



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY concerning HB 2479
relating to Noxious Weeds**

Senate Natural Resources Committee

March 9, 2016

Submitted by Randall Allen, Executive Director

Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2479. The proposed legislation modernizes the long-standing Noxious Weed Act in Kansas. Since responsibility for enforcement of the provisions of the Act is vested in the board of county commissioners, we consider any changes to the Act very seriously.

I want to acknowledge the positive and constructive way that Secretary McClaskey and her staff at the Kansas Department of Agriculture reached out to us in drafting this legislation. The control and eradication of noxious weeds is truly a shared responsibility, with the State and counties working together. We appreciate the Department listening to our concerns, and the concerns of noxious weed directors.

We believe the time has come to list noxious weeds through the rules and regulations process in lieu of statutory enactment. This will enable the Department and the community of partners/stakeholders to act more nimbly in addressing emerging situations through a science-based process with recommendations from a newly-created state noxious weed advisory committee. We believe that the composition of the committee is smart, as it includes landowners, representatives of the research community, representatives from agricultural industries such as agribusiness retailers; county noxious weed directors, a representative from Wildlife and Parks; and a county commissioner. The duties of the committee are enumerated in New Section 3 of the bill, and they help ensure that the program is accountable and responsive to needs.

Finally, we appreciate the department's willingness to reflect, in the Act, the more modern ways in which counties budget for noxious weed programs. Counties can budget funds for any legal purpose in their general fund, in lieu of budgeting for specific purposes (such as noxious weed eradication) in several separate funds, and this legislation correctly recognizes this option. While this new language is largely inconsequential to the public, it clarifies once and for all that counties can appropriate county funds for noxious weed eradication without doing so in a separate budgeted fund.

For all of these reasons, we urge the Committee to pass out HB 2479 favorably for passage. This legislative proposal has been in development for a very long time, and our Association wants this bill enacted into law. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written testimony.