

March 20, 2017

House Committee on Agriculture
Representative Kyle Hoffman, Chair

A statement in support of SB 117, a bill adding wild blackberry plants to the county option noxious weed list (written testimony only)

My name is Daniel Mushrush and I am a third generation rancher in the Flint Hills located in Chase County. I am writing you to express my support of SB 117 which would allow counties impacted by wild blackberries to add them to their noxious weed list.

I would like to share my personal experience with these weeds as they encroach in the Flint Hills region. We first noticed them along the Cottonwood River several years ago, likely brought in by wildlife. We expected them to be brought under control by spring burns which are our regions way of controlling woody species and other noxious weeds such as the Eastern Red Cedar. We learned, however, that the opposite was true and by removing the old canes, blackberries actually thrive after a burn. Several canes could become a several hundred square foot bramble that choked out native bluestem grasses and forced away cattle. "Normal" chemical treatments have also proven to be ineffective because of the same rhizome that protects it from burning. Even the right application of the correct chemical will take multiple years to get every cane.

As a rancher I care for the land. It represents my livelihood today but more importantly my children's prospects for the future. The ecosystem of the Flint Hills is well known in our state and is something of which to be proud of. I can honestly testify that if I had to choose between blackberries and our better known noxious weeds of Eastern Red Cedars and sericea lespedeza, wild blackberries are without a doubt more difficult to control and are more readily spread by wildlife. Even now a trained eye can see several large brambles alongside the Scenic Byway between Council Grove and Manhattan. Allowing affected counties to declare wild blackberries a noxious weed will certainly not be an overnight remedy but it will be a start in a long fight to get in front of this invasive and destructive weed.

Regards,

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