

**To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Senator Virgil Peck,
Chair**

From: Justin Cobb, The Nature Conservancy

Date: January 24th, 2024

**RE: SB 347 – Requiring senate confirmation of wildlife and parks commission
appointees**

Chairman Peck and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on SB 347. The Nature Conservancy in Kansas is a conservation nonprofit with a mission of conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We manage over 60,000 acres across 10 counties and have a conservation impact on an additional 100,000 acres across the state. The Nature Conservancy is a staunch supporter of hunting, fishing, and trapping as a preferred method of managing wildlife populations. Recently, The Nature Conservancy's 10,086 acre Sandhills Ranch, located between Dodge City and Greensburg, was enrolled into the state's Walk-In Hunting Access program for this purpose.

The Wildlife and Parks Commission is a nonpartisan, seven-member board that cannot have more than four members of any political party. Central to both the mission of the Wildlife and Parks Commission and section 21 of the Kansas Bill of Rights is the proper and reasonable management of wildlife to preserve healthy populations and recreation opportunities for future generations. Therefore, the regulatory decisions of this body must be informed by science and in pursuit of outcomes that benefit wildlife as a shared resource owned by all Kansans.

Although it is not unusual across the country for wildlife commissioners to require Senate confirmation, a significant number of states require experience or education in non-consumptive recreation, wildlife conservation, or a related field. If the committee deems it necessary to add additional requirements to the appointments of Wildlife and Parks commissioners, it is the recommendation of The Nature Conservancy that such objective criteria be considered, instead of political confirmation, to better support the fulfillment of section 21 and proper wildlife management.