



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

**From: Sarah Hill-Nelson
The Bowersock Mills & Power Company**

Date: January 22nd, 2024

RE: HB 2541 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of a State Conservation Bill from The Bowersock Mills & Power Company (BMPC), a hydroelectric power plant located on the Kansas River in Lawrence. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of the Conservation Bill.

As the operator of a hydroelectric power plant that depends upon sufficient water in the Kansas River, BMPC supports state efforts to protect water throughout the state of Kansas. Water is the single most important resource of the State of Kansas, and maintaining clean and sufficient water supply relies on the proper management of natural resources throughout the state. As an agricultural state, there are no investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas than protecting our land and water. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state is failing to provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

As of 2024, Bowersock has been generating hydropower on the Kansas River for 150 years, starting with mechanical power in 1874. We are a private business that relies on the state to protect its most valuable resource – water, and our vested right to make beneficial use of that water to generate electricity. In addition to generating clean hydroelectric power, the Bowersock Project also creates a pool of water for the Kaw River Water Treatment Plant, which supplies approximately 50% of the water for the City of Lawrence on a daily basis.

A state conservation fund would not only allow Kansas to access federal dollars for protection of our resources, but would provide funding for farmers and ranchers to protect their land and the water that runs through it. As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support the Kansas Conservation Bill.

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