

Before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Written-only testimony by Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Proponent Testimony on HB 2063
February 6th, 2025



Chairman Rahjes and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written remarks on HB 2063 and the dedication of state funds for land conservation efforts. The Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club, which is a statewide, nonpartisan, grassroots environmental organization with nearly 5000 members. **We understand how important conservation efforts are for improving or maintaining the quality of our soil and preserving our ecosystems and habitats.** The Sierra Club's view on land management and agriculture is grounded in the need to conserve our terrestrial and aquatic natural ecosystems and integrate ecologically sound farming practices with wildlife habitat. We support abundant healthy food and fiber for all communities while maintaining the fertility of the soil and protecting the Earth's climate and the native diversity of plants and animals. HB 2063 is indeed a major investment into agriculture, ecological stewardship, and outdoor recreation, but a worthy and vital investment with invaluable benefits.

The State of Kansas has a key role in helping our agriculture be more ecologically sound, expanding wildlife habitat, and offering recreation for Kansans to enjoy and explore the land. HB 2063 would be a big help.

We recognize the realities of human use of land, water, energy, and other resource but we must recognize its impact on our ecosystems for which life on earth depends. Unfortunately, agriculture and land degradation due to development have created some of the largest negative impacts to land and water in Kansas, nationally, and globally. Common practices such as irrigated large-scale mono cropping in semi-arid climates and concentrated animal feeding systems consume significant amounts of water, pollute our air and water, degrade the soil, diminish biodiversity, and emit atmospheric pollution. Such practices are neither economically, ecologically nor socially sustainable. Kansas is also one of the worst states in the U.S. when it comes to available acres for public use/enjoyment. **So, Kansas needs an expeditious transition to farming methods and land uses that maximize both cultural and biological diversity, benefit local communities, improve rural and urban livelihoods, and preserve natural resources and habitats.** HB 2063 would help Kansans go in that direction.

Incorporating land conservation practices in farming and habitat protection helps align our agricultural and land use enterprises with the preservation of our ecosystems. HB 2063 would help landowners and other stewards better implement eco-friendly projects with more resources and capacity. A dedicated funding stream would also be highly beneficial in leveraging federal funding opportunities when local grant matches are required, or continuing state efforts when federal funding runs dry.

We expect HB 2063's funds will go to projects that offer wide-ranging benefits to Kansans at large, rather than offsetting costs for for-profit companies. Sierra Club recommends project funds be utilized for long-lasting public benefits, instead of short-term results that could be diminished when programs end or when crop prices change. We urge the State to prioritize some funds specifically for Kansas Tribes or other historically underserved communities.

State funding of \$60 million with HB 2063 is a good start for expanding conservation in Kansas.

Investing in efforts to enhance our common agricultural practices, improve our wildlife habitat, and expand our nature-based recreational opportunities are worth every penny.

Let's get going! Please pass HB 2063 this year. Thank you.

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The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to enjoying, exploring, and protecting our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for fifty years.