## **KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION**

## MAINTENANCE & RESTORATION OF STREAMSIDE HABITAT

**Whereas,** riparian forest buffers act to protect water quality for more than 134,400 miles of streams, creeks, and rivers in Kansas although Kansas is one of only ten states that does not have a single National Wild & Scenic River, and

Whereas, numerous wildlife species depend upon undisturbed native streamside habitat for all or part of their life cycle, streamsides are the most productive wildlife habitat in North America, and

**Whereas,** streamside forests are transitional zones between aquatic and upland ecosystems, they provide a unique mix of water, food, and cover that create a wide range of micro-habitats utilized by a wide variety of wildlife species, and

Whereas, streamside forests and their deep root systems act as filters, trapping pollutants found in surface runoff such as sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and bacteria before these pollutants reach the state's waterways, and

Whereas, soils below streamside forests generally have a greater ability to absorb water than row-crop agricultural and urban land; and, slowly release that water to the stream overtime, down-stream flooding is reduced, and

Whereas, tree trunks reduce water velocity during flooding, more water infiltrates the soil to recharge groundwater, and

Whereas, tree canopy along streams shades and cools the water, thereby maintaining healthy levels of dissolved oxygen that benefits many forms of aquatic life, and

Whereas, upland birds use woody cover along streams for thermal cover, and

Whereas, small mammals finding food and cover along streams attract predators like weasels & mink to streamside habitat, and

Whereas, large woody debris from the riparian tree canopy creates den sites, and attracts insects and small mammals that act as prey for larger creatures like bobcat, snakes, and raptors, and

Whereas, watersheds are damaged when a stream is channeled or straightened to control erosion, and

Whereas, trees along streams provide a unique form of aesthetics and beauty to the Kansas landscape, and

Whereas, riparian forests contain the most valuable tree species in Kansas making them economically valuable, and

Whereas, live riparian trees provide roosting sites for turkey; and, bald eagles use large Bur oaks, Sycamores, and Cottonwoods along stream & river banks, and

Whereas, streamside snags (standing dead trees) provide den and nesting sites for birds and

mammals (e.g. raccoons, squirrels, and bats); and, also provide suitable nesting sights for Great blue herons and Bald eagles, and

Whereas, insects that feed upon decaying dead wood from dead standing or fallen trees provide food for woodpeckers, nuthatches, brown creepers and other birds, and

Whereas, native trees and shrubs in arid areas or in agricultural areas support upland birds such as pheasants and turkeys; and, may be the single critical factor limiting bird populations in those arid areas, and

**Whereas,** many types of waterfowl also utilize riparian forests as well, such as Bufflehead, Wood Duck, Goldeneyes, and Mergansers, and

Whereas, tall grasses & forbs provide food and nesting cover for rabbits, deer and birds that can be damaged by over grazing, agricultural cultivation or flooding.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Kansas Wildlife Federation assembled during its annual meeting, February 21, 2015 in Hays, Kansas, make the following recommendations:

Restore aquatic habitat along damaged streamsides with plantings of native trees, shrubs, grasses & forbs, and

Properly manage riparian forests to maximize the benefits they provide, and

Recommend off-stream watering stations for livestock to prevent damage to streamside habitat and prevent water pollution due to soil erosion, and

Enforce legislation that makes it illegal to dispose of fracking water into streams & rivers, and

Avoid damage to watersheds resulting from stream channeling or straightening intended to control erosion, and

Eliminate needless and expensive mowing along streamsides since it destroys habitat, and

Installation of adequately large culverts for fish passage since flooding can wash fish out of their banks, and

Recommend a minimum of 50 feet of forested riparian buffers as circumstances warrant. Generally the buffer should be the average width of the canopy of a mature streamside tree such as a cottonwood or other likely trees, and

Encourage the use of CRP along streamsides to preserve riparian habitat, improve water quality, prevent erosion, provide forage and increase wildlife numbers, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Kansas Wildlife Federation provide this resolution to the Governor of the State of Kansas, the Chairperson and members of the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission, the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the State Forester of the Kansas Forest Service.