

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Joann Freeborn at 3:30 p.m. on April 02, 2002 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Clay Aurand - excused
Representative Vaughn Flora - excused
Representative Bruce Larkin - excused
Representative Bill Light - excused
Representative Dennis McKinney - excused
Representative Don Myers - excused
Representative Jeff Peterson - excused
Representative Daniel Thimesch - excused

Committee staff present: Emalene Correll, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Raney Gilliland, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mary Ann Graham, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Mike Hayden, Secretary, Kansas Department Wildlife and Parks, 502 Landon Office Building, 900 SW Jackson, Topeka, KS 66612
Lance Hedges, District Wildlife Biologist, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Mound City District Office, Courthouse, 315 Main Street, Mound City, KS 66056

Others attending: See Attached Sheet

Chairperson Joann Freeborn called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. She welcomed Representative Melany Barnes attending today's committee meeting and stated that she believes today's topic on Quail Population is not only important to hunters but also to tourism and to the state's wildlife program in general.

Secretary Mike Hayden, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, was welcomed. Mr. Hayden addressed the committee on the decline in the bird population, not only in quail, but also in other bird species such as pheasant and prairie chickens. Last year the quail population was the lowest on record, which he believes is a very real and serious problem. If we lose the quail and pheasant population not only will it have an environmental effect but also a tremendous economical effect. He believes our society, as a whole, benefits when we have a flourishing crop of birds. He introduced Lance Hedges, District Wildlife Biologist, with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

The Chairperson welcomed Lance Hedges to the committee. He briefed the committee on the Quail Initiative for Southeast Kansas with the use of over head slides. Mr. Hedges believes the initial problem with the decline of quail population is habitat. A new program which has been in effect for a little over a year is designed to improve quail habitat and also benefit landowners in Allen, Bourbon, Crawford, and Neosho counties. The Southeast Kansas Quail Working Group, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, is offering up to \$2,000 annually per cooperator as incentive payments or cost-share payments for creating and enhancing habitat beneficial to quail. All habitat improvements must be designated in a written quail (wildlife) management plan prepared by the district wildlife biologist for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Plans may be prepared by private consultants, Natural Resources Conservation Office or others, but must be approved by KDWP before a contract is initiated. Habitat improvements eligible for payment are: replacing fescue; establishing prairie vegetation; hedgerow renovation; strip discing; early burning of native grass; establishing food plots or leaving some grain unharvested; establishment of shrubs; prescribed livestock management; livestock exclusion from borders and odd areas; and use of conservation headlands (a narrow field perimeter area left uncultivated and free of pesticides). (See attachment 1)

A copy of "A Turkey Tall Tale" was distributed, addressing rumors concerning turkeys being a predator of quail. Roger Wells, a native Kansan, an avid quail hunter and trained biologist who is the National Habitat Coordinator for Quail Unlimited, refers to an ongoing study at the Tall Timbers Research Station near Tallahassee, Florida. There biologists have studied more than 400 wild quail nests and their resulting broods.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, Room 231-N of the Capitol
at 3:30 p.m. on April 02, 2002.

The team used tiny video cameras placed at nest sites and placed small radio transmitters on adult birds, then followed them as they led young broods around. Through the years they documented some high rates of egg and chick predation by everything from foxes to fire ants. They learned that snakes, raccoons and armadillos are the three most common types of nest predators. In all their years of study, turkeys were never found to be predators of quail. The decline of Kansas quail can probably be blamed on a number of factors; the unusually hard winter of 2000-01, dismal hatching conditions several years running, diminishing habitat and increasing numbers of natural predators. (See attachment 2) Discussion and committee questions followed.

The Chairperson thanked Secretary Hayden and Mr. Hedges for their presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next meeting has not been scheduled.