

Testimony of Lauren A. Sill

HB-2331 AN ACT CONCERNING WILDLIFE; RELATING TO THE TRANSFERABILITY OF DEER PERMITS

I respectfully submit my opposition to HB-2331 and request rejection of this Bill.

HB 2331 is a bill that may monetarily benefit some landowners in Kansas but it comes at the significant detriment to the vast majority of Kansas wildlife resources, hunters, and residents.

Because the current bill contains no requirement that the landowner have a hunting license or that the permit be restricted to the land owned by the original purchaser, it opens thousands of potential permits to be issued that would not otherwise be used and without regard to effective deer herd management. This will create multiple unintended consequences and management issues leading to future problems greater than those we currently face regarding deer-vehicle collisions as well as crop depredation, disease, and other issues.

Non-resident deer hunters comprised 22.5% of all deer hunters in Kansas in 2013. That percentage has increased every year since 2013. This percentage significantly exceeds the non-resident/resident hunter ratio in surrounding states. With hunter success rates nearly the same for residents and non-residents, during the 2019-2020 deer season, non-resident hunters harvested nearly 60% of the antlered bucks in DMU 16, probably the premiere unit in the state. In units 1, 3, 7 and 12, for every 3 bucks harvested by residents, 2 or more were taken by non-residents. This problematic trend is due in significant part to resident hunters dropping out because they cannot gain access to private land and experience severe over-crowding on public lands. More non-resident permits can only exacerbate access issues. Our public lands are already over-crowded and neither the resources nor hunter tolerance can accommodate any significant influx of hunters. Most resident hunters are not against non-resident hunters, but they are opposed to being driven out of hunting by the excess numbers of them allowed to hunt here.

Success rates for drawing a non-resident any deer permit have remained in the 90-95% range since 2014. No non-resident hunter who has just one preference point is denied a permit. There is simply no evidence of any need for Transferable Deer Permits. 95% of non-residents who want to hunt, get to hunt during the year that they apply and 100% will get to hunt at least once in a two-year period. This generous allotment exceeds that of any other state in our country. Can you help me understand why non-residents should feel entitled to our Kansas natural resources?

There are no other states that employ a transferable deer tag system that remotely resembles this proposal. There is a program in Utah that allows some transfer of tags but that requires a minimum of 640 acres for a landowner to qualify, 75% of Utah is public land and there are many other management differences between our two states. In Wisconsin's very limited system, you may receive a transferable permit once in a lifetime. In New York, there are transferable antlerless tags but none for antlered deer. Maine does have a fairly open transferable system. If farmers and ranchers in every other state in our nation are able to manage hunting on their land without transferable permits, I am confident that ours can do the same.

Landowners have every right to determine whether they allow hunting, to whom they will allow access, and what they expect in return for that access. There is already a free system in place for financial

benefit for landowners who want to benefit from allowing hunting. Kansas has no restrictions on leasing land for hunting or other outdoor pursuits.

The transferable permit system is discriminatory in that it does not allow for equal opportunity within the permitting process. It gives preference to those with land ownership and with wealth who can pay to bypass the system that the general public must use further driving hunting toward a recreational pursuit for wealthy, white males.

While there is no evidence supporting a true need for these permits, the most significant reason for rejecting this bill is subtle but far more crucial. This bill has an underlying premise that deer belong to the landowner. They do not. Our Kansas resources belong to all the people of our state, that includes you and me. They don't belong to KDWPT or even the state government. They are held in public trust by our government, which includes each of you, for the benefit of this generation and those in the future. To treat our wildlife resources as commodities for the benefit of a few instead of public resources is a betrayal of public trust. This impacts not only deer hunters but other hunters, wildlife watchers, and all outdoorsmen and women.

The North American Model for Wildlife Conservation has guided all of the States and Canadian provinces in the development of laws and regulations concerning wildlife. This foundation is part of why we have the wonderful wildlife resources that we do in Kansas. Wildlife agencies cannot sustain effective management using these tenets if legislative oversight disregards this approach to conservation.

The model is based on 7 key principles:

1. *Wildlife as a public trust resource*, owned by no one and is held by government in trust for the benefit of present and future generations.
2. *The elimination of markets for game* which regulates and restricts the exploitation of game.
3. *Allocation of wildlife use by law* which means that the government, as trustee, should manage wildlife for benefit of present and future generations of the public.
4. *Kill only for legitimate purposes*.
5. *Wildlife as an international resource* which recognizes that wildlife knows no borders and conservation methods, or the lack thereof, has international implications.
6. *Science-based wildlife policy* which recognizes that informed decision-making must be based on scientific evidence.
7. *Democracy of hunting* which recognizes that there are benefits to all of society when hunting opportunities are not restricted to those who have special class, status or privileges based on land ownership, wealth, power, or other means.

A balanced approach to non-resident hunting can benefit all while a landowner or financially driven system will benefit a few at the expense of the majority. This bill does not promote economic development. HB2331 promotes treatment of the natural resources of Kansas as a commodity and promotes transferring Kansas' natural resources to non-residents for the benefit of a few. I urge you to please reject this bill.

Respectfully,

Lauren A. Sill
Hutchinson, Kansas