

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Joann Freeborn at 3:30 p.m. on April 02, 2002 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Clay Aurand - excused
Representative Vaughn Flora - excused
Representative Bruce Larkin - excused
Representative Bill Light - excused
Representative Dennis McKinney - excused
Representative Don Myers - excused
Representative Jeff Peterson - excused
Representative Daniel Thimesch - excused

Committee staff present: Emalene Correll, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Raney Gilliland, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Ann Graham, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Mike Hayden, Secretary, Kansas Department Wildlife and Parks, 502 Landon Office Building, 900 SW Jackson, Topeka, KS 66612
Lance Hedges, District Wildlife Biologist, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Mound City District Office, Courthouse, 315 Main Street, Mound City, KS 66056

Others attending: See Attached Sheet

Chairperson Joann Freeborn called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. She welcomed Representative Melany Barnes attending today's committee meeting and stated that she believes today's topic on Quail Population is not only important to hunters but also to tourism and to the state's wildlife program in general.

Secretary Mike Hayden, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, was welcomed. Mr. Hayden addressed the committee on the decline in the bird population, not only in quail, but also in other bird species such as pheasant and prairie chickens. Last year the quail population was the lowest on record, which he believes is a very real and serious problem. If we lose the quail and pheasant population not only will it have an environmental effect but also a tremendous economical effect. He believes our society, as a whole, benefits when we have a flourishing crop of birds. He introduced Lance Hedges, District Wildlife Biologist, with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

The Chairperson welcomed Lance Hedges to the committee. He briefed the committee on the Quail Initiative for Southeast Kansas with the use of over head slides. Mr. Hedges believes the initial problem with the decline of quail population is habitat. A new program which has been in effect for a little over a year is designed to improve quail habitat and also benefit landowners in Allen, Bourbon, Crawford, and Neosho counties. The Southeast Kansas Quail Working Group, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, is offering up to \$2,000 annually per cooperator as incentive payments or cost-share payments for creating and enhancing habitat beneficial to quail. All habitat improvements must be designated in a written quail (wildlife) management plan prepared by the district wildlife biologist for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Plans may be prepared by private consultants, Natural Resources Conservation Office or others, but must be approved by KDWP before a contract is initiated. Habitat improvements eligible for payment are: replacing fescue; establishing prairie vegetation; hedgerow renovation; strip discing; early burning of native grass; establishing food plots or leaving some grain unharvested; establishment of shrubs; prescribed livestock management; livestock exclusion from borders and odd areas; and use of conservation headlands (a narrow field perimeter area left uncultivated and free of pesticides). (See attachment 1)

A copy of "A Turkey Tall Tale" was distributed, addressing rumors concerning turkeys being a predator of quail. Roger Wells, a native Kansan, an avid quail hunter and trained biologist who is the National Habitat Coordinator for Quail Unlimited, refers to an ongoing study at the Tall Timbers Research Station near Tallahassee, Florida. There biologists have studied more than 400 wild quail nests and their resulting broods.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, Room 231-N of the Capitol
at 3:30 p.m. on April 02, 2002.

The team used tiny video cameras placed at nest sites and placed small radio transmitters on adult birds, then followed them as they led young broods around. Through the years they documented some high rates of egg and chick predation by everything from foxes to fire ants. They learned that snakes, raccoons and armadillos are the three most common types of nest predators. In all their years of study, turkeys were never found to be predators of quail. The decline of Kansas quail can probably be blamed on a number of factors; the unusually hard winter of 2000-01, dismal hatching conditions several years running, diminishing habitat and increasing numbers of natural predators. (See attachment 2) Discussion and committee questions followed.

The Chairperson thanked Secretary Hayden and Mr. Hedges for their presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next meeting has not been scheduled.

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: April 2, 2002

NAME	REPRESENTING
Milton Patterson	Personal interest in quail hunting
Jacque Oakes	Pers. Interest

5. FOOD PLOTS

- 30-foot width - \$25/acre
- 40-foot width - \$35/acre
- 50-foot width - \$45/acre

Minimum size: one-third acre

Maximum size (in one location): one acre (approximately 50-feet x 875-feet)

No more than two food plots per 40-acre tract. Can be part of planted field and left or planted specifically as a food plot. Must use grain sorghum, forage sorghum, millet, or sunflowers. If large hedgerow is next to food plot location, root plowing of hedgerow must precede planting of the food plot. (This payment is also available as a habitat practice on WIHA lands and that payment may be earned in addition to the Q.I. (Quail Initiative) payment.

6. SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT

- If no other cost share program is used - 75 cents per shrub.
- "Plow perch" method, in lieu of buying seedlings and planting - \$1.50 per lineal foot.

**THE RIGHT TO ALLOW
HUNTING REMAINS
WITH THE LANDOWNER**



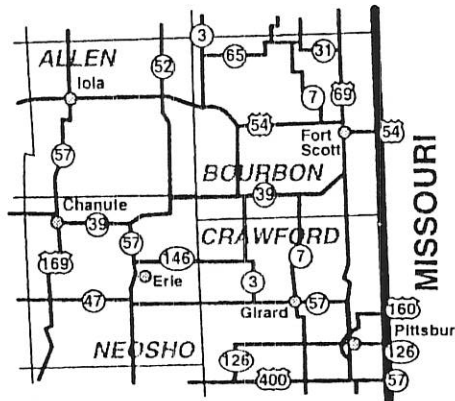
7. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

- Three-year prescribed range management plan - \$3 per acre per year.
- Maximum acreage is 320 acres per cooperator per year.

8. LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FROM BORDER OR LINEAR HABITAT SITES

- Exclusion fence - 40 cents per foot. (Contact Wildlife and Parks or NRCS for details.)
- The Southeast Kansas Quail Working Group, which has made this program possible, is comprised of representatives from Kansas Farm Bureau, See-Kan R C & D, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Pittsburg State University, Kansas State Extension Service, Quail Unlimited, private landowners, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Primary funding for these incentives comes from a KDWP project dedicated to this effort. These funds will be supplemented by a challenge grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, donations from local and statewide Quail Unlimited chapters, and landowner contributions of labor and planting materials.



General Area Map

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612. 01/01

SOUTHEAST KANSAS



Quail Initiative

House Environment
4-2-02
Attachment 1

LANDOWNER COST-SHARE TO DEVELOP QUAIL HABITAT

This new program, designed to improve quail habitat, will also benefit landowners in Allen, Bourbon, Crawford, and Neosho counties. The Southeast Kansas Quail Working Group (SEK-QWG), in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), is offering up to \$2,000 annually per cooperator as incentive payments or cost-share payments for creating and enhancing habitat beneficial to quail.



Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks
Region 5 Office (Chanute)
1500 W 7th. P.O. Box 777
Chanute, KS 66720
(316) 431-0380 (Regional Office)

Habitat improvements eligible for payment:

replacing fescue

establishing prairie vegetation

hedgerow renovation

strip discing

early burning of native grass

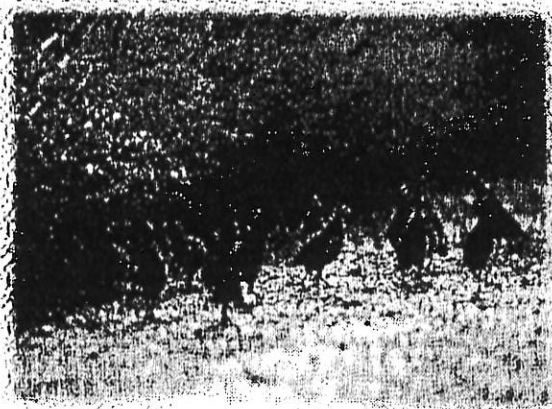
establishing food plots or leaving some grain unharvested

establishment of shrubs

prescribed livestock management

livestock exclusion from borders and odd areas

use of conservation headlands (a narrow field perimeter area left uncultivated and free of pesticides)



HABITAT COST SHARES AND INCENTIVES PROGRAM 2001

All habitat improvements must be designated in a written quail (wildlife) management plan prepared by the district wildlife biologist for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Plans may be prepared by private consultants, NRCS or others, but must be approved by KDWP before a contract is initiated.

Maximum payment is \$2,000 per landowner per year.

Accepted Practices, Benefits

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF PRAIRIE

- Converting introduced pasture grasses to native through the use of chemical treatment followed by reseeding - \$80/acre.
- Only seed and seeding on clean tilled or into crop stubble - \$55 per acre.
- Planting wildlife-friendly permanent cover under the Continuous CRP program - \$10 per acre.
- All other lands under contract with USDA (CRP, WRP, WHIP, EQIP, etc.) will not be eligible for this habitat practice

2. DISTURBANCE OF STAGNANT STANDS OF VEGETATION

- Discing strips in existing re-seeded native grass (prairie) vegetation - \$12.50/acre (This cost share is also available on walk-in hunting areas and payment may be earned in

addition to the Quail Initiative payment. If the land to be strip-disked is under a CRP contract, landowner notify Natural Resources Conservation Office ar. all CRP program requirements.) No more than 20 percent of each field may be disked on non-CRP lands

- Early burning (Nov. 1-Mar. 1) of native warm season grass stands - \$1.50 per acre, maximum of 200 acres per cooperater. Limit 2 years of participation.

3. RENOVATION OF OVER-MATURE HEDGEROWS

- Side trim and pile cut limbs back in hedgerow - \$50 per acre.
- Cutting trees (for posts etc.) but leaving stumps to resprout - \$100 per acre.
- Cutting trees and piling cut tops back onto hedgerow - \$150 per acre.

4. CONSERVATION HEADLANDS

- No mechanical or pesticide control on a 30 ft border borders of planted fields - \$30 per acre.

Interested landowners should contact the KDWP regional office in Chanute at (316) 431-0380. Information may also be obtained from USDA offices in the targeted counties.

Kansas.com

Posted on Sun, Mar. 31, 2002

A turkey tall tale

A friend once joked that to get an inkling of the human body, you'd need to spend a year with a doctor.

To get a fair understanding of an automobile, you'd need a month with a good mechanic.

But to learn absolutely everything about wildlife management, you'd only need 20 minutes in a small-town cafe or co-op.

It will probably only take two minutes to learn wild turkeys are to blame for Kansas' depressed quail population.

And it's never long before some coffee-cup biologist tells of someone who cleaned a turkey and "found its stomach packed full of baby quail."

Caps all around the room will nod in agreement as if it's gospel.

But the whole concept is mostly gossip with little, if any, substance behind it.

Sure, we do have more turkeys and fewer quail these days, but blaming one for the demise of the other is ignoring some pretty solid facts.

For instance, quail populations have long fluctuated in Kansas.

I remember in my childhood when we didn't hunt quail in northeast Kansas because the population was so low.

It was about 20 years before we saw our first wild turkey in that area.

And if turkeys are eating all the quail, why are there few quail where there are no turkeys?

A buddy who hunts wide-open Comanche County said last fall's bobwhite crop was one-fifth of what it was five years ago.

Funny, the only time turkeys cross those pastures is when they're in the back of a truck, frozen in plastic and headed to dinner at a desolate ranch house.

But there are better holes to be explored in what's becoming a widespread rural legend.

*House Environment
4-2-02
Attachment 2*

No. 1 in my book relates to the ol' stomach full of baby quail line.

Through the years I've cleaned scores of wild turkeys and I've yet to find a true stomach, let alone anything packed with baby quail.

Turkeys, like most game birds, swallow things whole into an esophagus that leads to a crop, and into a gizzard that grinds everything up.

And there is another serious flaw in such tales.

Here in Kansas, turkey seasons generally run early April through mid-May, and don't reopen until Oct. 1.

So, when would such a turkey have been shot? Certainly not within any given season.

But I'll admit it is possible a wild turkey might eat a baby quail.

They are, after all, opportunistic feeders that don't mind mixing in the occasional small frog, tiny lizard or the like with their summertime staple of grasshoppers and other bugs.

But their timing would have to be incredible.

A quarter-sized, newly hatched chick wouldn't be a problem, but a few weeks later it would be bigger than a white oak acorn that's about an adult turkey's max.

And as of now, there is no scientific proof that wild turkeys have ever preyed upon quail eggs, chicks or adults.

Roger Wells, a native Kansan, is an avid quail hunter and trained biologist who is the National Habitat Coordinator for Quail Unlimited.

Tired of the widespread rumor, Wells recently wrote a paper, "What's the deal with quail and turkeys?" that addresses the possibilities of predation.

In the paper, Wells refers to an ongoing study at the Tall Timbers Research Station near Tallahassee, Fla.

There biologists have studied more than 400 wild quail nests and their resulting broods.

The team used tiny video cameras placed at nest sites and placed small radio transmitters on adult birds, then followed them as they led young broods around.

Through the years they documented some high rates of egg and chick predation by everything from foxes to fire ants.

They learned that snakes, raccoons and armadillos are the three most common types of nest predators.

Yet in all their years of study, guess how many times turkeys were predators?

None.

And, by the way, this is in a region of Florida with between 30 and 60 turkeys per square mile.

The decline of Kansas quail can probably be blamed on a number of factors; the unusually hard winter of 2000-01, dismal hatching conditions several years running, diminishing habitat and increasing numbers of natural predators.

All of these things are well documented, but published science doesn't get near the exposure of coffee shop talk.

The rumor of turkeys ruining quail hunting will continue to spread. It's already shown up in other species.

A Manhattan man told me he'd witnessed a gobbler jump into the air, grab a rooster pheasant and eat it whole.

Of course, the same guy said he qualified for the 1933 Olympic swimming team, too.

No doubt somewhere in some small town, a table full of regulars are lamenting the shortage of deer last season.

Sooner or later, someone will blame it on the turkeys.

"Think about it," some guy will say. "These days turkeys eat nothing but them dime-sized quail eggs. Well, all the quail are gone, but what size are the spots on a newborn fawn?"

Within seconds, caps all around the room will nod in agreement and a new rural legend will be born.