

HB 2476
An Act Concerning National Land Designation; Requiring Legislative Approval
To
The House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

By Brad Loveless, Secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

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HB 2476 focuses on upholding Kansas' sovereignty by prohibiting state funds from being used to match federal monies for national heritage areas or national heritage trails without legislative approval, nor would it allow state property, water, or facilities from being included within a national heritage area or trail.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) is neutral on this bill. However, it requests clarifying amendments to the bill that would provide greater direction and improve the legislation.

Role of National Park Service

The original purpose of national heritage areas and national heritage trails ("Heritage Site(s)") was to build public attention for particular locations with the hope that doing so would increase tourism. KDWP does not participate in the designation or administration of Heritage Sites. In fact, there is very little interaction between KDWP and the National Park Service (NPS) concerning them. That being said, it is our understanding the NPS does not actually designate Heritage Sites. NPS only administers the Heritage Sites after designation. Contrary to line two on page two, the decision to designate Heritage Sites is made by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Existing Facilities Within Heritage Sites

HB 2476 is not clear as to what happens to state facilities or state infrastructure currently contained within a Heritage Site. KDWP currently has facilities and infrastructure in place in two areas that have received Heritage Site designation by the Secretary of Interior: the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA), established in 2006, and the Sante Fe National Historic Trail (SFNH), established in 1987.

The FFNHA consists of 29 Eastern Kansas counties. Within the FFNHA, KDWP has 14 state parks and multiple smaller properties, such as wildlife areas and fishing lakes, it manages. The SFNH stretches across 118 miles of Kansas. SFNH closely aligns with 30 miles of the Flint Hills Trail State Park and is directly on top of approximately six (6) miles of the trail.

Although KDWP uses its funds to support its existing facilities and infrastructure located within the FFNHA and SFNH, it does not apply these funds for the purpose of promoting or benefiting these areas as a Heritage Site. As such, KDWP would request clarifying amendments to subsections (b) and (c) prohibiting only the use of state funds or properties from being expended for the promotion or benefit of the Heritage Sites.