

(To Toni.Beck@Senate.ks.gov)

Coombs Statement in Opposition to SB 425

Upon retirement, we (Fred and Nancy Coombs) returned to our home state of Kansas to restore 80 acres of badly eroded farm land that had been in our family since 1857. For the last 17 years we have sprayed noxious weeds, cleared red cedars, planted a diverse assortment of native grasses and flowers, and conducted a patch burning program. Today what we have accomplished is the source of considerable pride to us and our extended family.

At last count, our restored farm now features 407 species of native grasses and forbs, supports 117 species of Kansas birds, and provides excellent habitat for increasingly rare wildlife. It has also afforded a large number of people, including members of the Topeka Audubon Society and the Kansas Native Plant Society, an opportunity to learn about a prairie habitat similar to the distinctive one Fred's grandparents found when they settled in Kansas 160 years ago. In recent years our farm has also served as a site for doctoral students at the University of Kansas to conduct dissertation research on prairie pollinators.

From the start, my wife and I hoped that we were doing something that our children and future generations of Kansans could enjoy long after we are no longer able to continue our work. A conservation easement seemed the obvious way to protect our investment of labor and love for future generations.

It is with alarm that we learned that the legislature is considering action which will render any future conservation easement on our property worthless. Passage of SB 425 would clearly destroy a program that has worked well in the past and promises an attractive option for us. We (Fred and Nancy Coombs) urge you to vote against SB 425.

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