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Investing in Conservation, Investing in Our Future

For many Kansans, natural resources pay the mortgage, keep the lights on, and feed their families. From agriculture to industry, our economy runs on land and water. Yet current conservation efforts are not enough to ensure a healthy and sustainable future.

35 other states have state-based conservation funds, and it's time for Kansas to join their ranks. **Vote yes on HB 2541.**

KANSANS FOR CONSERVATION

We are a coalition of diverse organizations working collaboratively to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for Kansas by focusing on water, land, outdoor recreation, and environmental education for Kansans.

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WORKING LANDS, WATER & WILDLIFE

Agriculture is the main function on nearly 90 percent of the land in Kansas, making ag production the state's largest economic sector and 6th in the nation. In a nutshell, agriculture represents the state's economy, history and culture, and Kansans for Conservation wants to keep it that way. An investment in protecting the soils and working lands represents an investment in the entire agricultural chain, from production to retailer. And healthy soils go hand-in-hand with clean water. Conserving and sustainably managing working lands and Kansas's water sources can be achieved in our lifetimes if we invest now.

Working lands are also critical to Kansas wildlife, which exists almost entirely on private lands. Voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs for farmers and ranchers are the backbone of wildlife habitat and deserve sustained financial commitment.

PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Children deserve outdoor spaces to run, play and interact with nature for their physical and mental health. Investing in infrastructure like parks, trails and natural areas also attracts business to communities and provides safe places for families to recreate. Safeguarding these environmental and outdoor learning experiences is critical to the success of our state's long-term conservation efforts.

Outdoor recreation is also critical to Kansans' bottom line. Every year people from far and wide visit to hunt, fish, hike, bike and boat any number of publicly accessible venues. All told, outdoor recreation in the state generates \$1.8 billion from consumer spending, another \$481 million in state and local taxes, and supports 71,000 jobs. Whether camping under the stars, hunting upland game and waterfowl or fishing on its many lakes, Kansas is a sight to behold that keeps people coming back.



KANSANS
for conservation

Supporting A State Conservation Fund

There is widespread support for state conservation funding by Kansans from all walks of life. Most Kansans agree that too little money is spent on conservation. They solidly support increasing state funding for conservation, and this view is expressed throughout the state and across party lines.

Our neighboring states have significant conservation funding, making them more competitive than Kansas. Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma have all made long-term financial commitments to their residents' quality of life with better stewardship of the state's water, land, and outdoor heritage. It's time for Kansas to do the same.

Kansas is losing millions in federal funding for land and water conservation. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides nearly a billion dollars to states every year—but it is only available when matched by non-federal sources. Without a dedicated state conservation fund, Kansas has received \$102 million less than the average of our neighbors.

There's no time to wait. We need only look to the disappearing prairies and farmers struggling with declining soil health. It will take both nature-based and engineered solutions, along with an investment in our conservation legacy, to recover. **Please vote yes on HB 2541.**

Coalition Members



Kansans for Conservation Coalition FAQs

January 18, 2024

[Is a state conservation fund just a plan for the government to grab land?](#)

The bill, as written, allocates half of all funds to private, working lands conservation. While the bill allows for funds to be used by towns, counties, and other entities to purchase land from willing sellers, the State of Kansas is held to an existing requirement of legislative approval for any acquisition over 160 acres.

[What about conservation easements?](#)

Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements that provide benefits for landowners and the public. The use of conservation easements is an effective strategy to safeguard Kansas' native prairies while also preserving its agricultural heritage and economic base. Conservation easements do not take land out of private ownership or grant access to the government.

The bill to establish a state conservation fund, as written, would allow for the purchase of conservation easements. Conservation easements are tools used by many of the coalition members to preserve Kansas prairie and ranching heritage. We would be happy to connect you with staff from one of land trusts if you would like more information about conservation easements.

[Will a state conservation fund take money away from economic development initiatives or other state-funded priorities?](#)

No. A state conservation fund would not divert money from other state-funded priorities. The bill, as currently written, allows the transfer of funds from three sources—lottery revenue, sporting goods tax, and sports gambling revenue to the state conservation fund.

- Lottery money would be transferred from the lottery prize fund and not take any revenue away from programs that already receive lottery transfers.
- The sporting good tax transfer is a relatively small transfer from the state general fund.
- Sports gambling revenue is currently underutilized with the “attracting professional sports to Kansas fund.” Transferring some of this money to a state conservation fund does not take revenue away from any other programs.

To administer the state conservation fund, this bill maximizes the use of existing government structures and programs with funding for only “relevant and necessary expenditures.” We anticipate that, at most, just 1 or 2 full time employees would be added to administer the grants.

[What about endangered species?](#)

Threatened and endangered species protections at both the state and federal levels are critical for conserving rare plants and animals. At their heart, they aim to recover species. No one wants to see a species listed because that means we are already failing to conserve it. Once a species is listed, it is most important to focus on what can be done to recover it. The state conservation fund could be used for both voluntary, proactive measures that prevent the listing of at-risk species and for recovery efforts.

