

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dan Johnson at 3:30 p.m. on March 10, 2004, in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative John Faber- excused  
Representative Bruce Larkin- excused

Committee staff present:

Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department  
Gordon Self, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Kay Scarlett, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Patricia Mehlhop, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior  
Dr. George Ham, Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture and Interim Director of K-State Research and Extension at Kansas State University

Others attending:

See attached list.

Patricia Mehlhop, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, addressed the committee answering prepared questions concerning the possible listing of the black-tailed prairie dog under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The black-tailed prairie dog is currently a candidate for listing as threatened with a listing priority of 8 on a scale of 1 to 12, with 1 being the highest priority. The priority rankings are based on the magnitude and immediacy of threats to the species. The prairie dog has had a listing priority of 8 since it was put on the candidate list in February, 2000. Unless there is a sudden change in the magnitude or immediacy of the threats to the black-tailed prairie dog, the Service does not anticipate proposing it for listing in the near future. If the prairie dog is listed, the Service will move forward with addressing critical habitat, including on private lands.

In reviewing **HB 2027**, as amended in the Senate, and now in Conference Committee, Ms. Mehlhop reported that if passed and enforced with the current language, it would not substantially change the threats to black-tailed prairie dogs in Kansas and thus, would not by itself change their assessment of the need to list the species. Passage and enforcement of **HB 2027** does not pose threats beyond what currently exists. She stated that what could decrease threats to the species in Kansas, is the addition of language that was struck from **HB 2027** that addresses management, as well as control. This is the version of the bill that passed the House in the 2003 legislative session. (Attachment 1)

Dr. George Ham, Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture and Interim Director of K-State Research and Extension at Kansas State University, discussed the many accomplishments of K-State Research and Extension and implications of the FY 2005 budget on their programs. Although their research projects are funded through grants written and received by faculty, he explained that K-State Research and Extension relies on the State General Fund to provide a base of funding to maintain faculty and staff positions, plus minimal operating dollars to permit them to meet their research and extension mission. K-State Research and Extension needs the Legislature's help if they are going to survive and help make Kansas State University a leading land-grant institution as they meet their mission of teaching, research, and extension and providing "Knowledge for Life" to all citizens of Kansas. (Attachment 2)

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2004.