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Distribution
KNRC Member Commissions
Affected non-member Counties
State & National Delegation

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Member Update

KNRC Activity Summary and Emerging Issues

The Kansas Natural Resource Coalition (KNRC) is a nationally recognized coalition of rural and urban county governments that has developed positive relationships with federal agencies at all levels. With a demonstrated record of influencing a broad range of natural resource policy issues, KNRC features deep research, excellent strategy, and targeted application of federal statutes, rules, and administrative procedures. Over the past eighteen months, some key KNRC activities include:

- [Submitted a comprehensive analysis with recommendations for reorganizing the federal government and eliminating redundant agencies](#) in response to Executive Order 13781 and OMB Memo M17-22. We are seeing KNRC's work bear fruit in emerging agency and congressional policy making.
- Between May and December 2017, KNRC contributed to the development of a startup sister organization called the Minnesota Natural Resource Coalition (MnNRC). KNRC staff and leadership participated in educational seminars, technical writing, informational workshops, and a March 2018 public meeting in Minnesota. Lessons were learned, but the initiative lacked local resources to continue or grow.
- In September 2017 KNRC [engaged USFWS on its failure to complete a statutory 12-month species status assessment \(SSA\) within the allowed timeframe for the Lesser prairie chicken \(LPC\)](#). Despite an [increase in LPC populations since an unsuccessful ESA listing attempt](#), USFWS has *still* not issued the required SSA finding. We anticipate the SSA to be issued in first quarter, 2019 along with initiating a second potential ESA listing.
- Represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, [KNRC filed a lawsuit against the Department of Interior, requesting federal courts to order USFWS to submit its Policy for Evaluating Conservation Efforts \(PECE\) to Congress](#) as required by the Congressional Review Act. We expect that a decision may be rendered in early December 2018.
- In July 2018 and aided by KNRC staff, member [Logan County requested that USFWS issue a funding moratorium on Black-footed ferret \(BFF\) studies and perform an audit of the BFF program](#). In August 2018 KNRC met with the Director of USFWS for positive discussions concerning the BFF, LPC, and other issues.
- In September 2018 USFWS initiated a species status assessment on the ESA-listed Arkansas River shiner. Critical habitat for Arkansas River shiner has been designated for several streams in KNRC member counties, and during the August 2018 meetings with USFWS, staff pointed out that because fish cannot live in streams that flow intermittently, the critical habitat designation needs revision. [We believe the SSA is a result of KNRCs request](#).
- In August 2018 KNRC leadership participated in meetings with White House and agency officials in Washington, DC. The relationships and outcome from these meetings were beneficial and will have long lasting policy results.
- In 2017 and early 2018, [KNRC performed research on Kansas rails to trails projects](#) and established a good working relationship with the federal Surface Transportation Board. In first quarter, 2019 KNRC staff plan to work with KNRC member Clark county to roll out a pilot program for engaging rails to trail sponsors. Results from that effort will be modified and published so programs can be monitored, and trail sponsors held accountable.
- KNRC will continue to monitor the [O' Pioneers! National Heritage Area \(NHA\) project](#), which is targeted to include approximately [100 counties in north-central Kansas and south-central Nebraska](#). Over time NHAs can pose land use, private property and tax base issues through imposition of management plans and slow-working regulatory actions.
- The 2018 general election resulted in a split legislative branch in Congress, with the Democrats having a majority in the House of Representatives. While most of KNRC's activities engage the executive branch, we will closely monitor how House committee and legislative actions may affect our activities and the agencies we engage. We will be prepared to respond as needed to maintain our effectiveness in engaging those agencies.
- Through effective fiscal management, KNRC was able to *reduce* the membership dues for 2019 by 5%.
- In 2019, KNRC will continue to build relationships with key administration and agency personnel. We plan positive engagement with USFWS on species issues, and Department of Interior through the PECE case. We will work with counties to develop rails to trails policies and hope to expand our membership through value demonstrations and effective use of resources. We will continue to proactively monitor agency, administration, judicial, and congressional activities, particularly as those activities that potentially impact Kansas counties.