

KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The voice of outdoor Kansas

Kansas Wildlife Federation
Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 269
to the Kansas Senate Committee on
Natural Resources

March 12, 2015

Chairman Powell and members of the Committee, we thank you for the opportunity to present our ongoing concerns regarding imperiled wildlife species conservation needs in Kansas.

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is a 65-year old grassroots organization of hunters, anglers and concerned wildlife conservationists that promotes hunting and fishing opportunities and associated recreation for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. KWF supports the sustainable use and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats through education, partnerships, outreach, and policy oversight.

KWF opposes Senate Bill 269, which modifies the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1975. KWF was involved in getting the nongame program passed in Kansas. SB 269 will result in serious consequences for the future of the protection of imperiled, native, wild animal species that are important components of the natural heritage of the State of Kansas.

One of our biggest concerns is that enacting SB 269 will eliminate the scientific process currently set up under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1975. SB 269 is designed to eliminate the Act one species at a time. SB 269 eliminates a listed species for political purposes instead of science-based reasons. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism would be relegated to a secondary and advisory role in development review, conservation planning, conflict resolution, mitigation, and delisting of protected species, resulting in more expensive and protracted review and permitting process. Many 'avoidance' opportunities occur with discussions between the department and project sponsors.

KWF contends that the KDWPT has an excellent record as a lead agency in managing the nongame wildlife resources as they intersect with the development of natural resources. It is important to note that in a typical year, KDWPT staff reviews about 2,000 projects under their authorities, and typically only one-half of one percent requires any mitigation expense. KDWPT uses a scientific process that utilizes expert input, sighting data, literature searches, informational meetings, public comment periods, and KDWPT Commission voting on any listing changes. SB 269 is a significant change in a very successful law to address such a small issue.

SB 269 specifically removes protections for the state protected Eastern Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*). There is accumulating scientific data and professional opinion that the most essential conservation efforts take place at the edges of a species range. We can best help restore T&E species to their original range by enhancing habitats on the fringes of their currently restricted population areas. (See works below and references therein.)

http://www.arlis.org/docs/voll/69415913/channell_edited_final_feb_8.pdf

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/bl02fraser3.pdf>

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2010/On-the-Edge-Sept-2010.pdf>

If the supporters of SB 269 have evidence of a significant increase in the Eastern Spotted Skunk population in Kansas they should submit their data to KDWPT and ask that the review process be used and the species be moved to the Species in Need of Conservation (SINC) category. The species is designated as a state endangered species in Missouri, where it has been declining drastically in recent decades.

A 2011 survey commissioned by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism was conducted by Responsive Management Inc. regarding: *Kansas Residents' Opinions on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife by Responsive Management*. It revealed some very interesting information:

“An overwhelming majority of Kansas residents (91%) agree that the Department should continue to identify and protect habitat critical to the existence of threatened and endangered wildlife.”

“Approximately 66% of landowners would strongly or moderately support the reintroduction of a threatened and endangered wildlife species to its historical range if that range was near or adjacent to the landowner's property.”

See the following website to view the results of a survey on the high levels of support for recovery of endangered species. *Kansas Residents' Opinions on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife by Responsive Management*.

(<http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/Services/Threatened-and-Endangered-Wildlife/Kansas-Residents'-Opinions-on-Threatened-and-Endangered-Wildlife-and-Actions-to-Protect-Wildlife-by-Responsive-Management>)

The Kansas Wildlife Federation feels it is in the best interest of all Kansans to maintain the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism as the lead agency in conservation and natural resource planning, particularly as it pertains to the protection of sensitive species, critical habitat designation, and permit reviews. It is tragic that state senators are being pushed, like never before, by special interests to undermine wildlife conservation measures in Kansas. We therefore ask you to oppose the passage of SB 269.

Thank you for considering our concerns.