



The Nature Conservancy in Kansas
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February 14, 2022

RE: House Bill 2686 Creating the Kansas Department of Water and Environment

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on Water,

The Nature Conservancy in Kansas is in support of House Bill 2686. We believe the creation of the Kansas Department of Water and Environment as described in this bill would provide more streamlined processes to administer water policy and environmental monitoring, including the State Water Plan. It is important to protect our water resources and all those who rely on them, for drinking, recreation, agriculture, industry, and other uses. Therefore, we support the concept of consolidated water administration.

We would urge lawmakers *not* to use this opportunity to reduce labor and revenue. The agencies that will be consolidated under this bill employ many talented public servants who are assets to our state. This bill provides an opportunity for them to continue their work for the state of Kansas, and address issues that they previously may not have had the capacity to address. Similarly, all appropriated fiscal resources should follow the agency into the new Kansas Department of Water and Environment. The state of Kansas must address our water quality and quantity issues to ensure a bright future, and success depends on people and financial resources.

Finally, we recommend that the water and environment maintenance board as described in the bill include adequate representation from all sectors, including the environment and science sectors.

Sincerely,

Rob Manes,

State Director

The Nature Conservancy in Kansas

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