

## ***Kansas Farm Bureau Statement***

### **Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan** **House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**

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**Submitted by:**

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Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony concerning the development of the Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan. I am Steve Swaffar, Director of Natural Resources for the Kansas Farm Bureau.

The economy and ecology of the Flint Hills region is directly tied to the ability to burn old growth thatch and young woody growth from the landscape. Livestock producers in the region depend on the new growth following a burn to provide nutritious forage for their livestock as well as maintain the diversity of grass and forbs species.

Burning of the Flint Hills region is also vital to maintain the prairie ecosystem. Burning promotes a diversity of grass and other broadleaf species, but more importantly prevents the invasion of woody and tree species from encroaching on the grass landscape. Our members are the practitioners of these fires and have a long history of managing the prairie for economic and ecological purposes.

As you are well aware, smoke generated from burning of the Flint Hills creates some temporary issues with air quality in local areas and some downwind metropolitan areas, primarily Kansas City, Wichita and the Omaha/Lincoln area. As you have already heard, these ozone air quality violations led to the development of the Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan.

KFB has been an active participant in the meetings with KDHE and EPA, data review and ultimately drafting of the plan. It has been an educational process for all involved but one that has yielded good results and a greater understanding of both rural and urban needs when it comes to prescribed burning.

KFB is pleased that the plan is voluntary in nature for ranchers and focuses on education, outreach and further data gathering. The key to implementation of the plan now is completing and fine tuning the models; putting in place the data

gathering infrastructure; and making ranchers aware of the new tools being developed for their use when making burning decisions. It is vitally important ranchers become aware of these tools and begin to use and understand what they mean.

KFB is committed to working with our members, K-State and KDHE to ensure the word gets to these ranchers. We understand it will take time for full adoption and hope both EPA and KDHE exercise patience with the process. Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the members of Kansas Farm Bureau. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at the appropriate time.