

Northeast District Meeting  
11/2/2023  
Bassett Parks Shop

President Russ Hamer called the meeting to order.

Roll Call/Introductions:

Russ Hamer, Oak Valley WMA	Scott Wessel, Norfolk
Logan Epp, Calamus SRA	Jeff Jones, East Subdistrict Sergeant
Jim Conn, Myrtle Hall WMA	Tyler Adelman, Rock/Brown/Keya Paha counties
Brian Gerken, Myrtle Hall WMA	Lucas Negus, Norfolk
Tyler Wulf, Regional Park Superintendent	Matthew Pfeiffer, Oak Valley WMA
Phil Chvala, Norfolk	Michaela Clemens, Fort Hartsuff SHP
Jeff Schuckman, Norfolk	Nate Remter, Niobrara SP
Rebecca Munter, Norfolk	Lynn Mellick, Ponca SP
Kye Schumacher, Grove Lake WMA	Rachel Russell, Ponca SP
Brady Petersen, Ponca SP	Kelly Corman, Bassett
Jeff Borchers, George Syas WMA	Jen Corman, Bassett
Josh Kounovsky, Grove Lake WMA	Cassie Humphress, Bassett
Cassidy Wessel, Norfolk	Jon Volker, Lewis & Clark SRA
Jason Thiele, Norfolk	

General Announcements

- Next year's meetings are tentatively planned as follows:
  - Early March – possibly incorporating some prescribed fire training
  - Mid-May – District Birding Day and updates from administration
  - October or early November – prep for deer check, etc.

Individual updates were provided by most present. For ease of readability, reports are grouped by division.

## Fisheries

### Phil Cvala

- Fall fish surveys are underway.
- The Fisheries Division meeting was held last week at Ponca SP.

### Rebecca Munter

- The Fisheries Division has been considering ways to use drones in their work.
- At last week's division meeting, one topic of discussion was use of artificial intelligence. Staff brainstormed possible applications.
- Staff can utilize a new app to report issues at public boat ramps. See attached document for QR code and instructions.

### Jeff Schuckman

- The Fisheries Division is working on the third iteration of the Aquatic Habitat Program and seeking input on access and habitat projects for the next ten years. Projects identified in the Northeast District include Willow Creek, Buckskin Hills, Twin Lakes, Red Fox, Willow Lake, Calamus, and Davis Creek.
- Paddlefish snagging success improved dramatically over the last six days of the season once the Corps closed the gates at Gavins Point.
- Boat docks will be removed soon at Swan Lake and Willow Lake.
- Fall fish surveys have had mixed results. Lewis & Clark Lake looks good, with a lot of young walleyes.
- The water level at Goose Lake has come up about 1.5' after 7" of rain. Fisheries staff made multiple trips to keep the carp barriers clear.

## Wildlife

### Russ Hamer

- Drone training has been ongoing. Russ and Officer John Bauer are licensed drone operators in the district. Reach out if you have needs for a drone. The agency is planning to purchase some additional drones but will probably wait for thermal imaging capabilities of smaller drones to improve.
- Fall spraying of exotic cool-season grasses has begun on WMAs.
- Pheasant releases at Oak Valley and Powder Creek went well.
- Elk Point Bend and Audubon Bend were busy for pheasant opener.

### Jim Conn

- They have been busy spraying brome and preparing fire breaks for a large burn with neighboring landowners.

### Brian Gerken

- Participation was down for the youth pheasant hunt at Sherman Reservoir, but the kids were successful.

Josh Kounovsky

- Josh gave lots of presentations in the past month for various events.
- There is interest in capturing and collaring mountain lions within the new Niobrara Unit. Pass along reports of cats that could be trapped.
- Let the public know that we are interested in reports of lions further east. Tell them to send pictures of lions, especially females/kittens.

Jeff Borchers

- Thanks for all the help at the Expo. The shuttle operation ran very smoothly this year.
- Jeff's technician Tim is attending the Wildland Fire Academy at Ponca SP.
- Recent projects have included noxious weed control, especially leafy spurge, and preparation of fire breaks.
- Pumping has been ongoing at Wilkinson WMA. Duck hunters have had good success.
- Wilkinson WMA was very busy for the pheasant opener (40+ vehicles), but hunter success was low. Syas WMA also had some hunters. The neighboring WRE property in OFW produced some pheasants and quail.
- A project to remove a large shelterbelt at Syas is planned for the near future.

Kelly Corman

- Elk depredation calls have been coming in. Some are in new locations compared to previous years. Kelly and Cassie have been hauling lots of fencing materials to build depredation yards. The new depredation biologist position will hopefully be filled soon.
- Some burn prep work has been completed at Keller WMA.
- Tree cutting projects are planned at Plum Creek Valley and Twin Lakes WMAs.
- Bull elk harvest has been pretty good, but only one cow has been harvested.

Jen Corman

- Landowners continue to have interest in cedar removal/control projects.
- American burying beetle surveys were completed in August.
- Jen gave an educational program for the Nebraska Star Party.
- TNC completed several growing-season burns in the area.
- Several fall burns are planned.

Rachel Russell

- Fire breaks have been prepared for burns at Ponca SP.

Kyle Schumacher

- A fall burn is planned in Boyd County.
- Lots of projects are underway in the eastern Sandhills with the Sandhills Task Force and other partners.
- Seven Whooping Cranes were recently observed near Butte.

#### Cassidy Wessel

- Thanks to all who helped with the deer/turkey workshop, particularly field trip leaders and speakers. About 50 people attended.
- Also, thanks to everyone who contributed to this year's Natural Legacy Conference in Norfolk by giving talks, coordinating the field trip to Wood Duck WMA, etc.
- Leslie Brownrigg was recently hired as a Fire Ecologist Intern. This is a partner position with the Santee Sioux Nation that was made possible by the America the Beautiful Challenge grant. Leslie is also an engine boss with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- There has been a huge influx of federal funding for conservation through USDA programs, so be on the lookout for opportunities.

#### Jason Thiele

- Two large OFW sites have recently been added in the Chambers area that should provide some opportunities for prairie-chickens and deer.
- Pheasant hunters were having good success in Dakota County on opening day.
- Extra help has been required at the office to handle phone calls and walk-in permit sales.

#### Scott Wessel

- Two Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan revision meetings have been held in the district in Ord and Valentine. Additional meetings will be held on January 23 in O'Neill and January 24 in Norfolk. Please attend a meeting to provide input. Further details will be coming.
- At a recent Niobrara Council meeting, the Niobrara National Scenic River received a "Quiet Trail" award from Quiet Parks International.
- NGPC and partners have been involved in low-tech stream projects ("beaver dam analogs") in Knox and Holt counties. Heavy rain events have presented challenges at the Holt County site, but benefits to fish habitat have been observed since their construction. Continued monitoring over time will help us learn how these techniques can be used to benefit stream systems in Nebraska.

#### Lucas Negus

- Staff and customers are facing ongoing problems with the new permit system.
- Deer check assignments are being finalized. A prototype deer check system tied to the new permit system is being completed, but expect to use the paper form as a backup. Keya Paha, Calamus East, Calamus West, Loup West, and Sandhills units will be conducting sampling for CWD this year.
- There is an ongoing response to the finding of a cat carrying a raccoon strain of rabies that is usually restricted to the eastern US. Raccoons are being live-trapped, tested, vaccinated, and released. Dead raccoons (e.g., roadkills) will also be tested. Note that it is the time of year when canine distemper outbreaks occur in raccoons, and the symptoms can be similar to rabies. We will generally not test animals here unless aggressive behavior or contact with a person or pet is reported. If an animal is to be submitted for testing, it should not be shot in the head.
- When checking in otters this year, a piece of toe pad should be collected for DNA analysis. Note that there is no harvest quota this year, but there is a limit of one otter per person. They can check them in at any time during the season or up to 48 hours after season close.

## Parks

### Logan Epp

- The paving project at Calamus is out for bid. The south road will be paved to Nunda Shoal. This project will impact campsites next year.
- The Halloween event went very well.

### Brady Petersen

- Parks staff had a workday at the Ponca SP North Addition to do fence cleanup and repair. About 40 acres were sprayed with a drone to treat cool-season grasses.
- The boat docks at Ponca SP will be pulled soon.
- Archery deer hunting opened at the park on November 1, and all ten spots were reserved.
- A youth mentor deer hunt will be held in December. A few new properties will be available for the kids to hunt.
- Ponca SP hosted the Eastern Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy.

### Tyler Wulf

- Thanks to all staff who assisted at the Ponca Expo.
- The Parks Division has put in another deficit request for more spending authority.
- Park regulations are being reviewed in cooperations with the Law Enforcement Division. There are proposals to change the regulations on length of stay, define swim beach areas, and allow use of Class 1 (pedal-assisted) E-bikes.
- The new Weigand Marina (STAR WARS project) is at 90% design.
- Flatwater Group and JEO are working on proposals for the Niobrara River access project. Public meetings will be held in the future.
- The Niobrara State Park lodge project is out for bid. Interviews will be conducted next year.
- The UNL Architecture program is putting together designs for a potential new headquarters building at Niobrara SP. Plans will include additional office space for Parks and other divisions.
- Governor Pillen visited Knox County last week and received a tour of the rural water system at the Devils Nest. He also received an update on the Weigand project.
- Ponca SP will be hosting the Commissioners' meeting in April.
- Parks Division is looking at ways to get more fire training for staff.
- Tyler hunted the Ponca SP North Addition and Elk Point Bend WMA for the pheasant opener. Hunter numbers were down compared to recent years.

### Jon Volker

- Winterization of park facilities at Lewis & Clark SRA is complete.
- Prescribed burns are planned for the South Shore area.
- A new sewage lagoon project is being planned.
- The park will have a Christmas tree decorating contest.

Michaela Clemens

- Operating hours at Fort Hartsuff may be changing. Conversations are being had with members of the community regarding changes.
- Next September marks 150 years since the Fort's construction. An event is being planned to commemorate this anniversary.

Nate Remter

- Niobrara SP held an event to honor first responders. Activities included a pumpkin roll, soup cookoff, trick-or-treating, and a haunted barn. Approximately 200 people went through the haunted barn within three hours.
- Cabin maintenance is underway.
- A new lean-to was added below the park shop to protect equipment such as the sawmill and tractors.
- Camping spaces for all-season yurts have been added by the buffalo cookout site.
- Fire breaks are being prepared for prescribed burns.
- Seven cabins in the park are now all-season cabins.
- Grazing may be used to help manage grasslands on the west side of the park. Some infrastructure may be needed.
- Customers have already been calling to reserve the Sharp-tailed Grouse viewing blind for spring 2024. The local high school shop class is building the blind. This was a Watchable Wildlife grant project.

Lynn Mellick

- Hallowfest was successful. The cabins were full, and the hayrack rides were full.
- The Ponca SP Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 14 at 7:30 a.m.
- Winterfest will be held on December 30.
- A snowman building contest will be held throughout the winter. Participants build their snowmen within the park and submit a picture for judging.
- There will be a Women's Wellness Retreat in January.
- The volunteer banquet will be held on January 28.
- Birds and Breakfast will be offered in February on the weekends before and after Valentine's Day.
- Marsh Madness will be held on Saturdays in March.

## Law Enforcement

### Tyler Adelman

- Grouse hunters have had mixed results. Many local ranchers have said that numbers seem to be down.
- Turkey numbers in the area seem to be good.
- The mountain lion season will include a new Niobrara unit this winter.

### Jeff Jones

- Mason Cooper of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundations has some matching funds available to help construct stockyards to protect hay from elk damage.
- Avian influenza reports have been coming in. [Staff are reminded that for incidents involving one or a few birds to double-bag them and put them in a dumpster for disposal.]
- A suspect has been identified in a recent dock fire. This same individual is also tied to burglaries and arson in three counties.
- Jeff Jones is the sergeant for the West Subdistrict and Cory Krause is the sergeant for the East Subdistrict. They no longer have specific county duty stations. 11 positions are going to be opened for transfer. Lots of shuffling of positions is expected with some officers taking new duty stations.

Minutes submitted by Jason Thiele

# Fishing Facility Reporting Tool



Use the QR code or click this [Fishing Facility Reporting Tool Link](#).

## Step 1) Contact Information

Easy, fill it out.

### Contact Info

**Name\***

Zach Horstman

**Division\***



Fisheries



Parks



Wildlife



Law Enforcement



Other

**Phone**

4024715446

**Email**

zachary.horstman@nebraska.gov

**Preferred Method of Contact\***

If you want or expect to be contacted, make sure to leave contact information above.



Phone



Email



Either



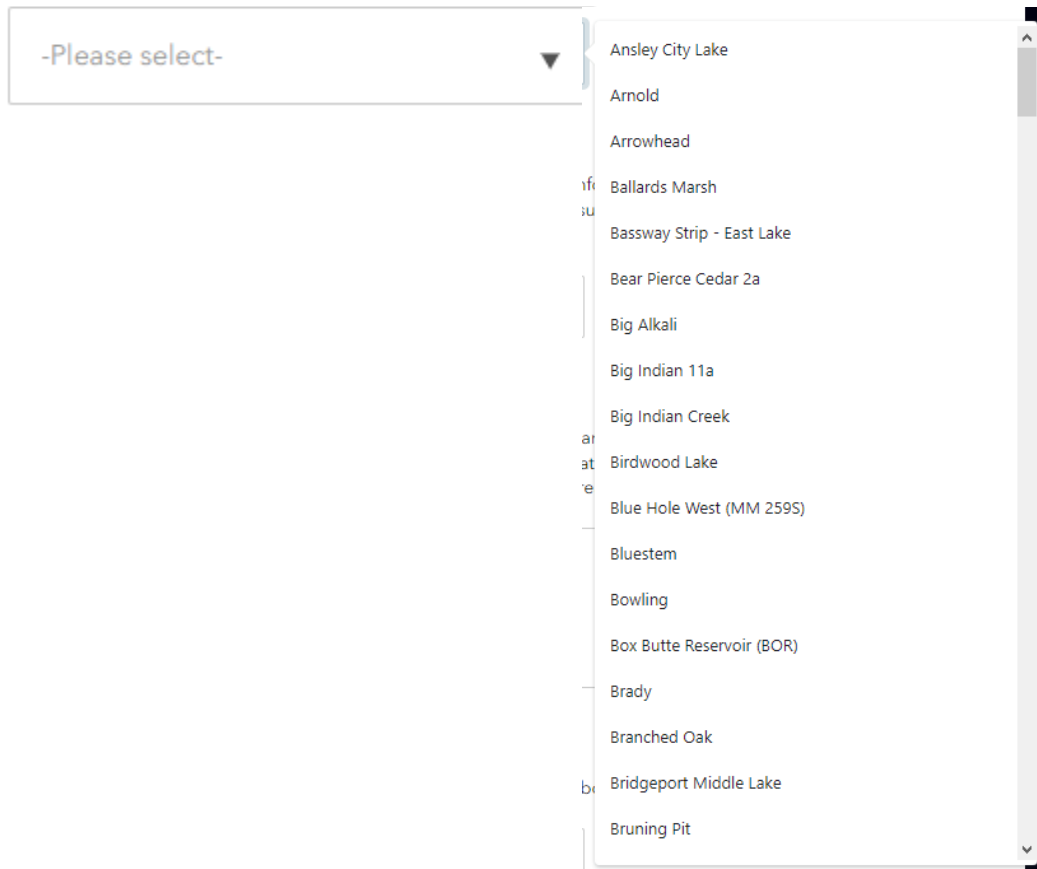
Do Not Contact

## Step 2) Waterbody Information

Auto-populated list of waterbodies with boating access facilities on them.

### Waterbody Name\*

If waterbody name is not listed, select "Other" and provide waterbody name.



A screenshot of a web form showing a dropdown menu for "Waterbody Name". The dropdown is open, displaying a list of waterbody names. The list starts with "Ansley City Lake" and ends with "Bruning Pit". The dropdown is styled with a light gray border and a white background. The text "Please select" is visible in the dropdown's header area.

Waterbody Name
Ansley City Lake
Arnold
Arrowhead
Ballards Marsh
Bassway Strip - East Lake
Bear Pierce Cedar 2a
Big Alkali
Big Indian 11a
Big Indian Creek
Birdwood Lake
Blue Hole West (MM 259S)
Bluestem
Bowling
Box Butte Reservoir (BOR)
Brady
Branched Oak
Bridgeport Middle Lake
Bruning Pit

If waterbody name is not listed, or you are unsure select "Other" and a text box will appear for you to enter the name of the waterbody.

### Waterbody Name\*

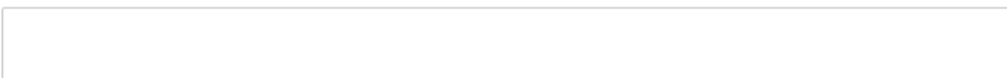
If waterbody name is not listed, select "Other" and provide waterbody name.



A screenshot of a web form showing a dropdown menu for "Waterbody Name". The dropdown is closed, and the text "Other" is visible in the dropdown's header area.

Waterbody Name
Other

### Please Provide a Waterbody Name\*



A screenshot of a web form showing a text input field for "Please Provide a Waterbody Name". The input field is empty and has a light gray border.

Waterbody Name

### Step 3) Area Name Information

Auto-populated list of area names associated with the waterbody you selected.

#### Area Name\*

Autopopulates a list of areas we have facility information on based on the waterbody selection above. If area name is not listed or you are unsure of the area name for these facilities, select "Other" and add a descriptive name.

If Area name is not listed, or you are unsure select "Other" and a text box will appear for you to enter the name of the area.

#### Area Name\*

Autopopulates a list of areas we have facility information on based on the waterbody selection above. If area name is not listed or you are unsure of the area name for these facilities, select "Other" and add a descriptive name.

#### Please Provide an Area Name\*

#### Area Name Notes

Please provide area name note if you find the area name drop down confusing. I will work on adding the additional details for future clarification. For example, out at Branched Oak, Area 11 may not mean much to some so I added Area 11 (Marina).


255

## Step 4) Date of Observation

Easy, fill out the day you were on site or the approximate date you were notified of the issue you are reporting.

### Date of Observation\*

When did you observe the facility at the waterbody you are reporting.

 MM/DD/YYYY ^

< October 2023 >

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

## Step 5) Are you reporting the condition of an existing facility (repairs, replacement, area need) or are you trying to add a facility to the Web App?

### Reporting condition of existing facility or notifying us of a new facility?

Please select whether you are reporting the condition of an existing facility or reporting a new public facility not listed on our website.

☐

Report Conditions of Existing Facility

☐

Report New Facility

## Step 5a) Reporting conditions of an existing facility

What are you reporting?\*

Boat Ramp ▼

### Ramp Name

Some areas have multiple ramps. Please specify name of ramp. If not provided please indicate in notes so I can add the ramp to our database.

☒ Branched Oak Area 11-A Marina North

☐ Branched Oak Area 11-B Marina Middle

☐ Branched Oak Area 11-C Marina South

Sometimes there are multiple ramps in an area, therefore you may need to select the ramp you are reporting on.

## Step 5b) Select the best option

Does the facility need repaired, replaced or this is an area need?\*

Select one

☒ Repair

☐ Replace

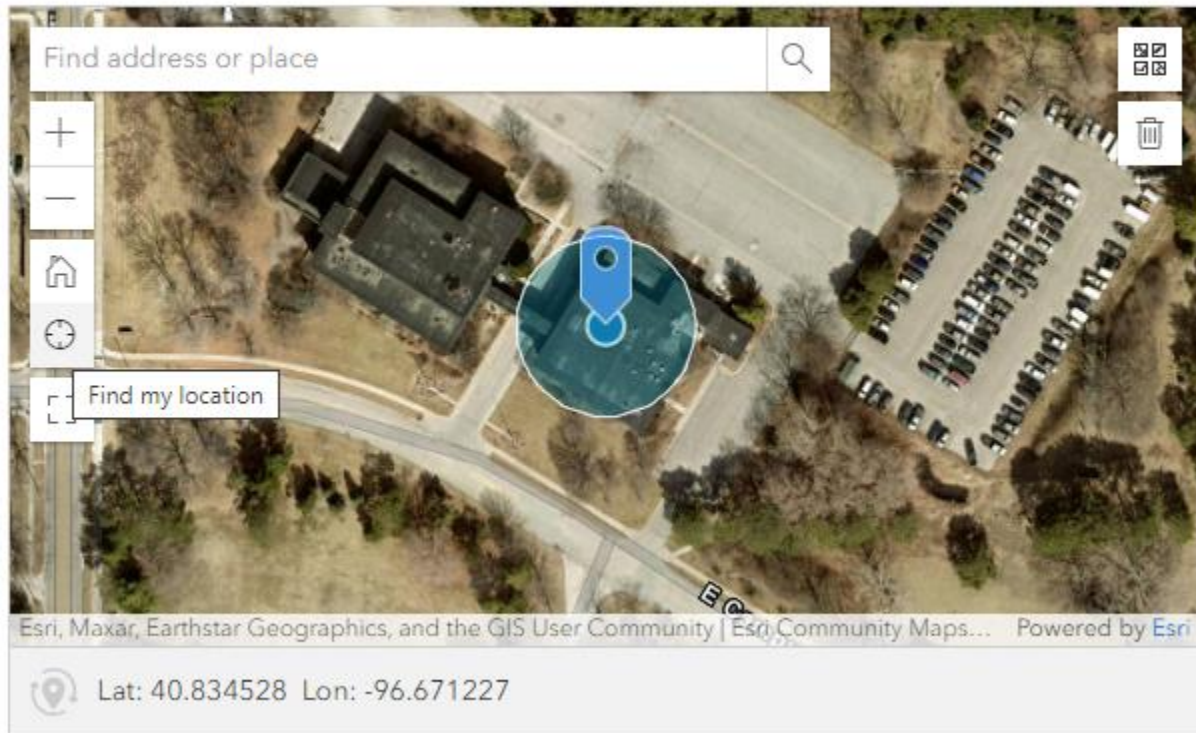
☐ Area Need

### Step 5c) Select the location.

Assuming location services is turned on, it will find where you are reporting from. If in the field this makes it easy to fine tune the point to sit where the structure is. Just drag and drop.

#### Specific Location of Structure\*

Place the cursor on the specific structure you are reporting.



### Step 5d) List severity of the issue being reported

Note: not all things are urgent 😊

#### What is the Level of Severity of this Need?\*



**Step 5e) Use the notes section to list the issues and how you propose we solve them**

**Describe the Condition of what you are Reporting\***

Describe well enough that someone who has never been to the site can understand the issue/need

1000

**Describe How to Address what you Reported above\***

Do your best to describe what needs to happen to address what you reported


1000

**Step 5f) Take as many photos as you want of the issue you are reporting**

This really helps me understand what's going on and often addresses the severity of the issues.

**Photos**

Provide adequate pictures of the issue being reported to convey to someone who has never been to the location what the problem is




facility\_photos\_20231027140224.jpg

18.7KB

...

2


Drop image here or select image (minimum number of files required: 1)



**Step 5g) Want to report additional issues at the same waterbody and area?  
Select the + symbol at the beginning of the “Condition Report of Existing Facility” and repeat steps 5a-5f.**

---

Condition Report of Existing Facility (1)

---

### **Step 5h) Submit the Report**

I will be notified via email of the report and try to get back to you regarding the problem.

Sometimes all I need to do is forward the information on to the Wildlife and Parks staff and the issues get addressed.

Photos tend to really help in my emails. Additionally, solutions to the issues seem to really help.

## Step 6a) Reporting a New Facility to be added to the Boating Access Web App

### New Facility Report (1) ▼



#### Facility Type\*

Select the type of facility you would like to add to our boating access inventory.

☐ Motorboat Ramp

☒ Paddlecraft Launch

☐ Fish Cleaning Station

☐ Other

If selecting a motorboat ramp or paddle craft launch, a drop down will ask what the substrate of the ramp is.

#### Paddlecraft Launch Substate

☐ Concrete

☒ Sand/Rock/Gravel

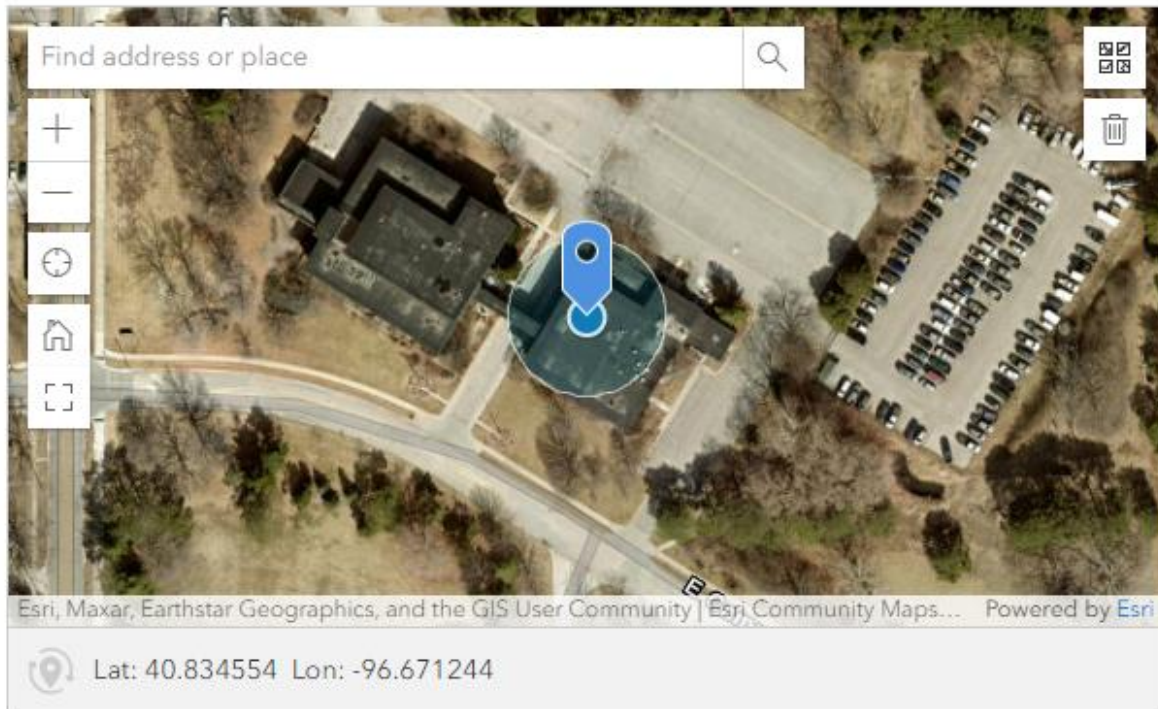
☐ Grass/Dirt

☐ Other

## Step 6b) Select the location

Assuming location services is turned on, it will find where you are reporting from. In the field this makes it easy to fine tune the point to sit where the structure is. Just drag and drop.

### Location of facility being reported\*



## Step 6c) Provide the name of the Facility owner and maintainer, if known

### Facility Owner

If you know the name of the facility owner, fill this in. If not, leave blank

NGPC SRA

### Facility Maintainer

If you know the name of the facility maintainer, fill this in. If not, leave blank

NGPC SRA

## Step 6d) Add additional notes of the site you would like us to know

### Additional Notes

One lane ramp  
2 lights  
Restrooms  
ADA pad  
Fishing platform  
Park open 6am -10pm  
Closed November 1 to April 1

894

## Step 6e) Take as many photos as you want of the issue you are reporting

### Photos

Optional: Provide pictures of the site



facility\_photos-20230111-194256.jpg

4.7MB ...



facility\_photos-20230111-194400.jpg

4.4MB ...

3

Drop image here or select image (minimum number of files required: 1)



**Step 6f) Want to report additional amenities at the same waterbody and area?  
Select the + symbol at the beginning of the “New Facility Report” and repeat  
steps 6a-6e.**



### **Step 6g) Submit the Report**

I will be notified via email of the report and try to get back to you stating the site was added.