



PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HB 2302
Mike Bulk, Kansas Ducks Unlimited Volunteer State Policy Chair
Kansas House Committee on Water
February 14, 2023

Good morning Chairman Minnix and members of the Committee. My name is Mike Bulk and I am a Ducks Unlimited volunteer from Sabetha, Kansas. I have been involved with Ducks Unlimited for over 20 years, currently serving as the State Policy Chair and also on the National Public Policy Committee. I'm here today to testify in support of HB 2302 on behalf of our nearly 14,000 Kansas DU members and over 650,000 members nationwide.

Ducks Unlimited is a science-based conservation organization working to protect wetlands for waterfowl, wildlife and people. Through voluntary incentive-based programs, we've worked hand in hand with Kansas landowners to conserve habitat and improve working farms and ranches. Ducks Unlimited is an active member of the Kansans for Conservation Coalition, which has long supported state-based conservation funding. For over 80 years, water has been at the heart of everything we do, and this is particularly true during the past few years in Kansas.

Ducks Unlimited has assisted in restoring, conserving, managing and protecting over 2,600 playa lake acres and over 5,000 upland acres in western Kansas, and this is just the beginning. Why is this important? Playa lakes are the main source of recharge to the Ogallala Aquifer. DU's efforts in the Playa lakes have contributed over 212 million gallons of cleaner water annually to the Ogallala Aquifer. These areas are an oasis for wildlife and are also the most biodiverse landscape in western Kansas, providing abundant recreational opportunities.

We are also partners in the Groundwater Recharge and Sustainability Project (GRASP) in Greeley and Wichita counties. This project, funded through the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), will help landowners voluntarily restore playas near municipal and domestic wells, improve irrigation efficiency, reduce pumping, retire wells, and transition to

dryland cropping systems. DU contributions include direct work with landowners through outreach, application delivery, project planning, and delivery of the projects.

In Eastern Kansas, DU is working with the City of Wellington, KDHE, EPA, and KDWP on a wetlands project to treat runoff into Wellington Lake. Once restored, enhanced, and managed, this property will have functioning wetlands that will improve the water quality at Wellington Lake, the city's primary, but degraded, water source.

For generations, landowners and residents of our state have struggled with too much, not enough, or unclean water. Recognizing these ongoing struggles, Ducks Unlimited recently kicked off the Kansas Water Initiative, a habitat delivery and fundraising endeavor focused specifically on the Sunflower State that aims to alleviate several of those water problems. The Kansas Water Initiative focuses on more than just waterfowl habitat – projects funded through this new effort will improve water quality and quantity, mitigate floods, and deliver win-win scenarios for farmers, ranchers, and other landowners across the state. What's more, the program aims to deliver custom solutions because water needs vary so much across Kansas.

DU applauds the Committee's efforts in HB 2302, which is an unprecedented commitment of resources to one of the state's most concerning issues. We want to be a resource for the Kansas Legislature as it considers options for addressing the state's water issues, and encourage the Committee to pass HB 2302. Ducks Unlimited also supports the proposed amendment to encourage collaboration with non-profits, and the inclusion of natural infrastructure solutions. Thank you for your time – I'd be happy to answer any questions.