

The Board of Logan County Commissioners met for a special meeting on Friday, September 2, 2022 at the Russell Springs Road Department. The purpose of the special meeting was to invite Kansas Natural Resource Coalition (KNRC) to come talk about conservation easements. Those attending were Commissioners Cameron Edwards and Cody Younkin. Commissioner David Hubert was absent. Several landowners were also in attendance. Chairman Younkin called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Tracy Barton, from Kansas Natural Resource Coalition (KNRC), explained to the group how they are a coalition of counties that monitor and when appropriate, intervenes to reduce the impact of the federal governments overreach when it impacts counties in the areas of natural resources. KNRC works at a federal level with things that affect property rights and holds them accountable to follow their own rules.

Barton talked about the 30x30 land grab that President Biden issued an executive order on to attack the oil and gas industry. She said by the year 2030, the government wants to conserve or control 30% of lands and water in the United States. The way they can control property is through the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Natural Heritage Areas, conservation easements, national monuments and even CRP.

Discussion was then held regarding the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In June, Fish & Wildlife Services notified everyone through the federal registry that they want to make a rule change. Right now, Fish & Wildlife Services, is required when they find a species they think is threatened or endangered and they want to move it to a new location, it must be within the historical habitat. This rule change they are proposing, would lift the restriction within the historical habitat. Meaning they can take any type of animal that is endangered and move it wherever they want to if they think it will survive there. Barton gave a couple examples like the grizzly bears that fall under this category. They placed them in a couple places in Montana and Utah and it started out as experimental, but it's thrived there, so it's a stable population. So, what they will probably do is come in and label it as critical habitat. Once it's a critical habitat, that's when they bring in the rules for what you can use your property for and what you can't. They will control it through critical habitat. The great wolf in Alaska and Colorado is another example. Barton explained how this is not a good situation and that's why KNRC is working to try to stop this.

Barton then talked about conservation easements. She said they are popping up all over the State of Kansas and explained what easements are and the problems with them. Barton stated they are a legal agreement that permanently limits the

use of land in order to protect conservation values. She explained how they sell it to be really good deal, but they don't tell you how the agreement you are signing is going to last forever. It's a perpetual agreement and it is very difficult to get out of it. Barton read testimony from landowners this has happened to.

Commissioner Edwards then discussed what's happening in Logan County regarding ferrets and prairie dogs and what could take place going forward. Edwards explained how a Logan County Landowner approached the federal government and signed a Smoky Hill Safe Harbor Agreement that no one was notified, nor the proper procedures was followed. Edwards told the group that the Commissioners are trying to address this within the latitude of their authority as Commissioners. Everyone in attendance was fully supportive of the County Commissioners including potential litigation.

It was moved and seconded by Commissioners Edwards and Younkin respectively to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. Motion carried.

ATTEST: _____ APPROVED: _____