

**Testimony in Support of HB 2479  
An Act Relating to the Possession of Ornate Box Turtles  
To  
The House Committee on Agriculture**

**By Brad Loveless, Secretary  
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks**

**January 27, 2022**

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks supports HB 2479 and the idea that Ornate Box Turtles need more protection over time to sustain their population in Kansas. We appreciate Rep Gartner and cosponsoring legislators' efforts to help this iconic species which is our state reptile. As the agency charged with promoting conservation of this species along with all of Kansas' wildlife, we are concerned about declines for this species as well as many others. While we believe that the current allowance of 5 of these turtles is not a cause of declines, we agree that it's prudent to decrease this to a smaller number, such as 1 or 2. This would still allow for casual use and the positive education that follows but would prevent an allowed accumulation of these that might be a precursor to illegal sale.

KDWP suggests this initiative move to the Kansas Nongame Wildlife Action Committee, a broad stakeholder group that includes KDWP, academics, zoos, conservation and agricultural NGOs. This open group makes recommendations about protections for the State's nongame species that are passed on to the KDWP Commission for regulatory rulemaking, a minimum 3 step process of open meetings culminating with a commission vote after all interested groups have had a chance for input. We have commission meetings scheduled for March, April and June 2022, so regulatory changes could potentially be voted on at the June meeting.

KDWP greatly appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the legislature to conserve this and other Kansas nongame species.