



Kansas Natural Resource Coalition

Bringing Voice and Environmental Decision-making to Local Government

P.O. Box 22, Garden City, KS 67846

www.knrc.org

**Testimony Opposing HB 2063
Establishing “Various Conservation Funds, Allocating State Moneys for Conservation”
Kansas Natural Resource Coalition
February 5, 2025**

My name is Tracey Barton, the current acting Executive Director of Kansas Natural Resource Coalition (KNRC). KNRC functions as an instrumentality of Kansas Boards of County Commissioners, and our membership currently stands at thirty-two member counties.

While HB 2063 appears to have honorable conservation-related goals, KNRC is opposed to the bill. The shifting definition and purpose of conservation since Executive Order 14008 (also known as the 30x30) has been detrimental to farmers and ranchers and in essence our rural counties. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency to taxpayers concerning matching funds being offered, which only benefits non-governmental agencies (NGOs).

KNRC doesn't see the need for substantial tax resources to be directed into conservation measures which have shifted their focus from encouraging good stewardship practices that improve agriculture production as directed by the Farm Bill and Food Safety Act of 1985 to the purpose outlined in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (HR 5376), which prioritizes mitigating climate change, limiting livestock emissions, enhancing biodiversity, and controlling agriculture production.

Specifically, the bill outlines “long-term land protection from conversion or loss of habitat, biodiversity, sustainable and regenerative timber management, and ecological restoration.”

The shift in purpose began when Biden issued Executive Order 14008, which outlined plans to “conserve” thirty percent of US lands and waters by the year 2030. While the order has recently been rescinded by the Trump Administration, conservation programs had already adapted the new conservation purpose outlined in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which places farmers and ranchers and in essence, our rural counties, at a significant disadvantage, all in the name of climate change.

Another reason KNRC does not support HB 2063, is that the bill is lacking transparency to taxpayers. Specifically, HB 2063 states under “Sec. 2 (g) Applications providing an opportunity to capture federal, private or other nonstate matching moneys through a state or local match shall be prioritized. Matching moneys shall include cash contributions, noncash contributions, including land value donations, and in-kind contributions.”

This bill prioritizes the purchase of, donation of, and matching federal grant funds for conservation easements. That is why under Sec. 2, subparagraph (d) “nonprofit entities shall be eligible to receive funding from the grant program.” Nonprofit governmental organizations (NGOs), or land trusts, are supporting this legislation because they will be one of the main entities benefiting from passage of this legislation. They will receive large grants to purchase private property or place as many conservation easements as possible on private lands.

Steering Committee Members

Bob Rein, President (Pawnee) | Duke Strobel, Vice President (Russell) | Marcus Rogge, Treasurer (Haskell)
Jim Daily (Clark) | Becky Larson (Wallace) | Cody Younkin (Logan)

Proponents of 30x30 believe private lands must be a significant part of the protected areas in America. They seek to preserve lands of high biodiversity and productivity, which are largely those which have been privately owned, and therefore properly managed. Creating a federal nexus to private land is critical for them to be positioned to eventually exercise the centralized control they seek over all of America's land, and therefore our food supply.

Proponents of HB 2063 see these federal dollars as their opportunity to advance "conservation" in the State of Kansas, but what they will be accomplishing is the goal of the former Biden Administration to lock up as much private property as possible through federal matching funds.

In addition to our opposition to HB 2063, we also take this opportunity to recommend term limits on conservation easements in Kansas. Conservation easements are a detriment to landowners, county and state economy due to the associated perpetual strict land use activity restrictions.

Thank you.

KNRC functions as an instrumentality of thirty-two Kansas boards of county commissioners located across the state of Kansas. KNRC sponsors, promotes, and engages in meaningful government-to-government participation between its member counties and federal and/or state executive branch agencies during administrative policymaking and actions. Through their responsibilities for protecting their respective human and natural environments and for ensuring the success of their local economies, many of KNRC's member county boards of county commissioners have material interests in agriculture-related activities.

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