



**The Wildlife Society**  
The Kansas Chapter

Promoting Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship through Science and Education

---

22 April 2025

Senators and Congressional Leaders,

On behalf of the Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society, an organization whose members are respected land managers, biologists, administrators, researchers, and educators in Kansas, we write to convey our frustration and deep concerns regarding recent and proposed actions by our current administration. Ongoing dismissal of Federal employees and drastic reductions in resources for Federal units have upended the livelihoods of Kansans (and their families) working in these fields and have the potential to negatively affect delivery of conservation and natural resources programs in the state. Many of these programs, as you already know, also benefit farmers and ranchers who work closely with our professionals to achieve shared goals in natural resources conservation in communities across the state.

For the past several weeks, Federal government employees working with farmers and ranchers to deliver conservation programs in Kansas have been under assault by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Rapid and seemingly arbitrary decisions by DOGE have resulted in thousands of layoffs, buyouts, and firings across the United States and Kansas communities are being directly affected. Many of our wildlife and natural resources professionals have been terminated, and those that remain are forced to work with few resources and the threat of their own termination. Kansas landowners have been working closely with federal agencies to implement conservation programs (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Water-Savings Commodity Program, Great Plains Grassland Initiative) on their farms and ranches. Many employees with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were unexpectedly (and likely illegally) fired a few weeks ago and the conservation easements/contracts they were working on were stopped or are now in limbo. Many Kansas landowners are now confused about where these contracts stand and questioning if they should complete work to satisfy conservation agreements. These partnerships have now been strained, and we are concerned that the success of these once-successful programs may be at risk.

The changes that DOGE have implemented have been drastic and are rapidly occurring throughout all Federal programs that support natural resources management in Kansas. For instance, programs that fund applied research that benefits Kansas landscapes and wildlife are now being threatened. Recent reports indicate that Congress is set to wipe clean the biological research program at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) which would have massive and rippling effects across the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), Kansas State University, partnerships with regional NGOs, and with our native wildlife resources. The USGS Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit is a nationally recognized research group that has been at the forefront of using applied research to inform management and conserve wildlife and natural resources across working landscapes in Kansas. If their partnerships with many groups in Kansas (e.g. KDWP, Kansas State University, The Nature Conservancy) were to cease, our efforts to conserve and manage iconic Kansas wildlife populations (e.g., lesser and greater prairie chicken, pheasants, wild turkey, mule deer) would be severely curtailed. Furthermore, strong working relationships with Kansas ranchers and farmers would also be threatened.

The impact of our Federal employees working in Kansas is not trivial. Federal employees from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USGS, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and others work closely in communities across the state. As you are already aware, unemployment in small Kansas communities can be devastating to local economies

and decisions by DOGE have not only negatively affected wildlife professionals working across Kansas, but they have also directly affected their families and the tight-knit communities in which they work. It is becoming increasingly difficult to complete our important conservation work here, and **we look to you to be our voice in Washington** to help restore and maintain our roles in enhancing natural resources in Kansas. Our Federal wildlife professionals have committed their lives and careers to public service in Kansas and are now faced with daily threats of termination and abandonment from the Federal government. Many of those who have already been affected are early career professionals who have just started their careers and families in Kansas communities.

We hope that you understand our concerns and appreciate the effects that recent firings and budget cuts will have on conservation and natural resources management in Kansas. If given the opportunity, we would welcome a chance to talk with you in more detail about these issues. Please help us ensure that our important work, and our steadfast collaborations with farmers, ranchers, and private landowners in Kansas, will not continue to be undermined by actions of DOGE and this administration.

Regards,

Drew Ricketts, President  
The Kansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society