



Missouri Society of American Foresters

February 11, 2015

Hon. Tom Dempsey, President
Missouri Senate
Jefferson City, MO

Dear President Dempsey:

The Missouri Society of American Foresters (Missouri SAF), the organization representing over 200 professional foresters in Missouri, appreciates the opportunity to comment on SB337 that prohibits the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) from engaging in prohibited conduct with connected not-for-profits.

In 1937 the citizens of Missouri approved an amendment to the state constitution that created the Missouri Conservation Commission to manage the activities and approve all regulations promulgated by the Department. The goal was to keep politics out of conservation and let public opinion and research help guide the management of forests, fish and wildlife.

In the last seventy-eight years Missouri has seen tremendous improvements in its forest, fish, and wildlife resources. Wildlife and fish populations have rebounded from critically low numbers to healthy, huntable and fishable populations. The numbers of destructive wildfires has been greatly reduced, resulting in improved timber quality and wildlife habitat. Forests now occupy 15.4 million acres of Missouri's landscape and contribute \$8 billion to our economy, employing over 42,000 people.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the use of partnerships with non-profit conservation organizations. Partnerships engage thousands of citizens and accomplish conservation goals more efficiently. This is why Missouri SAF is opposed to SB337. Under this law, many forest and wildlife conservation partnerships, including the following, will be potentially declared illegal:

- Volunteer Fire Departments – cooperative agreements for fighting wildfires, conducting training, providing excess property equipment and grants
- National Arbor Day Foundation – Missouri has 85 Tree City USA communities
- ForestReLeaf – free/reduced price trees for planting on public property
- Forest and Woodland Association – private forest management outreach

- Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation – Stream Stewardship Trust Fund and grants for youth programs
- 4H and FFA – conservation field days and shooting sports
- Missouri Electric Cooperatives – cooperative agreements on right of way habitat management and electric cooperative property managed by the Department
- Missouri Stream Team Watershed Coalition – volunteer Stream Team program
- Conservation Federation of Missouri – Share the Harvest, Operation Forest Arson, Operation Game Thief, and grants for MO Archery in the Schools Program
- National Wild Turkey Federation, Quail Forever and Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation – private land habitat cost share, research, private land seed program, cooperative dove management fields and cooperative positions for private land assistance
- Ducks Unlimited – wetland restoration and enhancement efforts, research and cooperative positions for private land assistance
- Missouri Prairie Foundation – management of remnant prairies in SW Missouri
- Quality Deer Management Association – cooperative positions and private land focus areas for private land assistance
- Whitetails Unlimited and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – partnerships in youth programs such as the Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program
- River Relief – volunteer river clean up and outreach programs
- Midway USA Foundation – youth shooting sport programs to encourage youth shooting sports
- The Nature Conservancy – cooperative habitat restoration efforts on private and public land and wildlife restoration programs
- National Rifle Association – partnerships for public shooting ranges
- Ozark Regional Land Trust – habitat management efforts in the Ozarks
- Kauffman Foundation – assistance to the Anita Gorman Discovery Center in Kansas City
- Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts – cost-share, incentives and habitat equipment to private landowners, school field days
- Forest Park Forever and Friends of Forest Park – outreach programs, urban fishing, and habitat management in Forest Park
- Trout Unlimited – urban winter trout fishing program

Not only does SB337 threaten citizen-led conservation efforts in Missouri, it also appears to violate several articles of the Missouri (Article IV, Section 40(a) and Article I, Section 13) and US (Article I, Section 8 and Article 14, Section 1) Constitutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Hoss

National Society of American Foresters Board of Directors, District 9 Rep
Missouri Society of American Foresters - Historian