



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Justin Cobb, Legislative Chair of Kansans for Conservation

Date: February 5th, 2025

RE: HB 2063 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2063. The Kansans for Conservation coalition led the collaborative drafting process of this bill, and it is my pleasure to give you an overview of the coalition and this bill.

Kansans for Conservation was founded in 2017 by a diverse group of stakeholders brought together by the need for dedicated state funding for conservation. Now with 41 member organizations, the coalition's membership represents Kansans from virtually every walk of life and county of the state.

HB 2063 can truly be considered a collaborative effort, combining the interests of farmers, ranchers, hunters, hikers, and any Kansan who enjoys the quality of life and economic benefits our natural resources provide.

Many of the conferees today will discuss their personal experiences with conservation and the challenges and opportunities that exist. I would like to provide one brief example that demonstrates the mission of the coalition.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and landowners integrate conservation into working lands. EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to producers to address natural resource concerns such as increasing soil health, improved wildlife habitat, drought mitigation, and much more.

In 2024 Kansas producers submitted 1,970 applications for the EQIP program. 837, or 42%, were awarded. Over 1,000 applications requesting more than \$140 million were denied because of a lack of funding.

This shortfall demonstrates a theme felt across Kansas. The stewardship of our natural resources is driven by the work of private landowners and local governments. By themselves, they cannot tackle the many issues the state faces or capture the innumerable private and federal match opportunities that our neighboring states receive. HB 2063 would provide much needed support in this area which benefits all Kansans.

Thank you once again for your consideration of HB 2063 and we look forward to working with support our state's natural resources. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.



Agriculture



Commercial



Nonprofit



Wildlife

