



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
KANSAS**

To: House Committee on Taxation, Rep Adam Smith, Chair

From: Kurt Ratzlaff, Legislative Chair, Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Date: February 11, 2025

Re: HB 2097 – Providing for approval by the department of wildlife and parks for qualified program or management plans to qualify for the nongame and endangered species habitat credit.

Chairman Smith and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide supporting testimony to HB 2097. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) is known as the sportsmen's voice for our public lands, waters and wildlife. The Kansas Chapter of BHA seeks to ensure our outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and hard work. We perform numerous service projects every year to improve our publicly owned lands and increase hunting and fishing access and opportunity in any way we can.

This proposed legislation represents an important step in protecting Kansas' natural heritage while also recognizing and incentivizing the role that private landowners play in conservation efforts. By providing tax credits to landowners who voluntarily manage their land to protect critical habitats for threatened or endangered species, this bill aligns economic incentives with ecological responsibility, fostering a more sustainable future for our state.

Kansas is home to a variety of unique ecosystems and wildlife species, many of which are under increasing pressure due to habitat loss, climate change, and development. Our agricultural and private landowners serve as essential stewards of these landscapes. However, conservation efforts often come at a financial cost, including land management expenses, property tax burdens, and opportunity costs associated with limiting certain types of development. HB 2097 seeks to address these challenges by offering a practical solution that benefits both conservation and the economy.

Importantly, HB 2097 also expands access for hunting, fishing, and trapping; reinforcing the rights outlined in paragraph 21 of the Kansas Bill of Rights, which explicitly guarantees the right of Kansas citizens to hunt, fish, and trap. These activities have deep cultural and economic significance in our state, providing both recreational enjoyment and economic benefits. Today, approximately 3% of Kansas is available to the public for the pursuit of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Any addition to this is welcome and ensuring access to well-maintained habitats supports wildlife populations, encourages responsible outdoor traditions, and bolsters Kansas' strong hunting and fishing heritage.

It is also worth noting that HB 2097 reflects best practices from other states that have implemented similar tax credit programs with positive results. States such as Colorado and South Carolina have successfully used tax incentives to encourage private land conservation, leading to the protection of thousands of acres of critical habitat while also supporting landowners' financial well-being. Kansas has the opportunity to build on these successes and tailor them to our specific environmental and economic



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landscape. It may be easy to label the revenue lost from the tax credit as a negative here, but the economic value of dollars put into improving habitat and the economic output from outdoorsmen and women exploring these wild places should easily outweigh these concerns.

In conclusion, HB 2097 is a win-win policy for Kansas. It supports landowners, encourages responsible conservation, protects biodiversity, and provides additional outdoor access opportunities for the public. By passing this bill, we take an important step toward ensuring that Kansas' rich natural heritage is preserved for future generations while also recognizing and rewarding the invaluable role that private landowners play in these efforts.

For these reasons, the Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers supports HB 2097.



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