



Ducks Unlimited

**TESTIMONY ON SB 145
Mark Schlegel, Ducks Unlimited Volunteer Board Member
Kansas Senate Ways and Means Committee
March 15, 2021**

Good morning, Chairman Billinger and members of the committee. My name is Mark Schlegel and I am a Ducks Unlimited volunteer from Kingman, Kansas. I've lived in Kingman for about 30 years, and have been involved with Ducks Unlimited for over 20 years – I have been an Area Chair and KS State Chair. Until recently, I was the State Public Policy Chair, and I was elected to DU's national Board of Directors in September 2020. Kansas Ducks Unlimited volunteers work in their communities to put on over 100 fundraising events across the state every year raising almost \$1.5M. Those sportsmen and women are dedicated to maintaining and improving resources for hunting, fishing and other forms of outdoor recreation that have been a part of Kansas' heritage since before statehood. I've spent many days at the Byron Walker Wildlife Area, which is one of the primary attractions in Kingman County attracting more out-of-county visitors than any other venue. This proposed expansion would significantly increase the recreational opportunities in southern Kansas.

Over the past year, the average person has spent more time outdoors than ever before. Participation in recreational past times like hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and kayaking has surged. Kansas was certainly no exception to this increased demand for outdoor access, but ranking 49th in the country for public lands, we don't have the supply to match. One thing is clear – the need for additional outdoor recreational opportunities has never been higher.

This has really been a showcase transaction, and a great example of how KDWPT, local landowners, and conservation NGOs like Ducks Unlimited can work together to facilitate the acquisition of select properties under circumstances which benefit everyone involved. A willing landowner approached KDWPT about the possibility of adding their property to a great public resource. Ducks Unlimited was able to step in and acquire the property pending legislative approval. And the existing tenants were satisfied with a land swap that enabled them to enhance their agricultural operation. Recognizing the importance of expanding the Byron Walker Wildlife Area to the local economy, both the Kingman County Commission and Kingman City Commission are supportive of the transfer. This is already a win-win scenario, with outdoor recreation in Kansas being the final winner. We encourage the committee to recommend the passage of SB 145.