

# **Kansas Wildlife Federation**

## **2012 Resolution**

### **AGRICULTURE TILE DRAINAGE**

**Whereas**, the expansion of tile drainage is a significant factor in the direct loss of wetlands and the reduced habitat value of remaining wetlands through limiting water recharge of wetlands; and

**Whereas**, the loss of wetlands has significantly reduced habitat and feeding areas for a wide array of wildlife including migratory birds such as ducks; and

**Whereas**, the loss of wetlands, combined with the increased base flow caused by tile drainage, has led to reduced flood mitigation capacity, resulting in increased number and severity of floods, causing increasing damage to property and increased risk to human lives; and

**Whereas**, nutrient loss from agricultural lands plays a significant role in causing algae blooms which cause hypoxic death zones in major ecosystems, disrupting wildlife within and dependent upon such ecosystems; and

**Whereas**, declines in fish populations and water quality in bodies of water affected by hypoxia and algae blooms destroy outdoor recreation opportunities, fishing industries, property values, and Americans' enjoyment of natural spaces; and

**Whereas**, tile drainage has been shown to increase delivery of nitrogen to waterways, increasing algae blooms and hypoxia; and

**Whereas**, the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force, consisting of five federal agencies and 12 states and tribes within the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin, has recommended a minimum of 20% reduction in Mississippi riverine nitrogen loads to effectively reduce the size of hypoxic zone in the Gulf, and

**Whereas**, the cumulative impacts of continued expansion of tile drainage or widespread adoption of water control structures on tile drains are currently unknown and have the potential to drastically impact hydrology, wildlife habitat, and flood risk locally and down river, and

**Whereas**, buffers combined with improved natural soil drainage through the use of cover crops may be more socially efficient than tiling in the long run by reducing maintenance costs and various disaster and environmental spending while maintaining economically valuable ecological services and sustaining biodiversity, and

**Whereas**, cover crops, conservation tillage, and other agricultural production practices have been shown to help farmers manage water without negatively impacting wetlands or increasing river base flows, and in some cases increase crop production,

**Now, therefore, be it resolved**, that the Kansas Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting convened in February 25, 2012 in Salina, KS calls on the Administration and Congress to:

Require maps with GPS coordinates of tile locations for all new tile installations or replacement of existing tile;

Require full enforcement of Swampbuster, section 1221 of the Food Security Act (Farm Bill) of 1985, which prohibits farm program benefits on any wetland acres converted to agricultural production and expand conservation compliance requirements to all Farm Bill program benefits;

Require effective setbacks of new, replacement or reconditioned tile lines and tile line surface inlets from wetlands or from significant hydrologic recharge areas of wetlands, as determined by Natural Resources Conservation Service;

Conduct a thorough analysis of the hydrologic impact of tile drainage management control structures and management plans. If such studies show minimal or no hydrologic impact, government agencies must require water control structures on all new, replacement, or reconditioned tile lines as well as a prescriptive management regimen to ensure their effective use to achieve water and nutrient management results;

Declare that water retention areas created to temporarily store water removed via tile lines and/or water control structures may not be classified as wetlands for the purposes of financial assistance through federal programs or to qualify in wetland mitigation programs;

Provide education to agricultural producers on alternative water control options such as cover crops and tillage management techniques as a required step to a wetland determination;

Review all programs and procedures within USDA relating to tile drainage promotion and add information outlining the hydrologic and wildlife impact of tile drainage and alternative options for water management; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Kansas Wildlife Federation urges the National Wildlife Federation to adopt this resolution and call on the Administration and Congress to pursue its recommendations.