

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Testimony of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks
House Bill 2547

February 3, 2026

Chairman Rahjes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding HB 2547. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Department) is neutral on this bill. However, the Department offers the following comments and considerations regarding the current language.

While the intent and sentiment of the bill is understood and appreciated, the methods and the program outlined within the bill are unlikely to achieve the identified purpose. The use of released upland birds has been evaluated by the Department and has been identified as an inefficient strategy for population recovery or increasing hunter opportunity. Stocking birds is a common suggestion when populations are below what is expected or deemed acceptable levels. This comes from a misunderstanding of how pheasants were initially established in Kansas, and misconceptions about management practices that other pheasant states employ. There have been significant reductions in habitat over the last 10-15 years which has impacted the number of pheasants that can be supported. However, despite losses in habitat, when conditions are good, we still see natural increases in the population as was observed this year on pre-season surveys and during harvest.

Releasing birds as a Population Recovery tool

- Releasing pen-raised pheasants has not been determined to be an effective method of increasing populations by the National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee (NWPTC).⁽¹⁾
- Research has shown that survival and reproductive rates of pen raised pheasants are not sufficient to add to the population.^(2,3,4)
- This position is supported by other non- governmental conservation organizations such as Pheasants Forever.⁽⁵⁾
- Release of pen-raised pheasants has the potential to negatively impact wild bird survival.^(2,6,7)
- No state Wildlife agency is currently releasing pheasants to establish or increase populations.⁽¹⁾
- KDWP maintained four upland bird hatcheries between 1905 and the late 1950's which were shut down because emerging research indicated that they were not achieving their intended purpose.
- Declines in pheasant populations correlate with declines in habitat, particularly through the loss of CRP acres, a decline in wheat acres, and a transition to chemical fallow.^(1,8,9,10,11,12,13)

Releasing birds to create Hunter Opportunity

- Hunters have a strong preference for wild birds for a variety of reasons (e.g. uniqueness of hunting opportunity, strength of flight by wild birds vs. released birds).

- Wild birds with DIY opportunity is a major attraction to many of our hunters.
- Some states release birds to provide opportunities, typically where opportunities for wild birds have become limited or no longer exist. ^(NWPTC)
- Kansas annually ranks within the top 3-4 states in wild harvest (10 Yr avg ~330,000/YR).
- No state harvesting as many wild pheasants as Kansas releases pheasants. ^(NWPTC)
- The creation of a stamp to hunt released pheasants has been controversial and met stiff resistance in other states. ⁽¹⁴⁾
- The cost of release programs far exceeds the revenue from stamps. ^(14, NWPTC)
- Harvest efficiency estimates range from 10-50% resulting in estimated costs of between \$50-\$400 per harvested rooster. ^(14, NWPTC)
- Using these estimates, the cost to increase Kansas harvest by 10,000 birds would be between \$500,000 - \$4,000,000.
- There are currently over 280 licensed Controlled Shooting Areas (CSAs) in Kansas providing a service to individuals who want this opportunity. A state-run release program would directly compete with these businesses.

Extended 10-day Youth Season

- The current youth season for upland game birds is the first Saturday and Sunday in November.
- The proposed 10-day youth season within this bill would add 8 days to the current season, but those days would all be weekdays; the 3-weekdays prior to the current season and the 5-weekdays following the current season.
- While the Department is fully supportive of expanding youth opportunities, the addition of weekdays for school aged individuals does not provide much in the way of additional opportunity.

The Department respectfully urges the Committee to consider these concerns regarding the release of upland birds as a strategy towards population recovery or increasing hunter opportunities. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and stand ready to assist the Committee as needed.

Sincerely,



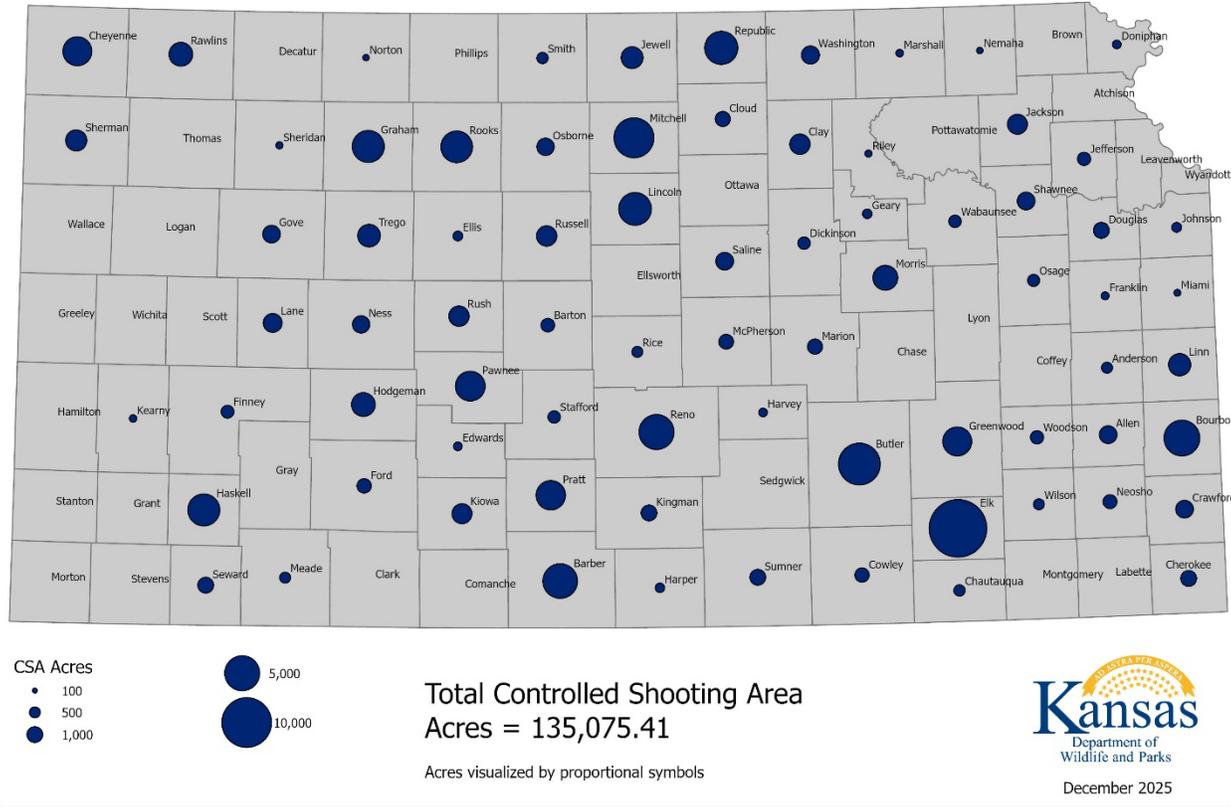
Christopher Kennedy, Secretary

Attachment 1: Citations

Attachment 2: CSA Map & Stats

1. National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee. 2021. National wild pheasant conservation plan. Second edition. J. S. Taylor (ed.). Agencies of the National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan and Partnerships
2. Leif, A. P. 1994. Survival and reproduction of wild and Pen-Reared Ring-necked Pheasant hens. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 58:501-506.
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5. Pheasants Forever. 2025. Pheasant stocking:An ineffective management tool. <https://www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/Pheasant-Facts/Pheasant-Stocking.aspx>
6. Dwight, I.A., Coates, P.S., Stoute, S.T. and Pitesky, M.E., 2022. Health surveillance of a potential bridge host: Pathogen exposure risks posed to avian populations augmented with captive-bred pheasants. *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases*, 69:1095-1107.
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8. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2021. Conservation Reserve Program statistics. Farm Service Agency. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/reports-and-statistics/conservation-reserve-program-statistics/index>.
9. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2021. Quick Stats. National Agricultural Statistics Service. <https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/>.
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11. Snyder, W.D., 1984. Ring-necked pheasant nesting ecology and wheat farming on the high plains. *The Journal of wildlife management* 48:878-888.
12. Godar, A., Piernicky, A., Haukos, D. and Prendergast, J., 2023. Ring-Necked Pheasant Brood Habitat Selection and Movements in an Intensive Agricultural Landscape. *Prairie Naturalist*, 55, pp.107-123.
13. Taylor, J.S., Bogenschutz, T.R. and Clark, W.R., 2018. Pheasant responses to US cropland conversion programs: a review and recommendations. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 42:184-194.
14. Gregg, I. 2023. Pennsylvania Game Commission: pheasant Propagation report.

Controlled Shooting Area Acres by County



For the 2024-2025 reporting season:

- Reported Pheasants Released: 375,755
- Reported Pheasants Take: 192,719
- Reported Quail Released: 69,317
- Reported Quail Take: 27,875
- Reported Chukar Released: 50,831
- Reported Chukar Take: 27,016
- Reported Hun Partridge Released: 3,348
- Reported Hun Partridge Take: 2,376