

Stafford County Kansas Business Owners
c/o Tammy Batten
PO Box 126
St. John, KS 67576

August 31, 2023

Martha Williams
Director, US Fish & Wildlife Service
1849 C street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Williams,

As business owners in the rural county of Stafford, Kansas, we request that you sincerely review accurate facts and data surrounding the 'impairment' filed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concerning the Quivira Natural Wildlife Refuge. The consequences of the impending actions by the Ks Dept of Agriculture-Division of Water Resources will devastate the economy of multiple central Kansas counties.

I think we can all agree that the laws of the land's intended purpose is for the protection of our society as a whole. That protection encompasses many facets, to name only a few:

- Providing a safe environment for us to raise our families in.
- Protection of the economy of our communities.
- Protection of the education of our young people.
- Protection of our families with adequate local health care.
- Protection of the wildlife in our communities.

Please consider the consequences for all the above if the proposed restrictions on irrigation in these central Kansas counties are enforced.

Agriculture is the most prevalent industry of rural Kansas communities, as it is for most rural communities across America. It is the life-blood of our rural economies. What will happen to these rural communities when their economies collapse? They will lose population, due to the lack of jobs! How many services will be lost? Rather than having thriving communities, will we not simply increase the number of 'Ghost Towns' in rural Kansas?

Everyone seems concerned about rising Food Prices. Will the severe reduction of farm production help bring these down or cause them to increase even more?

What will happen to our School Funding when the tax base is so dramatically dropped from irrigated land values to that of dryland? -- This will affect the funding of all Kansas schools not merely those located in these eight counties.

What will happen with the Health Care Services for our rural communities? As community businesses fail, the tax base will not only be decreased for our schools, but for our health care services as well.

What will the consequences be for the Wildlife if we seek solutions of better management rather than simply devastating the surrounding communities and farmland that support the wildlife? In previous years Refuge management always had the water needed to support the wildlife. They managed the water available and always had adequate water. Former Refuge management was dedicated to the care of wildlife and to the surrounding communities. While managing the

Rattlesnake Creek provided minimal water, but also when the creek flooded with an overabundance of water. That management considered both the water and wildlife in the Refuge, but also took care to protect the surrounding community and those communities far down-stream. While at the Refuge, those sincerely dedicated to the wildlife managed the water holding units to be assured of having adequate water in the fall for the migration season as opposed to current management which does not properly manage the holding units. Rather, they release the water to upgrade projects or simply because it is 'not needed now'. PLEASE examine the facts . . . Is this really a problem of the Refuge not receiving adequate water or is it simply a problem of poor stewardship of the water that the Rattlesnake Creek provides? Is the Refuge there for the benefit of only the waterfowl? What about the shore birds that thrive when the water levels are lower? What will be the long-term benefit of supplying the Refuge with additional water if the Refuge management does not utilize conservation measures to manage the water available to them? Without better management, will we not merely devastate our whole economy and local communities? To what end?

The question has been posed, "Was not the data used to formulate the 2016 water right restriction statement actually taken when Quivira wetlands had been drained for habitat improvement efforts? Observations by locals that live in the area near the Refuge have noted that in spite of the drought which has covered the Rattlesnake Basin for the previous four years, the Quivira Salt Marsh has been refilling on its own in early fall. The locals know it is the under-flow that is refilling the basin. Obviously, due to the drought the irrigation usage has been at peak levels – yet the basin has been recharging itself?!!! Those that have lived in the community for decades will attest to the fact that, "The flow of the Rattlesnake Creek has always been up and down. It has never had a consistent flow."

For years, the agricultural community has been required to implement better farming practices to conserve the water supply. We ask, what oversight and requirements have been placed on the Refuge management?

We all agree . . . we need to protect our ecosystem. Are not the people part of the ecosystem as well? GMD 5 along with others have been in negotiations with the Department of the Interior for several years. In 2019 the Department of the Interior agreed to a plan for supplementing the Wildlife Refuge and protecting our farm communities as well. May we please be given time to finalize a plan that works for the good of both the wildlife and the people in the surrounding communities?

From the Audubon of Kansas Mission Statement, "The mission . . . is to promote the enjoyment, understanding, protection and restoration of the state's natural ecosystems with a focus on birds, other wildlife, . . . for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity." Even they acknowledge in their mission statement that man is part of our ecosystem. Therefore, we ask you to sincerely consider: Is the enforcement of this action protecting or harming those our laws are intended to protect – all in our society, just everyday Americans working to provide for their families?

Thank you for your careful consideration of this urgent matter.

Stafford County Kansas Business Owners

Signatures of Concerned Business Owners / Managers is attached.

Honorable Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

*Letters went to
all of these as
well as to
Martha Williams*

Stephen D. Guertin
Deputy Director For Program Management and Policy
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Senator Jerry Moran
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Room 521
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Roger Marshall
Russell Senate Office Building
Suite 479A
2 Constitution Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002

US Congressman Ron Estes
7701 E. Kellogg, Ste. 510
Wichita, KS 67207

Secretary Mike Beam
Kansas Department of Agriculture
900 SW Jackson, Room 456
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Mr. Jeff Lanterman
Division of Water Resources - Stafford Field Office
300 S. Main Street
Stafford, KS 67578-1521

Mr. Matt Hogan
Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region
134 Union Blvd
Lakewood, CO 80228

Governor Laura Kelly
Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 241S
Topeka, KS 66612-1590

Representative Brett Fairchild
150 NW 40th St.
St. John, KS 67576

Senator Alicia Straub
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Accompanying this letter are signatures from owners / managers of the following Stafford County Businesses:

Paul's Oilfield Service	Keller Real Estate	Sunflower Trailer Sales
C & D Irrigation	Rockin' V Sales	Kanza Short Stop
Quality Storage	Wild at Heart Bees	Wild at Heart Habitat Serving
Stafford County Drug	Fisher Service Center	Triplet Automotive - NAPA
Triplet Automotive (NAPA)	The Petal Shop	Clark's Barber Shop
Angela's Mowing Service	AG 360 Insurance	Pueblo Nuevo Restaurant
St. John Lumber & Supply	Fisher Service Center	Wheatland Café
Jones Rental, LLC	The Frosty Bean	Clark Collision Center
Mawhirter Trucking, LLC	Newell Truck Repair	Central Kansas Outfitters
Main Street Market & Deli	Mid-Kansas Tire	Stafford Lumber Company
Minks Lawn Service	Burns Lawn Care	Curtis Crosson Agency
Hearn Cattle Co.	Joan's Café	Stafford County Flour Mills Co.
M&K Trucking	Sallee Masonry, Inc	Sallee Tree Service
Dickson Trucking, Inc	Rattle Snake Valley Body	S & S Tire, Inc
Raindrop Repair, Inc	Davis Electrical	Golden Belt Telephone (GBTA)
Mansel Concrete Construction	Norris Const. & Cabinets	Scentsy
SJN Bank of Kansas	Shear Madness by Lyndz, LLC	Minnis Chapel
3 K Customs	Eximious engineering, LLC	Jones Oil, LLC
Tiger Town Pizza	Kansas Dirt	Carol Long Pottery
John Falk Agency (Farm Bureau)	Thomas Garner, Inc	Equity Bank

*Copies of Signatures
from these businesses
were included*