

MINUTES OF THE SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robert Tyson at 8:30 a.m. on January 25, 2001 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: All present

Committee staff present: Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department
Jill Wolters, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Judy Krase, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:
Gordon Schmidt, Water Protection Agency of Central Kansas
Steve Williams, Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Others attending: See attached list

Senator Schmidt moved that the minutes from the January 17 joint meeting with Ag and the January 19 meeting be approved. Senator Umbarger seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The first conferee to appear before the committee was Gordon Schmidt from Inman, Kansas. He gave a brief introductory statement on Water Protection Agency of Central Kansas (WaterPACK). He said it consists of 13 counties and includes irrigators and ag producers. The agency is proactive and promotes efficient use of water and would like to be used as a resource.

Steve Williams presented an overview of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Attachment 1). Questions and discussion followed.

Senator Huelskamp moved that a bill be introduced by the committee concerning a crossbow deer hunting season for ladies, seconded by Senator Downey. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 26 at 8:30 a.m.

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

GUEST LIST

DATE: *January 25, 2001*

NAME	REPRESENTING
<i>Andy Shaw</i>	<i>Kearney Law Office</i>
<i>Sabrina Maalm</i>	<i>DOA</i>
<i>Jim Allca</i>	<i>Sea board</i>
<i>Orville Cole</i>	<i>Sen. Tyson</i>
<i>Gordon Schmitt</i>	<i>Water P.A. Of.</i>
<i>Wally Maus</i>	<i>KRPA</i>
<i>Clint Riley</i>	<i>KDWP</i>
<i>STEVE WILLIAMS</i>	<i>KDWP</i>
<i>Dick Koerth</i>	<i>KDWP</i>
<i>Ron Applehoff</i>	<i>Water Dist. No 7 of Jo Co</i>
<i>Karla Saelhardt</i>	<i>Leg Affairs</i>
<i>David Miller</i>	<i>DOB</i>
<i>GREG FOLEY</i>	<i>KDA</i>
<i>Todd Johnson</i>	<i>KLA</i>
<i>Smith Kenyon</i>	<i>HNS</i>
<i>Mike Beam</i>	<i>Kp. Livestock Ann.</i>
<i>Sen. Cole</i>	<i>Sen. Tyson Office Staff</i>
<i>Pat Lehman</i>	<i>KRPA</i>
<i>Tom TUNNELL</i>	<i>KANSAS FERT./CHEM ASSN.</i>
<i>Colleen Mull</i>	<i>KansasOutdoors</i>

Senate Natural Resources Committee

Overview of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Steve Williams, Secretary

January 25, 2001

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Committee for the opportunity to provide an overview of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. I would also like to welcome new and returning Senators to Topeka. The department looks forward to working with you as members of this committee and as members of the full body as you discuss natural resource issues affecting Kansas.

I have had the honor and privilege of serving as a member of Governor Bill Graves' cabinet since 1995. Prior to 1995, I worked for the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. I received a Ph.D. in Forest Resources, majoring in Wildlife Management, from The Pennsylvania State University in 1986. My time in Kansas has provided the most satisfying and rewarding years of my career. We have accomplished much in the last few years and I look forward to future challenges and opportunities.

Organizational Structure

The Wildlife and Parks Commission is a seven member, bipartisan board appointed by the Governor to serve staggered four year terms. The Commission serves as an advisory board to the Governor and the Secretary of Wildlife and Parks. They have full regulatory authority which is exercised during public meetings held throughout the state.

The department has a cabinet-level Secretary, two Assistant Secretaries, and four Division Directors. We are organized into five geographic districts. We operate 24 state parks, 36 state fishing lakes and numerous wildlife and public land areas, many located on federal land adjacent to federal reservoirs. Our major programs include: fish and wildlife research and management, state park recreation, conservation law enforcement, boating safety and education, and information and education. Our policy is defined in K.S.A. 32-702, in part, "... to protect, provide and improve outdoor recreation and natural resources in this state ..."

Economics and Quality of Life

Department programs reach a great number of Kansans. Our state park system hosts 6-7 million visits each year. We sell or provide approximately 60,000 annual park entrance permits and more than 265,000 daily park entrance permits. There are more than 100,000 registered boats in Kansas. There are more than 200,000 licensed anglers, 100,000 licensed resident hunters, and 50,000 licensed nonresident hunters. The actual number of resident anglers and hunters exceeds these numbers because licenses are not required for youth under 16 years old or for private property owners who enjoy these activities on their own land.

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Attachment # 1

by permits and licenses exceeds \$20 million; however, this is a minor part of the total economic impact of fishing and hunting in Kansas. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated (1996 report) that anglers in Kansas spent more than \$180 million each year in total expenditures. Hunting generated almost \$313 million of direct expenditures each year. Wildlife watching, that does not include taking fish or wildlife, accounted for \$105 million each year in direct expenditures. According to this report, total expenditures for fish and wildlife related activities are almost \$600 million. This total does not include the economic impact of our state park system (camping equipment, recreational vehicles, etc.) or the economic impact of boating (boat sales, motors, fuel, equipment, etc.)

Perhaps more important, but less quantifiable, is the impact of our programs on the quality of life for Kansans. Kansans, like all Americans, enjoy outdoor recreation. A visit to western Kansas during the opening of pheasant season; a trip to our state parks on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, or Labor Day; or a drive by any one of our reservoirs or state fishing lakes during warm weather will demonstrate the high level of participation in outdoor recreation. The demand for this recreation appears to be growing and is becoming more diverse. We will continue to strive to improve the quality of life for Kansans and for our visitors from other states.

Accomplishments

I am particularly proud of the accomplishments of department staff and our many private partners during the last six years. The department provided a more detailed handout for your review but I will mention a few noteworthy accomplishments:

- resolving long-standing financial and audit disputes with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Corps of Engineers;
- improving our state park system through a three-year, \$10 million capital improvement plan;
- improving hunting opportunities for residents and nonresidents by providing more than 700,000 acres of WIHA;
- expanding hunting opportunities by relaxing restrictions on season lengths and increasing regulatory flexibility;
- reaching out to women, minorities, and youth to involve them in all aspects of outdoor recreation (such as the youth waterfowl, pheasant, and deer seasons); and
- creating partnerships with local governments to provide \$500,000 of state funds and approximately \$750,000 of federal funds for each of the past three years to improve local outdoor recreation facilities.

These accomplishments were made possible due to the efforts of department staff, private individuals and organizations, and support from Governor Graves and the Kansas Legislature. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued commitment to outdoor Kansas.

Financing

We have provided each of you a copy of our most recent 1999-2000 Annual Report. In that report, we detail the revenue sources and expenditure breakdown by major program. In short, the department generates, through user fees, about 88% of our total annual budget. The

remaining 12% is contributed by the State General Fund (approximately \$4.4 million, FY2002 GBR.) License fees and federal trust funds finance our fish, wildlife, and conservation law enforcement programs in totality. Park users contribute about 62% of the funds used to operate state parks. The SGF contributes the balance (about 38%) for operation and maintenance of these facilities. I am also proud that, according to state and federal auditing methods, direct administrative costs for the department are only about 10% of our total budget.

Issues

Although there are always numerous issues that deserve the department's attention, I would comment on just two at this meeting. As you are all well aware, deer management is a contentious issue. We have provided each legislator a packet of information, in that packet is a description of steps taken to date to reduce deer numbers and a question and answer document that responds to the most frequently asked questions. I am pleased to report that the deer-vehicle accident rate (the number of accidents per mile driven), comparing 1998 to 1999, has declined slightly. This decline is the first since 1988 to 1989 comparison. We anxiously await complete accident data from KDOT for the year 2000. As I have testified many times before, the results of our management actions become apparent 1-2 years after they are in place. This is a function of season timing and deer population dynamics. Each of the past six years, we have taken increasingly aggressive steps to reduce deer numbers. We have seen a response; however, the response to the most recent years' actions will be seen this year and the next.

I will briefly list the major actions taken in the last few years to control and reduce deer numbers (a more detailed description is in the packet provided to each legislator):

- increased deer permit availability (a doubling in total permits and a seven-fold increase in doe permits);
- focused efforts on harvesting does by establishing a 14-day, antlerless-only season in January and by limiting hunters to only one buck;
- opened approximately 700,000 acres of land for public hunting through the WIHA program;
- initiated a deer damage control permit, free of charge, to allow landowners or their agents to harvest deer causing damage throughout the year;
- developed a hunter-landowner referral system to provide landowners the names of hunters who would travel to property experiencing deer damage to shoot does; and
- provided a toll-free telephone number for landowners to contact the department about deer damage and advertised this service each quarter in newspapers across the state.

The end result of these measures and others is that Kansas has developed the most aggressive deer management system, in terms of season length and harvest limits, of any state in the midwest. The liberal season length and limits, coupled with other programs developed by the department have made a difference. We remain committed to the goal of reducing white-tailed deer populations statewide.

The second issue I would mention is equally important, future funding for the department's fish and wildlife programs. By way of introduction, the legislature establishes a minimum/maximum range for fish and wildlife license and permit fees. The last legislative action

on this issue was in 1989. The Wildlife and Parks Commission has the responsibility to set license fees within the constraints of the legislatively established range. In 1995, the Commission raised fees for selected licenses to the statutory maximum (e.g., annual fishing and hunting licenses cost \$15 each.) Since January 1, 1996, the effective date of the license fee increase, the department has increased fish and wildlife expenditures for many programs including these major programs:

- the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program,
- the FISH access program,
- state fishing lake dam repair and renovation,
- ADA compliance at state facilities, and
- motor boat access facilities across the state.

Since 1996, cumulative expenditures on these programs have exceeded \$11 million. In addition to these major programs, costs associated with salary, wages, benefits, and operation and maintenance have climbed steadily. Out-year budget projections, based on current revenue and expenditure levels, demonstrate a declining Wildlife Fee Fund balance. We have and will continue to take measures to reduce costs. Because fish and wildlife programs are solely user-fee funded, we must ask hunters and anglers to contribute to keep these programs viable.

The department has presented this information to the Commission at their public meetings. The Commission has recommended that the department pursue legislation to set the minimum fee at the current level and to raise the maximum fee to an appropriate level to maintain department operations. We have briefly discussed this issue with Senator Morris and await introduction of legislation in the Senate Ways and Means Committee for further debate.

Future

Our strategic plan, *Focus 2002, A Plan for Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, outlines nine major focus areas for the department. We have made substantial progress on these focus areas but our work is not complete. Future challenges include maintaining and expanding voluntary, incentive-based programs for landowners. These programs would include WIHA, FISH, pheasant and quail habitat management, and threatened and endangered species recovery plans (e.g., black-tailed prairie dogs, lesser prairie chickens.) We also plan to continue efforts to recruit youth, women, and minorities to outdoor recreation activities. We will continue to improve our state park facilities and programs offered at the parks, as funding permits. We are working with five other state agencies to identify environmental issues confronting Kansas and strategies to address these issues. You may have heard of this activity as the "Kansas Natural Resource Legacy Initiative."

Because our overarching mission is to improve the quality of life for Kansans, we will continue to work with the Governor, legislature, state and federal agencies, organizations, and private individuals "to protect, provide and improve" Kansans' outdoor heritage.