



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS KANSAS

To: House Committee on Federal and State Affairs, Rep. Tom Kessler, Chair

From: Marshal Loftus, Kansas Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Date: February 17, 2025

Re: HB2279- An Act concerning rules and regulations; exempting the department of wildlife and parks from the implementation and compliance cost restriction

Chairman Kessler and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide supporting testimony to HB2279. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) is known as the sportsmen's voice for our public lands, waters and wildlife. The Kansas Chapter of BHA seeks to ensure our outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting through education and hard work. We perform numerous service projects every year to improve our publicly owned lands, and to increase opportunities to hunting and fishing access in any way we can.

KDWP is unlike other state agencies

Unlike any other state agency in Kansas, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is a fee-funded agency with its funding coming primarily from license and permit fees. Additionally, funding is provided by federal matching dollars through the Pitman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, as well as other grants and programs. In other words, this agency, unlike others, is funded by its constituents, not general taxpayer dollars. Current statute created by passage of HB2648 in 2024 places a limit of \$1 million over the first 5 years on implementation and compliance costs resulting from regulation changes. This very low threshold severely impedes the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Park's ability to perform its most basic responsibilities to the citizens of Kansas and those who come to recreate here. Passage of HB2279 would provide KDWP the opportunity to return to its mission *"To conserve and enhance Kansas' wildlife and its habitats, ensuring current and future generations appreciate and enjoy these living resources and associated recreation, while informing the public of the status of Kansas' natural resources, gaining understanding and supporting achieving this mission."*

The economic impact of regulation changes is very difficult to accurately assess. Impact on the agency may be easier to identify, but impact on constituents and the larger public is speculative at best. There are often economic impacts for failure to pass some regulations that may be more severe, especially in the long term. There can be very positive economic outcomes that are difficult to envision at the initiation of regulation changes. The current situation does not account for that situation in any way.



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Current statute does not contain any mechanism to adjust for inflation.

KDWP has historically been slow to increase fees for hunting, fishing, camping and other fees. The last significant fee adjustments were made in 2012. Without passage of HB2297, the agency will work indefinitely into the future with 2012 era fees in place and fall even further behind as inflation continues onward. Many of our license fees in Kansas are already at their fee cap, but with the passage of HB 2468 in 2024 KDWP is now unable to adjust fees even within the fee caps set by statute. This could have wide ranging impacts into the future.

KDWP needs the ability to act quickly when necessary to adapt to changes in wildlife populations due to disease, human behavior or natural disaster. A struggling wildlife population may not have time to wait for an economic impact study to be completed. The current limitations imposed by HB2648 do not allow staff and the Commission to adjust permit numbers as needed to maintain wildlife populations. This may lead to the potential of excess harvest and a reduction of population numbers to the point that there will no longer be huntable numbers. Consequently, resident and non-resident hunters alike would no longer be spending their money on equipment, supplies, lodging, and other services that support their hunting endeavors. Thus, there is still an economic impact, it is just more severe, less amenable to recovery and further down the road than the short-term view of implementation costs.

Necessity of passage of HB2279

The current limitation on implementation and compliance costs limits KDWP's ability to perform its statutorily assigned tasks. However, and much more importantly to us, it significantly degrades the quality of life that we seek as residents of Kansas. We ask that you support passage of HB2279 on behalf of your constituents whose enjoy camping, hunting, fishing, and all other forms of outdoor recreation in Kansas.

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