

TO: Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee
FROM: Alan Pollom, Senior Conservation Specialist,
The Nature Conservancy in Kansas
DATE: February 14, 2013
SUBJECT: Testimony in OPPOSITION to Senate Resolution No. 1711

I thank the committee for the opportunity to offer comments in opposition to Senate Resolution No. 1711. The Nature Conservancy and its 7,000 members in Kansas are dedicated to the conservation of our state's natural landscapes and the wide variety of native plants and animals they sustain.

We believe this resolution is unnecessary and will have the effect of undermining the legal assurances being offered to private landowners interested in helping our wildlife and agriculture agencies secure the future of the rarest mammal in America. The resolution, as drafted, contains multiple unsupported assertions and misunderstandings. Among them:

- The resolution asserts that the current black-footed ferret recovery efforts in Kansas have been unsuccessful. This statement is unsupported and contrary to the judgment of the agencies and organizations involved and the participating landowners.
- The resolution implies that the proposed safe harbor program is a heavy handed and unilateral action by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In actuality, it is an initiative undertaken with the expressed support of multiple federal agencies and an association representing twelve western states. A press release announcing the signing of their joint memorandum of understanding is attached.
- The resolution states that there is evidence that the introduction of black-footed ferrets in Logan County has detrimentally affected neighboring landowners. This statement is unsubstantiated. Any ferrets that might leave the managed cooperating properties in Logan County enjoy no endangered species protection if killed or harmed by any otherwise lawful activity. Furthermore, the Fish and Wildlife Service offers to trap and return any ferret observed away from the cooperating properties.
- The resolution draws an unwarranted association between black-footed ferrets and the presence of plague. Plague appeared on the west coast of the U.S. at the turn of the last century. It has gradually spread eastward and is known in every state west of Kansas. Of those states, half have never had ferrets present and the remainder largely had low or already extinct ferret populations. Plague is spread by fleas that infect all manner of rodents and mammals that prey on rodents. Whether or not plague makes its way to Kansas will have nothing to do with the presence or absence of black-footed ferrets.

In summary, The Nature Conservancy recommends a "no" vote on this resolution. I thank you for considering these comments. If you have follow-up questions, you may reach me by phone at 785-233-4400 (o) or email <apollom@tnc.org>