

March 13, 2025

To: Representative Rahjes, Chairman  
Members of House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
RE: Support for HB2268

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Committee Members,

HB2268 is the culmination of more than 4 years of highly engaged collaborative efforts between resident waterfowl hunters, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks staff, the KDWP Commission, multiple federal partners, and members of the public, both resident and non-resident. The increasing popularity of waterfowl hunting, very limited acreage for public waterfowl hunting, increasing restriction of non-resident hunting across multiple states and Canadian provinces, and unrestricted opportunities to hunt in Kansas have led to a level of human presence and pressure on our wetlands that is no longer sustainable. Waterfowl and wildlife behavior and health are negatively impacted, and human conflicts are increasing.

KDWP staff considered more than 100 possible options to address the growing discontent in the marshes including those practiced in other states, offered by members of the public, and offered by Commission members. The result of those collaborative efforts is detailed in HB2268 that is before you. This solution allows all non-resident waterfowl hunters to still hunt in Kansas. It reduces some pressure on the wetlands for our waterfowl, wildlife, and resident hunters. It does not require any agency resources of staffing or finances to administer. Non-resident hunters may hunt seven days a week in Kansas by spreading time between public and private lands. They may also hunt on public lands seven days a week by enjoying pursuit of upland birds or small game on the days that they are not able to hunt waterfowl on public lands. HB2268 has an additional benefit of creating additional opportunities for outfitters and landowners as they have an additional pool of potential clients for four additional days of each week of the waterfowl season.

Opponents of this bill may cite a negative economic impact to communities and businesses surrounding public hunting areas. While no one can guarantee that there will be no impact, an unintended case study at Cheyenne Bottoms provides significant evidence that this impact will be negligible. Cheyenne Bottoms is a nationally recognized wetland, significant to waterfowl and non-game species alike. In addition to hunters, the Bottoms draws significant numbers of birdwatchers from across the world on an annual basis. Extremely low to no water over the past three years has severely limited both hunting and birdwatching resulting in decreased visitation. During recent phone calls, staff at both the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce and the Great Bend Economic Development agency denied awareness of a negative impact on the community or businesses due to the decreased visitation to Cheyenne Bottoms. HB2268 will have less impact on public land use than low water has had on the Bottoms. Please do not allow unsubstantiated fears for the ruin of the Kansas economy to impede good decision-making.

Our natural resources are not infinitely renewable. A long-term view is essential to conserve those resources, sustain the opportunities that they provide, and enhance the resulting quality of life for all into our future. Please support sound resource management and continued quality hunting opportunities in Kansas by supporting HB2268R.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lauren A. Sill, Former KDWP Commissioner