



The Wildlife Society The Kansas Chapter

Promoting Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship
Through Science and Education

The Kansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Position on Senate Substitute for Senate Bills No. 268 and 269

March 4, 2015

The Kansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society, representing a professional society of wildlife biologists, land managers, researchers and educators in the state of Kansas, respectfully opposes any progression of Senate Bills 268 or 269, the terms of which would (1) prohibit review of stream maintenance projects, as currently directed by Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (SB 268), and (2) set troubling precedent for selective assessment by state legislators of wildlife species candidacy for listing under the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (SB 269).

Senate Bill 268 specifically calls for the exemption of stream maintenance projects from review by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). Such reviews currently provide mitigation of potentially negative impacts to state-listed threatened and endangered species. Many wildlife species are dependent upon healthy riparian corridors (streams and their streamside habitats), which are restricted in their distribution across Kansas landscapes. The State's lists of threatened and endangered species are dominated by stream-dwelling aquatic species due to the past contamination and physical alterations of stream habitats. These species could be adversely affected by unregulated stream maintenance projects. Many terrestrial species (e.g., songbirds) are also dependent upon the unique habitats provided by riparian corridors.

Senate Bill 269 specifically calls for the delisting—and prohibition of future listing—of a single wildlife species (the eastern spotted skunk, *Spilogale putorius*) without regard to the biological knowledge of the status of the species within the State. Such a legislative action would circumvent the spirit of the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act which authorizes the responsibility of KDWPT to consult *biologists* in performing status assessments of wildlife species within the State. Given the facts that the Senate Bill 269 would set precedent for legislators, not biologists, to reduce the State's capacity to meet its public mandate of conserving declining wildlife populations and their habitats, further action on this measure should be halted.

It is the policy of The Wildlife Society to oppose activities that jeopardize populations of threatened and endangered species. The Society supports restoration of critical habitats by establishment of market-based strategies including tax incentives, conservation credits, safe harbor agreements and expanded use of Farm Bill conservation programs to assist and encourage voluntary private landowner actions contributing to recovery of at risk species.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society