



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
KANSAS**

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2621
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of the Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers regarding House Bill No. 2621 which authorizes the purchase of 493 acres of land in Kingman County adjoining the Byron Walker Wildlife Area. **The Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers supports this bill.**

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) is the fastest growing conservation organization in the United States with over 40,000 members in North America. We coin ourselves as “the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife”.

Kansas sits near the bottom of the list in percentage of public lands available when comparing our 50 states. The Kansas Chapter of BHA appreciates this strong tradition of private land ownership in Kansas. However, we also appreciate efforts to appropriately enhance public access to land, particularly lands already accessible to the public. The Byron Walker Wildlife Area is a gem of the Kansas landscape. It provides all Kansans the opportunity to engage with a stunning sandhill habitat. Cutting through these sandhills, the Ninnescah River and its bottomland is rich with hardwoods and native grasslands. Enlarging the existing 4,685 acres of the Byron Walker Wildlife Area with additional acreage improves an already beautiful area that is accessible to each and every Kansan.

Whether you fish, hunt, bird watch or just feel a need to be outdoors in your native landscapes, access to quality public land and water is an absolute necessity for an ever-growing number of Kansans. Even for those who never pursue these activities, we should seize this opportunity to take action on the idea that our State values such places, with its wildlife reserved in a natural landscape in perpetuity. This 493-acre purchase is a small investment that grants current and future generations of Kansans an increased opportunity to experience the Kansas landscape in a deeper and even more meaningful way.

House Bill No. 2621 provides Kansans additional and perpetual access to public land and will benefit our wildlife, water and future generations of Kansans. **The Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers supports this bill.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeffrey D. Hancock

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