

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND PARKS.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Becky Hutchins at 3:35 p.m. on February 5, 2003 in Room 243-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Clark Shultz - excused

Committee staff present: Mary Torrence, Revisor of Statutes' Office
Hank Avila, Legislative Research Department
Russell Mills, Legislative Research Department
Sarah Samuelson, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

proponent: Chad Luce, Department of Wildlife and Parks
opponents: Marvin Stous, Mustang Camping Club, Kansas Campers' Association
Doris Kehler, District 1 Director, Family Campers and RV'ers

Others attending: see attached list

Chairperson Hutchins asked for bill introductions from committee members. No bills were requested. She asked for bill requests from the gallery. No bills were requested.

HB 2054: Removing age exemption applicable to certain persons for permits and licenses issued by department of wildlife and parks.

Chad Luce, Department of Wildlife and Parks, addressed the committee as a proponent of the bill (Attachment 1). He said that this bill is necessary for the continued maintenance of facilities because of decreased allocations from the State General Fund, from over 50% of the state parks budget a decade ago to 22% now. He emphasized the concept of user fees, that the natural resources of Kansas should be maintained by those using those resources. The burden should not rest solely on the segment of population under age 65. He also discussed the apportionment of federal aid that Kansas is not receiving because of hunting and fishing licenses not being sold to senior citizens.

Mr. Luce requested an amendment to the bill, changing the effective date of the bill to January 1, 2004.

Representative Kauffman asked the amounts of the present fees. Mr. Luce referred her to his written testimony (Attachment 1, page 3), and explained that there are different prices for passes purchased in-season and out-of-season, and that the current prices for senior citizens are one-half of each full price quoted.

Representative Merrick asked whether the rates for non-residents is different; Mr. Luce replied that non-Kansans always pay the full price, even if they are senior citizens.

Representative Merrick asked about the policies and pricing of nearby states. Mr. Luce replied that regulations differ. Nebraska only counts as senior citizens those over age 70; Colorado, Iowa, and South Dakota offer no exemptions for licenses. For state park entrance fees, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Texas offer a discounted rate for senior citizens. In total, 28 states have no discount, 12 states offer a partial discount, and 10 states fully exempt senior citizens.

Representative Hutchins asked whether the federal excise taxes could be reapportioned if the license fees for senior citizens were a minimal amount, such as one dollar. Mr. Luce replied that federal policy requires the license fee charged by the state to be greater than the cost to the state of issuing the license. A study has not yet been done to determine this cost, but one dollar would be almost certainly be too low.

Representative Hutchins asked how much federal money is being lost in this way; Mr. Luce said the exact figures are unavailable because those who are not required to purchase licenses do not register with the department in any way. An extrapolation from census data would yield an estimate, in the year 2005, of \$38,000 in licenses sold and an additional \$15,000 in federal aid. This would increase each year because of more people turning 65.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND PARKS at 3:30 p.m. on February 5, 2003 in Room 243-N of the Capitol.

Representative Hutchins asked Mr. Luce to explain "land area" (Attachment 1, p.2). Mr. Luce replied that this is simply the total land area of each state; for example, Texas receives more than Rhode Island.

Representative Schwab asked who receives the revenue from the migratory bird stamps. Mr Luce replied that there is a federal stamp and a state stamp each year, whose revenues go to the federal and state levels, respectively. Senior citizens, like other hunters, must purchase both. For the purpose of apportionment of excise taxes, the federal government does not count stamps as licenses sold.

Representative Hayzlett asked whether park visits are increasing. Mr. Luce said yes, most recently there have been seven million visits per year, whereas a decade ago there were only five million. This includes repeat visitors.

Representative Hayzlett asked whether the increased funds from these increased visits are going back into the budget for maintenance; Mr. Luce replied that they are, and referred him to his written testimony (Attachment 1, p.4).

Representative Hayzlett asked what attrition was expected as a result of the proposed fee increases. Mr. Luce replied that the department estimates a 30% attrition initially, with people eventually returning. This is similar to the attrition experienced as a result of past fee increases.

Marvin Stous, representing the Mustang Camping Club, the Kansas Campers' Association, and Mustang's parent organization, Family Campers and RV'ers, addressed the committee as an opponent of the bill (Attachment 2). He noted that fees or permits are just another name for taxes, and that the senior citizens targeted by the proposed legislation have been paying taxes all their lives. Also, senior citizens often face financial challenges that would prevent them from being able to afford fee increases. He suggested that the department should find ways to work within their financial limits. He noted that since he lives in northeast Kansas, he and his friends have the option of camping in Missouri or in Nebraska; these parks are well maintained, and they offer senior citizen discounts.

Representative Long asked what fees Nebraska and Missouri charge to non-Kansans; Mr. Stous replied that he cannot recall the exact figures, and he cannot predict what the fees will be in future years.

Doris Kehler, District 1 Director, Family Campers and RV'ers, addressed the committee as an opponent of the bill (Attachment 3). She said that most senior citizens live on fixed incomes, whose finances have been greatly hurt by the weak economy. She also noted the senior citizens' contributions to maintaining the parks, building a shelter and birdhouses, and keeping campgrounds clean.

The committee had no further questions, and the hearing was closed.

Chairperson Hutchins asked the committee members if they would be interested in attending the Treasures of the Czars exhibit, which would be counted as an \$18 gift in the Topeka Convention and Visitors' Bureau lobbyists' report. A majority of members expressed interest, and the visit was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 19.

Chairperson Hutchins reminded the committee of next week's schedule:

Monday: hearing on **HB 2106** - membership of Council on Travel and Tourism

Wednesday: hearing on **HB 2083** - tourism advertising fund

The minutes from January 29, 2003 were distributed and approved without amendment.

Chairperson Hutchins adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2003.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND PARKS

GUEST LIST

DATE: Feb. 5, 2003

NAME	REPRESENTING
Doris Kehler	District I - FCRV
Max Kehler	District I - FCRV
Mary Lou Stous	District I - FCRV
Marvin Stous	Mustang Campers - FCRV
Chad Luce	KDWP
Chris Tymeson	KDWP



STATE OF KANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & PARKS

Office of the Secretary
1020 S Kansas Ave., Room 200
Topeka, KS 66612-1327
Phone: (785) 296-2281 FAX: (785) 296-6953



HOUSE BILL 2054
Testimony provided to
House Committee on Tourism and Parks
February 5, 2003
Chad Luce

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2054.

This bill would remove the age exemptions for entrance into the state parks of Kansas, and would also require all persons born after December 31, 1939 to purchase a hunting, furharvesting, or fishing license, before participating in those activities. Persons with disabilities would still be able to enter the state parks at ½ of the normal fee, and residents under the age of 16 would not be required to purchase a hunting, furharvesting, or fishing license.

The date of December 31, 1939 is essentially a “grandfather” clause. Under this clause, all persons who are currently 64 years of age or older will be exempted from purchasing hunting and fishing licenses in perpetuity.

As most members of the committee are aware, our state parks are funded through a combination of user fees, the Park Fee Fund (PFF), and State General Fund (SGF) dollars. A decade ago, the SGF represented over 50-percent of the total state parks budget. For FY 04, the SGF makes up only 22-percent of the total parks budget.

As the SGF support has dwindled, the department has asked the park users to contribute more through fee increases in two of the last three years, including charging seniors ½ price of the vehicle entry fee. The long term decline in State General Fund support for Kansas State Parks is affecting the department’s ability to manage our state park system. Certain portions of state parks have been closed around the state due to a lack of maintenance funding. While no full closures are planned, without increased revenue, it remains a possibility.

For the most part, this argument is philosophical. Everyone acknowledges that the state parks must be funded by some mechanism. Some feel the people who use the parks should pay for the opportunity to utilize them. Others feel that the cost should be borne exclusively by the segment of the population under 65 years of age.

On the wildlife side of the department, the agency is funded primarily through the sale of licenses and permits and federal excise tax monies. Our department is not maximizing its federal aid apportionment by exempting senior hunters and anglers. Federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment are collected by the United States Fish and Wildlife and Service, who then

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allocates these funds to states based on land area and licenses sold. By exempting hunters and anglers 65 years of age and older, the department does not capitalize on its full apportionment.

In the near future, our aging population will place more funding pressure on our younger users. In 2000, 13-percent of the population is over 65 years of age in Kansas. By 2025, that number will grow to 20-percent. Combined with a gradual decline in hunting and fishing licenses, our department will not be able to offer the current levels of service to the sportsmen and women of Kansas without the contributions of all user groups.

The conservation movement was founded on, and continues today, based on user fees. Simply put, the department believes that every person who utilizes the natural resources of Kansas should contribute to the future of those resources. While the department is grateful for the dedication of long-term license buyers and park users, we cannot continue to offer an age exemption without eventually reducing services, or charging even higher user fees to younger sportsmen and women.

As the attached fiscal note indicates, the initial fiscal impacts will be small. However, these impacts will increase over time, as our population ages.

2003-2004 Park Fees

	January 1 - March 31, 2003	April 1 - September 30, 2003	October 1 - March 31, 2004
Daily Vehicle	\$4.50	\$5.50	\$4.50
Annual Vehicle	\$29.50	\$44.50	\$34.50
Second Vehicle	\$19.50	\$24.50	\$19.50
Annual Camp	\$110.00	\$150.00	\$150.00
14 Night Camp	\$60.00	\$75.00	\$65.00
Overnight Camp	\$5.00	\$7.00	\$6.00
Cabin camp permit	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$35.00
One Utility	\$5.50	\$5.50	\$5.50
Two Utilities	\$7.50	\$7.50	\$7.50
Three Utilities	\$8.50	\$8.50	\$8.50
Duplicate Permit	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00

2003 Hunting and Fishing Fees

Hunting License	\$18.50
Fishing License	\$18.50
Combination License	\$36.50

PERCENT OF PARKS DIVISION STATE OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES FROM FUNDING SOURCE

1/17/2003

INDICATED BY FISCAL YEAR (Does not include expenditures for Aid, AMERICORP, or Capital Improvements) (Amounts in \$)

	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	Actual FY 02	GBR FY 03	GBR FY 04
Parks Division Operating (Total)	5,365,613	5,616,082	5,659,211	6,087,691	6,265,951	6,784,882	6,905,281	6,882,367	7,139,252	7,508,940	7,733,746
State General Fund	2,826,146	3,391,785	3,213,742	2,745,417	2,693,077	3,016,657	2,604,713	2,489,596	2,255,182	1,728,650	1,714,452
Percent of Total	52.7%	60.4%	56.8%	45.1%	43.0%	44.5%	37.7%	36.2%	31.6%	23.0%	22.2%
Park Fee Fund	2,539,072	2,206,583	2,384,991	3,218,105	3,447,281	3,624,392	4,197,774	4,307,399	4,766,027	5,583,423	5,873,762
Percent of Total	47.3%	39.3%	42.1%	52.9%	55.0%	53.4%	60.8%	62.6%	66.8%	74.4%	75.9%
Other Funds	395	17,714	60,478	124,169	125,593	143,833	102,794	85,372	118,043	196,867	145,532
Percent of Total	0	0.3%	1.1%	2.0%	2.0%	2.1%	1.5%	1.2%	1.7%	2.6%	1.9%

KANSAS

DIVISION OF THE BUDGET
DUANE A. GOOSSEN, DIRECTOR

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

February 5, 2003

The Honorable Becky Hutchins, Chairperson
House Committee on Tourism and Parks
Statehouse, Room 502-S
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Representative Hutchins:

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note for HB 2054 by House Committee on Tourism and Parks

In accordance with KSA 75-3715a, the following fiscal note concerning HB 2054 is respectfully submitted to your committee.

Currently, anyone who is 65 years or older is not required to pay for hunting or fishing licenses. They also are given a 50.0 percent discount when purchasing state park permits. HB 2054 would require everyone, regardless of age, to pay full price for state park permits. For hunting and fishing licenses, the bill would change the exemption from payment from individuals who were over 64 years of age to individuals born before January 1, 1940.

Estimated State Fiscal Effect				
	FY 2003 SGF	FY 2003 All Funds	FY 2004 SGF	FY 2004 All Funds
Revenue	--	--	--	\$79,110
Expenditure	--	--	--	--
FTE Pos.	--	--	--	--

According to the Department of Wildlife and Parks, HB 2054 would increase receipts to the Park Fee Fund from state park permit sales by \$79,110 in FY 2004. The Department based its estimate on park permit sales in calendar year 2001. The change from an age threshold to a date specific threshold for hunting and fishing licenses would not generate additional revenue

The Honorable Becky Hutchins, Chairperson
February 5, 2003
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until FY 2005, when it is expected to increase the Wildlife Fee Fund by \$49,946. This estimate was derived from data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Department states that administering the bill would not affect its operations or increase expenditures. Any fiscal effect associated with the passage of HB 2054 is not included in *The FY 2004 Governor's Budget Report*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Duane A. Goossen".

Duane A. Goossen
Director of the Budget

cc: Dick Koerth, W&P

HONORABLE CHAIRPERSON – VICE CHAIRPERSON – LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE TOURISM & PARKS COMMITTEE

My name is Marvin Stous, I reside in Jackson Co. My wife and I belong to the MUSTANG CAMPING CLUB – THE KANSAS CAMPERS ASSOC. and the parent National organization known as FAMILY CAMPERS AND Rvers.

I am sorry that it is necessary for those of us who are retired from various employment to have to come to the legislature Again to protest the Dept of Wildlife & Parks attempting to raise their financial resources by fee on SENIOR CITIZENS I and some of the fine people with me today were here at the Capitol to protest the very same thing, I believe it was 4 or 5 Years ago. This is a tax being proposed by the Dept. on the people of this state and other visitors who are senior citizens. Make no mistake the fees or permits are just another name for taxes. Also the group the Dept. is targeting are the very Same people who have paid taxes to the State of Kansas all of their working years.

Also this is a group of people whose income and resources are mostly at a fixed level. Most pensions are one amount For the recipients life. There are very few cost of living clauses and in some cases where there is such a clause it has been Suspended—by government entities. I don't think that I need to remind the committee that investments have taken a nose Dive to where interest rates do not add very much to the disposable income at this particular time.

I realize that all Departments of the State are financially challenged, but perhaps the departments should learn that it Has to live with its present resources. A great many of us retired people do so. I would remind the committee that the cost Of living increase for Social Security recipients was nearly all taken up by the increase of Medicare Premiums.

In regard to the action taken by the Dept., I also am opposed to the removal of the age benefits for Hunting & Fishing Licenses, all though as proposed by Wildlife & Parks, the changes would not affect me. I remember how I looked forward To the year that I would no longer need to purchase a combination Hunting & Fishing License, that was one of the few Benefits of growing older.

It is interesting that this proposal is brought to the Tourism & Parks committee as the National Camping Organization That I referred to previously is holding the 43rd Annual Campvention in Hutchinson, Ks this July 11-18, 2003. We are Expecting to host 1,000 units or more and I would expect that a majority of these visiting units will spend some time Before or after the campvention in Kansas exploring our historical places of interest. That means some maybe staying in Our state parks. I would think that a reduced rate for Senior Citizens would be inducement to return boosting tourism. I would estimate that our national membership is over 50% retired people.

In conclusion, due to the fact that I live in NE Kansas, I and my friends have the option of camping in fine State Parks

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Attachment 2

In both Nebraska and Missouri. There are 2 parks in Missouri that are within 70 miles of my home and one in Nebraska
And they are just as nice as any Kansas Parks that I have camped in and they have always ask if we were 65 or older so
They could give us a discount. It is my hope and expectations that the committee will give serious consideration to this
Proposal by Wildlife and Parks and not comply with their wishes.

Thank you for allowing me to express my views.

Marvin Stous
24273 Q Rd.
Holton, Kansas
66436
Ph. 785-364-2327

February 5, 2003

To: Committee Members on Kansas State Wildlife and Parks

Subject: Proposed changes to fees charged for use of State Parks by Senior Citizens

My husband , Max Kehler and I, Doris Kehler are here to testify on behalf of all the Senior Citizens of Kansas who use the State Parks for camping, relaxation and fellowship with other campers. We are members of a National Organization known as Family Campers and RV'ers , hereafter referred to as FCRV. FCRV has around 500 members in the State of Kansas. As District Directors of the clubs in Northeast Kansas we have many members who use the various State Parks of northeast Kansas. Most of our club members are senior citizens all living on fixed incomes. With the present economy and the tremendous fall in the stock markets and interest rates these members will be limited on recreational activities. With this in mind we urge you to vote **no** on any changes to fees for use of the State Parks by our senior citizens.

We would also like to bring to your attention the services provided to the State Parks by many of our members. A club in Manhattan built a shelter house at Tuttle Creek State Park and also provide and maintain many bird houses. If you would ask any of the care-takers at any of the State Parks we are sure they will all tell you that any group of senior citizens leave the park as clean or cleaner than it was when they arrived. We try to encourage all members to not be litter bugs.

Many of these members also bring their friends and family to join them in the relaxation of camping. This in turn increases your revenue received in usage fees.

Before recommending or voting on any changes to fees charged these senior citizens for using the State Parks we urge you to think this issue over very seriously and consider all sides of the issue.

Signed

Max & Doris Kehler
District I Directors-FCRV

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