

February 22, 2021

Natural Resources Committee Members
Nebraska State Legislature



RE: **Oppose LB469**, relating to appropriations; to state intent regarding appropriations to the Game and Parks Commission for wildlife conservation

Dear Natural Resources Committee,

The Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society (NETWS) respectfully submits testimony in **opposition of LB469**, relating to appropriations; to state intent regarding appropriations to the Game and Parks Commission for wildlife conservation, and request this letter be included in the public hearing record.

LB469 would strip critical wildlife conservation funding from the Game and Parks Commission (Commission). Requiring the Commission to reimburse property owners for damage caused by wildlife would divert conservation funding from its intended purpose. This bill does not specify the compensation source, but we assume no state general funds would be appropriated for this purpose. Wildlife conservation funding is matched to federal conservation funding, namely Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (PR) funds. Using those funds to pay for depredation would disqualify the Commission from receiving potentially millions of dollars of federal funding. A reduction of funding of this magnitude would cripple the Commission's ability to carry out its mission and serve the citizens of Nebraska.

Tools already exist to deal with property damage caused by wildlife. The Commission already works with property owners to mitigate damage from game species like deer, elk, and antelope through hunting permits to reduce numbers and/or issuing depredation permits to address localized problems. The majority of wildlife damage caused by game animals can be mitigated through trapping, hunting, or other permitted removal options.

Wildlife research funding would be crippled. NETWS advocates for using science-based wildlife management with wildlife research as the core of sound conservation decision and policy making. A reduction of Commission funding would result in less funding for research, hampering the Commission's ability to make the informed decisions the citizens of the state expect.

In closing, the members of NETWS **oppose LB469** because it would divert funds from wildlife conservation, result in job loss, hurt rural economies and landowners. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Shelly McPherron

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