

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES BUDGET

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Powell at 1:30 P.M. on February 12, 2007 in Room 235-N of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Becky Krahl, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amy Deckard, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Torrence, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Jason Thompson, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Lura Attig, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Kevin Yoder, Representative, 20th District
Jan Alderson, Instructor, Shawnee Mission South High School
Dr. Valerie Wright, Konza Prairie Biological Station; Kansas Native Plant Society
Joan Leavins, Citizen

Others attending:

See attached list.

HB 2386 - State grass; little bluestem.

Kevin Yoder, Representative, 20th District spoke in support of **HB 2386**. No written testimony was provided.

Jan Alderson, testified in support of **HB 2386** (Attachment 1). Jan Alderson is an instructor of biology, anatomy and physiology at Shawnee Mission South High School in the Shawnee Mission School District.

Ms. Alderson, her honors students and their parents have been working to have the Little Bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) named as the state grass.

Valerie Wright, PH.D., Education Coordinator, Konza Prairie Biological Station, Division of Biology, Kansas State University addressed the committee as a proponent of **HB 2386** (Attachment 2). The Konza Environmental Education Program has a mission to teach about the prairie ecosystem.

Joan Leavens, citizen of Overland Park, Kansas, former Education Director of the Blue River Watershed Association testified as a proponent of **HB 2386** (Attachment 3).

Chairman Powell closed the hearing on **HB 2386**.

Chairman Powell called for a Subcommittee Report on **HB 2070 - Intensive groundwater use control areas; time limitation on order of designation.**

Rep. Jason Watkins Chairman of the Subcommittee, gave a summation on the subcommittees findings. The major suggestion is that a moratorium on new IGUCAs (intensive groundwater use control areas) and the expansion of current IGUCAs be put in place until July 1, 2008. And that an interim study be commissioned to investigate the issues outlined in **HB 2070** and the subcommittee report (Attachment 4).

The committee accepted the report and agreed that an amendment be drafted placing a moratorium on new IGUCAs and the expansion of current IGUCAs be put in place until July 1, 2008. This amendment is to be presented at the next meeting.

HB 2168 - Relocation and other assistance for people in communities within a superfund site where substantial infrastructure has been lost.

Rep. Holmes made a motion to add an amendment on line 14, adding "located in Cherokee County and within

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget at 1:30 P.M. on February 12, 2007 in Room 235-N of the Capitol.

a superfund site". Rep. Doug Gatewood made a motion the amendment be favorable for passage. Rep. Jason Watkins seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

**House Agriculture & Natural Resources
Budget Committee**

Date Feb. 12, 2007

Name	Representing
<u>Valerie Wright</u>	Kanza Prairie Biological Station and Kansas Native Plant Society
JAN ALDERSON	SMHS HONORS BIOLOGY STUDENTS AND PARENTS
Carole Jordan	KAA
LANE LETOURNEAU	KDA
Joe Ford	KWO
Gyan Heavens	citizens
<u>Steve Collins</u>	KOWP

Chairman Larry Powell
Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Committee
House of Representatives
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

02/12/07

Chairman Powell and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jan Alderson. I am a biology and anatomy and physiology instructor at Shawnee Mission South High School in the Shawnee Mission school district.

I come before you on behalf of my Shawnee Mission South students and parents to support the proposal to establish a state grass through the State Grass Bill: HB2386 and sincerely appreciate the opportunity to appear before you.

One of the specialties of the South High curriculum is an environmental focus which is enhanced by the twenty-two acre, Shawnee Mission Educational Science Lab on the eastside of school and Indian Creek on the north side. We have a long tradition serving students of all ages through summer sessions, and field trips and one to make a difference environmentally.

During the 2006 legislative session, the Honors Biology 1 students and parents proposed a state grass in the Kansas House through HB2872 to the House Committee on Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism on February 20th through the facilitation of Rep. Kevin Yoder. Jerrod Reddick, Jeremy Roberts, and Stephanie Waxman represented South High students. Through e-mails and letters, students and their parents sent made over one hundred contacts concerning their hope that the Little Blue Stem grass would become the state grass of Kansas. A state grass was proposed when the students realized that Kansas, a grassland state, was not among eleven other states which had a state grass. All but one committee member supported the reasons why the SM students and passed it out of committee with only one dissenting vote.

The selection of the Little Blue Stem grass or *Schizachyrium scoparium*, sometimes called *Andropogon scoparius* was chosen after reviewing the attributes of native grasses as well as seeking the expertise of others. Today, I represent my students and will list their findings which ranked the Little Blue Stem grass as number one as the best grass to represent Kansas.

- a. Kansas, a prairie state, has a rich history as a grassland ecosystem which was the largest continuous ecosystem in the United State before urban development. Kansas contains some of the largest pockets of virgin prairie of any other state and we should be proud of our "grass roots" heritage. (I'm also a granddaughter of prairie homesteaders in North Dakota and feel a strong connection to the big sky areas and their influences).
- b. This native grass is found throughout the state of Kansas within the short, middle, and tall grass ecosystems and would represent the entire state.

c. color surpassed by no other Kansas grass. It is blue green during its growing season and red orange in the fall and dormant stages. Because of its beauty and hardiness, it is also becoming a preferred grass by homeowners for its beauty and hardiness. It is also a good companion grass to many wild flowers.

d. It is an extremely hardy grass with Prairie Cord grass being the only native Kansas grass which is hardier. Little Blue Stem will grow in any type of soil except boggy soil (few such areas in Kansas). It will tolerate it is drought resistant. Most of the prairie grass biomass is found underground, this withstanding extreme weather conditions. Its complexity and rich diversity allows it to survive adversity.

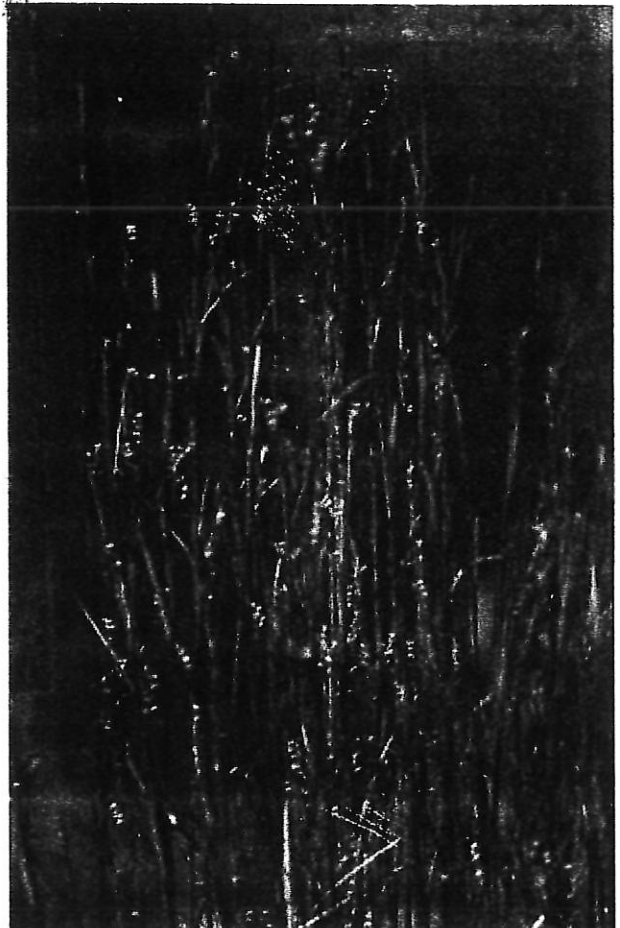
e. The seeds are consumed by small mammals and waterfowl. This grass is found in bunches providing important habitat and nesting sites for birds and small mammals as well as livestock grazing (and haying) and foraging for deer and antelope. *Scoparium* resists trampling. The stem and growth from previous years remain standing where it weathers to create mulch.

We sincerely appreciate all those who have made this effort possible and who have become involved in this project. Rep. Kevin Yoder, Joan Leavens, environmentalist, and Valerie Wright who inspires a love of grassland through her noted work as Director of the Konza Biological Station near Manhattan, Kansas and Marci Penner, Director of the Kansas Sampler Foundation and author of the Kansas Guidebook for explorers. Last summer, as a participant of the Prairies Across Kansas class held for two weeks at the Konza Prairie, I spoke to teachers/participants from all over the state of Kansas and were in support of this effort for the reasons I had stated.

The reasons are many and support strong. Your support would send a positive, message to students that getting involved makes a difference and would underscore the importance of Kansas as a grassland state.

Humbly submitted,

Jan Alderson, Science Teacher
Shawnee Mission South High
Shawnee Mission School District
soalders@smsd.org
913-7551
5800 West 107th Street
Overland Park, Kansas 66207



To: Representative Larry Powell, Chair
Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Legislature

From: Valerie Wright, Ph.D.
Education Coordinator
Konza Prairie Biological Station
Division of Biology, Kansas State University

Re: Proposed State Grass for Kansas – Little Bluestem, House Bill 2386

For 10 years the Konza Environmental Education Program has had as its mission to teach the public, especially children, about the prairie ecosystem in which they live. The heritage of the prairies is especially strong in Kansas, yet many children and adults who live in cities and towns do not know the value it has for our economy, both as a renewable natural resource and to our agricultural system. By adopting a State Grass for Kansas, educators will have the opportunity to teach about native prairies from the source of their value – the grasses that dominate the landscape and provide food and forage for our population.

Agricultural statistics show that native rangeland in Kansas provides about \$7 billion to a \$11 billion economy through the production of livestock. Kansas is second only to Texas in the production of livestock on native prairie. The several native grasses are considered dominant in pastures and prairies across the state, but the one species that is found in every county of Kansas is Little Bluestem (*Schizachrium scoparium*).

Little Bluestem is a native perennial with a dense root system reaching five to eight feet into the soil. It is drought resistant and grows from two to five feet tall in deep, shallow or rocky soils. It is important for wildlife habitat. It was once the most abundant grass in the Great Plains and is still of major importance in the tall, mixed and shortgrass prairies, can produce one to two tons of forage per acre. This grass is nutritious and palatable for cattle and bison, especially after a spring burn, when the new growth is highly attractive to grazers. Fire is important to its life history.

Little Bluestem is a bunch grass, growing in a tight bundle, which gives it a distinctive appearance. Its light and fluffy seed heads are attractive for horticultural plantings. The best characteristic of this grass is its blue-green color with seed stems of mauve and purple. The beautiful fall and winter color of the prairie is due in great part to the red-orange and mauve colors of Little Bluestem. Horticulturalists already promote it for gardens and landscaping. It is easy to grow and does not spread as rapidly as other grasses.

As the State Grass Little Bluestem is favored by many groups. The Kansas Native Plant Society endorses Little Bluestem, as do many teachers and their classes around the state. Botanists and range management specialists have promoted its value for many years.

The tall grass prairie ecosystem is one of the most endangered on the North American continent with less than 4% left as native, unplowed grassland. Kansas has the largest portion of the tallgrass prairie mainly in the Flint Hills. We should do everything we can to conserve this heritage for the future. Kansas can be a leader in conservation of the prairie. One step in this direction is naming a State Grass and teaching younger generations about our grassland heritage.

RE: House Bill 2386
Hearing: February 12, 2007
Joan Leavens
9824 Briar Drive, Overland Park, KS 66207

My name is Joan Leavens. I am speaking in support of House Bill 2386 to designate little bluestem the Kansas State Grass. I would like to thank the committee for taking time from your very busy proceedings to hear our testimony. We apologize that the students were unable to appear on such short notice. They had obligations both during the school day and as part of productions and athletic events after school today.

I am here as the former Education Director of the Blue River Watershed Association where I served five years educating students, teachers, and community members about the importance of clean water, in part by planting native grasses along stream corridors in our watershed to filter pollution, as well as stabilize stream banks and abate flooding. During 2006, I worked as a contractor for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks with Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS), a project promoting increased wildlife habitat through native plantings in outdoor classrooms at schools and other public places in our state.

Both experiences have provided me training and first hand experience in the value of little bluestem. Its deep root system and drought resistance make it a favorite of stormwater engineers. Those features, in addition to its decorative foliage, also make it a favorite of gardeners. In our area, we are promoting rain gardens to trap and filter stormwater on homeowners' property. Again, little bluestem is an all-star—beautiful and drought resistant, but not so tall as to create a jungle in the urban landscape.

Little bluestem can also be seen across the state. Last spring Scott Vogel, Chief of Environmental Services for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Topeka confirmed that little bluestem is used in the seed mix along the highway.

Terry Conway, Resource Conservationist at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Salina told us it is used in the seed mix establishing native rangeland: "Little bluestem is considered to be a dominant grass species component of the tall and mixed grass prairies and as a subdominant component of the short grass prairie in Kansas. Little Bluestem is approved for use in seed mixtures developed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for use in the establishment/interseeding of native rangelands in the short, mixed, and tall grass prairie regions of Kansas."

The widespread utility of this grass makes it a workhorse among native grasses. Additionally, the bluestem grasses have sentimental value among us urban dwellers and cowboy wannabes. We have "bluestem," a high-end restaurant, and Bluestem Learning in our area, so-named because of the romance of the open range for those of us hemmed in by concrete. Central Kansas has a number of tourist destinations, including the National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Chase County, as well as dude ranches inviting us city folks to separate and vaccinate calves while sleeping in bunk houses. Would it not be a great way to promote our "Home on the Range" state by naming little bluestem our state grass and getting the word out to all near and far—come visit Kansas and see for yourself!

Thank you for your time.

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee**Recommendation on HB 2070****Brief**

HB 2070 would limit the use of an intensive groundwater use control area (IGUCA) to a period of not more than five years from the date of its entry into the records of the chief engineer of the Division of Water Resources within the Department of Agriculture.

Background

A representative from the Kansas Livestock Association and the Kansas Department of Agriculture did not present testimony, however, did answer questions from the Subcommittee.

The fiscal note from the Department of Agriculture estimates that \$1,822,576 for eight IGUCAs (\$227,822 per IGUCA) would be needed from the State General Fund to implement the provisions of this act. This estimate assumes that the agency would seek to reestablish each existing IGUCA and any IGUCA that may be established in the future, and that each IGUCA could be reinstated within one year. Included in the total is funding for 13.0 FTE positions and associated operating costs.

The Subcommittee finds the following:

- The IGUCA law and the Kansas Water Appropriations Act do at times conflict with one another;
- These conflicts create a lack of understanding and confidence within the economic communities impacted by water concerns;
- That the Kansas Water Appropriations Act does provide benefit to the citizens of Kansas;
- That the IGUCA law does provide benefit to the citizens of Kansas;
- That the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and a large majority of the stakeholders are reasonable and are willing to work towards a resolution in the best interests of all stakeholders;
- That the Kansas Legislature needs to provide clarity, leadership, and direction toward a beneficial resolution for all stakeholders.

The Subcommittee recommends the following:

1. That an interim study be commissioned to study and investigate in more detail the issues outlined in HB 2070 and this report. The scope of the study should include, but not limited to IGUCAs, the Water Appropriations Act, the conflicts between the laws and the need for controls over future creation or expansions of IGUCAs.
2. That a moratorium on new IGUCAs and the expansion of current IGUCAs be put in place until July 1, 2008.