

Thomas



County

300 N. Court
Colby, Kansas 67701

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Byron Sowers
Paul M. Steele
Ken Christiansen

Shelly Harms
County Clerk
460-4500
Fax: 460-4503

Donita Applebury
County Treasurer
460-4520
Fax: 460-4524

Andrea M. Wyrick
County Attorney
460-4580
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Maybelle Moore
Register of Deeds
460-4535
Fax: 460-4512

Mike Baughn
Sheriff
460-4570
Fax: 460-3877

Mary Cech
County Appraiser
460-4525
Fax: 460-4527

Clair L. Schrock
Road Supervisor
460-4562

Clair L. Schrock
Noxious Weed Director
460-4560

Larry Jumper
Landfill Supervisor
462-8139

Kasih Rothchild
Health Director
460-4596
Fax: 460-4595

Susan McMahan
Emergency
Management Director
460-4516

Ken Gatlin
EMS Director
460-4585
Fax: 460-4586

Resolution No. 2008-17

WHEREAS, Thomas County has asserted its coordination authority for purposes of requesting that all federal and state agencies having management duties regarding natural resources in Thomas County coordinate their planning process and determination of management actions with the County through early notification and continued dialogue,

WHEREAS, Thomas County expects such agencies to seek consistency with County policies which have been developed pursuant to federal and state statutes, and the 10th Amendment to the United States Constitution;

WHEREAS, Thomas County's natural resource policies have been and will be developed in the interests of protecting the health, safety and welfare of Thomas County residents, such concerns including, but not limited to, the economic stability and social cohesiveness of the County for benefit of its residents;

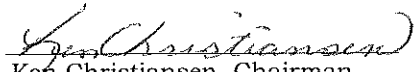
WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, including economic stability and social cohesiveness, of Thomas County residents requires development of policies consistent with the best interests of the County, and requires continual review and revision of such policies;

WHEREAS, the Thomas County Board of Commissioners has determined that pursuant to such review and revision process, the interests of the County require a policy revision;

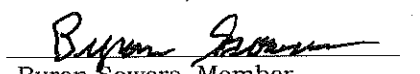
IT IS NOW RESOLVED THAT the natural resource policy of Thomas County shall be revised by adopting as policy that positions stated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in an official letter to United States Representative Jerry Moran, of Kansas First Congressional District, a copy of which is attached to this Resolution.

SIGNED AND DATED THIS 30TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 2008.

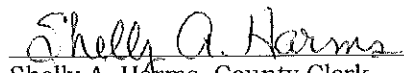
Board of County Commissioners
Thomas County, Kansas


Ken Christiansen, Chairman


Paul M. Steele, Member


Byron Sowers, Member

Attest:


Shelly A. Harms, County Clerk



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Kansas Field Office
2609 Anderson
Manhattan, Kansas 66502-2801

September 8, 2006

The Honorable Jerry Moran
U.S. House of Representatives
Attention: Mitchell Hall
Hays District Office
P.O. Box 249
Hays, Kansas 67601

Dear Representative Moran:

This is in reply to your August 31, 2006 letter requesting U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service response to an inquiry from State Representative Virginia Beamer regarding the potential reintroduction of the federally-listed endangered black-footed ferret to western Kansas. I appreciate the opportunity to explain the Service's interest in developing ferret recovery efforts in Kansas, and to address Representative Beamer's specific questions. I also want to provide some brief background of the history of ferret recovery.

The black-footed ferret is a highly endangered carnivore that is dependent on prairie dogs for survival and had a historical range spread over 12 western states, as well as portions of Canada and Mexico. Historically, Kansas was one of the most important states for the black-footed ferret, and more museum specimens are represented from Kansas than any other state. Black-footed ferrets became endangered through habitat loss, principally by conversion of native habitats to other uses, and by extensive prairie dog poisoning throughout much of the last century.

In 1987 the last remaining wild population of black-footed ferrets had been reduced by disease to 18 individuals in Wyoming. All were taken into captivity in a last ditch effort to save the species from extinction. From those 18 animals, well over 5,000 have been produced in captivity, and reintroduction efforts began in 1991. To date, ferret reintroductions have been attempted in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, and northern Chihuahua, Mexico with success in some areas and limited results in others.

One of the greatest obstacles to ferret recovery today is the presence of sylvatic plague, an exotic disease introduced to the western U.S. in the early 1900s and which is found through much of the prairie dog range. Plague is a devastating disease to both prairie dogs and ferrets. Almost all available large prairie dog complexes found throughout North America have been or are in the process of being planned for ferret recovery sites. There are few suitable complexes remaining that would readily support viable ferret populations; especially since much of the western areas and federal public lands have recurring episodes of plague. Plague has not been a problem in the eastern third of the black-tailed prairie dog range, an area that overlays portions of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Accordingly, the Service is very interested in developing recovery efforts in these states, including Kansas, and we know that working with private landowners will be crucial because there are no suitable

public lands for a ferret reintroduction currently in this state. The only potentially suitable public land in Kansas is Cimarron National Grassland in the far southwest corner of the state. However, plague has periodically occurred at Cimarron in recent years.

Our interest in attempting a reintroduction study in Logan County is to learn whether a viable population of ferrets can be established and maintained on smaller prairie dog colonies. Normally, traditional reintroduction sites are two to five times larger than those in Logan County. We hope the information we obtain during the study can be applied elsewhere in the historic range of the ferret. Logan County is an attractive site for the study because of willing landowners and no confirmed reports of plague.

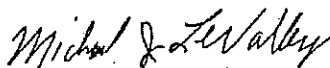
Reintroduction efforts will have to be developed with the full cooperation of these participating landowners and in a manner that will not inhibit the interests or uses of adjacent, non-participating private lands. If ferrets do disperse off of project lands, this will not impact the uses or management of surrounding lands, including lethal prairie dog control. We will allow for the "incidental" take of ferrets (e.g. road hazards, prairie dog control, agricultural practices, etc.). Only the intentional, direct killing of endangered ferrets would be illegal, such as shooting. We believe the risks to ferrets from secondary poisoning during prairie dog control efforts off of project lands will be low and not materially affect ferret recruitment and abundance on the release sites. We normally expect some loss of individual ferrets to predation, accidents, and other factors, but based on Service experience obtained during reintroduction projects on Tribal and Federal lands elsewhere in the Great Plains, these losses have not been limiting to ferret conservation. The Service is prepared to remove ferrets, subject to landowner permission, that disperse onto surrounding properties where they are not wanted. We are also prepared to terminate the study at any time during the 5-year term if problems arise that cannot be resolved. Examples of such problems would include plague outbreaks or unacceptable control and mitigation of dispersing prairie dogs onto neighboring lands where they are not desired.

While our efforts involve multiple partners including private landowners, other resource agencies, conservation organizations, and state universities, the Service is ultimately the authorizing agency for ferret recovery actions, and will make any decisions regarding when and where ferrets may be reintroduced. A decision to release ferrets in Logan County will be based on our ability to address the concerns of surrounding landowners who do not desire prairie dogs or ferrets. Those concerns must be addressed, otherwise the County Commission could invoke their right under state law to require control of prairie dogs on the reintroduction sites to a level that will not support a viable reintroduction trial.

The Service and our partners are working with surrounding landowners to see if common ground can be reached, and if so, where. I am confident we can avoid or mitigate effects on landowners who do not desire prairie dogs or ferrets on their lands. If we succeed, there will be tangible conservation benefits to the people of Kansas and the Nation, and significant progress made toward recovery goals for North America's rarest mammal.

Please contact me again if you have additional comments or questions regarding any of this information. Thank you for your time and interest in this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael J. LeValley
Field Supervisor

cc: Matt Kales, External Affairs