties, by adding 10,000 acres of new habitat to the PLOTS program. Landowners establishing new grassland habitat

through the programs will be eligible for an additional one-time incentive payment with a 40-acre minimum enrollment.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: They looked at our pilot version of the program and wouldn't anticipate any issues getting that interest. The payments are one-time up-front payments. All chapters host a banquet every year and will do local advertisements promoting the program and OHF. The local chapters will oversee their county projects. These are all producer-led, so ultimately it's at the discretion of the landowners, but they do try to persuade them to focus on the low producing croplands.

26-8 (D): Fargo Southwest Pond Regional Recreation Area, Fargo Park District – **OHF funding request: \$521,250** Total Project Costs: \$915,813. Project Summary: Create a native wetland and upland prairie for establishment of 80 acres of recreation and wildlife habitat through a .6 mile gravel trail network that would tie into an existing trail with benches, interpretive panels, trail crossings, and dry creek beds.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: The cost associated with the construction of this pond are paid for by the real estate developers for the housing areas around the storm water pond. There's a dry-creek bed on project expense. That is creating the recreation land for overbed flooding. It will be for erosion control of the trails in the area. The real-estate developers are paying for the actual construction of the ponds themselves which is not included in the project expenses for this.

26-9 (C): Enhancing State Parks Through Strategic Tree and Shrub Plantings, ND Parks and Recreation District – **OHF funding request: \$1,292,715** Total Project Costs: \$1,742,715. Project Summary: Due to the aging out of trees, victims of pests or disease, or simply not at optimal locations, the focus is to obtain and plant larger containerized trees in high-priority (Tier I) areas where they can quickly establish and have a positive impact on the visitor experience by providing shade, delineation of spaces, habitat, erosion control and an aural and visual aesthetic.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: There is a mockup of the methodology in the application. They are in seasonal parks. Most of the trees will be high-traffic areas. They looked at the cost of containerized trees and felt there is a benefit of putting these trees in the high traffic summer areas first. There are some areas that are more shelter belt areas and do concentration grade plantings in the future. They do have to do a public bid as a state Entity – the \$600 per tree is for the supply, planting, and the first 3 years of establishment of the trees. There will be tree tubes for protection for trees. They approached their assistant attorney general rep to determine eligibility. They talked to 9 legislative reps to discuss priorities, and this project was on the list. The feeling was this was the right mechanism for funding for this specific request. They also talked to

Governor Burgum and Governor Armstrong who both said to come to this body and didn't put it in their executive budgets.

The Board took a 15-minute break.

26-10 (B): Cover Crop & Livestock Integration Project 4, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. – **OHF funding request: \$936,000** Total Project Costs: \$1,440,000. Project Summary: CCLIP 4 is the fourth phase of previously successful grants that will help producers initiate cover crop and grazing practices on more than 4,000 additional cropland acres, enhancing 5,000 additional grassland acres over the next five years.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: 100% of the funds for the other projects are committed, but it is the responsibility of the landowners to do the contracting and get materials for their projects. There is a deadline that they give landowners – typically 18 months for grazing infrastructure. A little more lenient on cover crop seedings so don't usually have a timeline for cover crop reimbursement. The utilization of PLOTS for their farmers/ranchers was new this last grant round.

26-11 (C): ND 4-H Camp, ND 4-H Foundation – **OHF funding request: \$75,978** Total Project Costs: \$107,978. Project Summary: Install a 1,440 foot pump from the Missouri River to the ND 4-H Camp Pond to maintain water levels during dry periods.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: The pump is on the bank, so they won't need a permit. The pump is portable to be able to keep up with maintenance.

26-12 (B): Grazing Management and Habitat Enhancement, The Nature Conservancy – **OHF funding request: \$72,680** Total Project Costs: \$119,099. Project Summary: Install additional grazing infrastructure at the Brown Ranch (Ransom County) and John E. Williams Preserves (McLean County) which will create fresh water sources for livestock, improve habitat for wildlife species, protect sensitive areas, create flexibility in the grazing intensity and rest periods, and provide critical habitat on 3,600 acres of grassland.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: This project is on TNC Nature Conservancy property.

26-3 (D): Ryan Lake Prairie Trail & Outdoor Classroom, Grand Forks Park District – **OHF funding request: \$251,250**, Total Project Costs: \$335,000. Project Summary: Convert the other half of Ryan Park into native prairie with a 0.5 mile ADA accessible concrete trail with benches and connect the outdoor classroom with existing city greenway trails and two existing fishing docks on the lakeshore.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: Housing developments are not being asked to participate specifically for this park, but another Park (Prairie Park) is growing. Their previous grant was to put riprap around the water to hold and sustain the fish and help with erosion. The adjoining trail is asphalt – they really want concrete for ADA accessibility and less maintenance. The seed mix is a very specific seed mix from Prairie Moon that is ecologically appropriate for the site.

26-4 (D): Rivers Edge Fishing Enhancement Project, City of Grand Forks – **OHF funding request: \$155,450**, Total Project Costs: \$494,195. Project Summary: To extend the existing paved trail .4 miles with a 10' wide paved trail, safety railing at the fishing site, benches, trash cans, and an informational kiosk for trail users and anglers.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: This is a similar project to the one that was presented last time but they went a different direction with it. Mobilization and administration is the fee that the contractor charges us for getting their crews together, getting equipment, and prepping the site. It is not really a fishing pier, it is more so a riverbank.

26-13 (B): Smart Livestock Advancing Terrestrial Ecosystems, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. – **OHF funding request: \$505,327** Total Project Costs: \$720,585. Project Summary: Provide cost share for virtual fencing that provides GPS tracking and animal behavior to manage cattle movement via smart collars for enhanced grazing management to improve wildlife habitat and reduce impacts to ecologically sensitive areas. Over the period of 5 years, SLATE will partner with at least 12 private landowners to enhance grazing management on 5,760 acres.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: There is a \$10,000 cost reduction for companies that are going to work with them. It is tough to say where the greatest benefit will be from wildlife resources, but for mule deer and pronghorn you are looking at reducing the physical fencing so they can run through it as they won't be wearing collars. In talking with producers, they all have different reasons for doing it. Being able to use it for cross-fencing is one purpose, or areas like in the badlands are a couple examples. This project is state-wide and they've had interest from all over the state.

26-14 (B): Grazed Wildlife Habitat – Meadowlark Initiative, United Prairie Foundation – **OHF funding request: \$580,000** Total Project Costs: \$806,750. Project Summary: Implement patch-burn-grazing and expand landowner experience using controlled burning on 1,500 acres to manage grasslands, enhance grazing, remove invasive trees, and improve cattle forage while enhancing wildlife habitat in southeast ND. Also, implement patch-burn-grazing on 245 acres of demonstration plots for community education purposes.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated: This will affect 3500 accumulative acres combined. Around 1700-2000 including demonstrated areas, but about 1500 pasture areas. Focus is in southeast ND. Focus is in the prairie pothole region (Streeter, ND) – songbirds and prairie ducks habitat. There is an employee that has the fire credentials. They do a lot of burnouts which uses modern technology to map better. A burnout – you focus on where the livestock are, facilities, barns, buildings, homes, etc. Their burn plans take those into consideration – there are safety zones and escape routes. They are trying to bring a lot of education.

26-15 (C): Wildlife and Livestock Dams – Wetlands Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement III, ND Natural Resources Trust – **OHF funding request: \$445,000** Total Project Costs: \$890,000. Project Summary: Create, restore or enhance 25 wetlands for wildlife and livestock benefits covering 100 surface acres, primarily situated on private lands with 1:1 match funding.

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the Commission files).

In response to questions, the applicant stated:

Chairman Dokken opened it up to public comments on applications.

Patrice Delaney made a clarification that the United Prairie Foundation is a non-profit organization based in North Dakota.

There were no other public comments.

Board Discussion Comments

25-1: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation, Mule Deer Foundation:

- Excited to see this project – wildlife conservation is needed and it's a new partner for OHF
- Removals have been done before and boundary/perimeter fencing – would love to see the grazing addition added

25-2: ND Statewide Tree Planting Initiative, North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association:

- Would like to see the group come back in the future with a more refined and prioritized project that specifically meets the directives of OHF
- Concern regarding about 50% of project total being targeted around farmsteads

25-3: Fargo Southwest Pond Regional Recreation Area, Fargo Park District:

- The Board is normally supportive of habitat projects
- The project would get the program closer to the 15% goal for the directive
- It is a large project, so the Board could ask them to come back in the spring with phases that meet OHF directives
- Urban areas are important and would love to see the state Parks and Reg organizations be part of these projects also and do it conjointly

- It has been awhile since the Board has seen a gravel walking path

25-4: Manvel Community Park Improvement, Manvel Park Board:

- The project consists of walking paths to sidewalks to park benches
- Applicant should have focused more on the landscaping aspect for the OHF funds – there may be other aspects of the project that they need funding for that would fall into OHF directives

25-5: Planting for the Future, North Dakota Petroleum Foundation:

- They aren't necessarily meeting NRCS standards, and the specifications aren't tight enough to fund this project
- They had it per tree or per planting while most have it per perimeter – are the costs similar?
- Every county charges differently for trees and fabric
- This is one of the highest percentage cost-share out there so want to applaud the applicant
- It is above and beyond what they are mitigating

25-6: ND Grazing Management Toolbox, Audubon Great Plains:

- No questions/comments

25-7: UWP Educational Prairie Trail, Audubon Great Plains:

- Did the applicant answer the questions that the Board had last time?
- It's understood that they tried to reorganize funding for the grass seedings, but it's still challenging to support – the cost per acre is high
- Supportive of these kinds of projects and pollinator use – the public loves these projects

25-8: TMBCI Sky Chief Park Beachfront Landscaping, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa:

- Applicant should come back with a better plan than a 4ft retaining wall, and after they finish their other 3 projects that OHF is currently funding
- There are a number of other items in the project that the Board could support and fund, minus the retaining wall

25-9: Tree Planting, North Dakota State Fair Association:

- Match totals – should the Board require the match to be towards total project costs or just OHF request

25-10: Working Grasslands Partnership 7, North Dakota Natural Resources Trust:

- It is great to see how much of the funding has been used and what is left
- They are successful, so we should continue being supportive
- They put their own money into their projects and their match is always over 25%

Tyler Dokken noted the following Conflicts of Interest:

- 25-5 ND Petroleum Foundation: Planting for the Future

It was moved by Randy Kreil and seconded by Rachel Retterath to allow Tyler Dokken to vote on that application noted with the conflict. The motion carried unanimously.

Brian Amundson noted the following Conflicts of Interest:

- 25-6 Audubon Great Plains: North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox
- 25-7 Audubon Great Plains: UWP Educational Prairie Trail

It was moved by Tyler Jacobson and seconded by Randy Kreil to allow Brian Amundson to vote on those applications noted with conflicts. The motion carried unanimously.

The OHF Advisory Board filled out their scoring sheets for the Grant Round 25 applications at this time.

Chairman Dokken listed the applications that received less than 7 votes for funding which include application numbers 25-2, 25-3, 25-4, 25-7, 25-8, 25-9.

It was moved by Brian Amundson and seconded by Randy Kreil that the following applications not be forwarded to the Commission for funding:

- 25-2 NDCDEA: ND Statewide Tree Planning Initiative - \$5,317,000
- 25-3 Fargo Park District: Fargo Southwest Pond Regional Recreation Area - \$3,231,810
- 25-4 Manvel Park Board: Manvel Community Park Improvement - \$45,746
- 25-7 Audubon Great Plains: UWP Educational Prairie Trail - \$164,331
- 25-8 TMBCI Sky Chief Park Beachfront Landscaping: Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa - \$120,000
- 25-9 North Dakota State Fair Association: Tree Planting - \$100,000

On a roll call vote, Amundson, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Stafslie, and Weinand voted aye. The motion carried unanimously.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	11	0

It was moved by Randy Kreil and seconded by Patsy Crooke that application 25-1: Western Big Game Connectivity and Habitat Fragmentation, submitted by the Mule Deer Foundation, be recommended to the Industrial Commission for Outdoor Heritage Fund funding in the amount of \$750,000.

On a roll call vote, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Stafslie, and Weinand voted aye, and Amundson voted nay. The motion carried.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson		X
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	10	1

It was moved by Rachel Retterath and seconded by Brian Amundson that application 25-5: Planting for the Future, submitted by the North Dakota Petroleum Foundation, be recommended to the Industrial Commission for Outdoor Heritage Fund funding in the amount of \$220,177.

On a roll call vote, Amundson, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Stafslie, and Weinand voted aye, and Crooke and Dewald voted nay. The motion carried.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke		X
David Dewald		X
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	9	2

It was moved by David Dewald and seconded by Tyler Jacobson that application 25-6: North Dakota Grazing Management Toolbox, submitted by Audubon Great Plains, be recommended to the Industrial Commission for Outdoor Heritage Fund funding in the amount of \$635,000.

On a roll call vote, Amundson, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Stafslie, and Weinand voted aye. The motion carried unanimously.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	11	0

It was moved by Randy Kreil and seconded by Patsy Crooke that application 25-10: Working Grasslands Partnership 7, submitted by North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, be recommended to the Industrial Commission for Outdoor Heritage Fund funding in the amount of \$762,500.

On a roll call vote, Amundson, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Stafslie, and Weinand voted aye. The motion carried unanimously.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	11	0

Conversations were had pertaining to the wildfires in western ND and whether the Outdoor Heritage Fund could play a role in helping farmers and ranchers with the remaining, uncommitted Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars.

It was moved by Brian Amundson and seconded by Rachel Retterath that the Outdoor Heritage Fund board open up a special grant round for farmers and ranchers who have been effected by the wildfires, be recommended to the Industrial Commission.

On a roll call vote, Amundson, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Eckroth, Jacobson, Kaldor, Kreil, Retterath, Staflien, and Weinand voted aye. The motion carried unanimously.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor	X	
Randy Kreil	X	
Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Staflien	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	11	0

Discussion was held pertaining to a possible sub-committee for the potential Outdoor Heritage Fund wildfire grant round.

(Dana Kaldor left the meeting).

It was moved by Brian Amundson and seconded by Rachel Retterath that the Outdoor Heritage Fund, contingent upon the Industrial Commission’s approval, name 3 voting members and 1 technical review member to the wildfire sub-committee – Rachel Retterath, Randy Kreil, Brian Amundson, and Rhonda Kelsch, be recommended to the Industrial Commission.

On a roll call vote, Carlson, Crooke, Dewald, Dokken, Jacobson, Kreil, Kuylen, and Retterath voted aye, and Amundson and Weinand voted nay. The motion carried.

	Yes	No
Brian Amundson	X	
Dr. Joseph Carlson		
Patsy Crooke	X	
David Dewald	X	
Tyler Dokken	X	
Jeremy Eckroth	X	
Tyler Jacobson	X	
Dana Kaldor		
Randy Kreil	X	

Rachel Retterath	X	
Tyler Stafslie	X	
John Weinand	X	
Total	10	0

Potential dates and venue for the next Outdoor Heritage Fund advisory meeting were discussed.

Under other business, Brenna Jessen gave an update on the new grant software that was being procured by the Office of the Industrial Commission.

Being no further business, it was moved by David Dewald and seconded by John Weinand to adjourn the meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.