

ENGROSSED SENATE  
CONCURRENT  
RESOLUTION NO. 46

By: Gustafson, Price, Williams  
(Don), Shurden, Long  
(Lewis), Wilkerson and  
Williams (Penny) of the  
Senate

and

Pettigrew and Bonny of the  
House

A Concurrent Resolution requesting the Department of Wildlife Conservation to reconsider the decision to cease the production of bobwhite quail at the Darlington Game Farm; requesting the Department of Wildlife Conservation accomplish a new study of the hatchery; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, the Department of Wildlife Conservation has announced plans to cease production of bobwhite quail at the Darlington Game Farm. The Game Chief will ask the Commission at a future meeting to authorize the shutdown. The nine employees involved in the raising and distribution of quail may be terminated; and

WHEREAS, the hatchery, founded in 1931, produces quail which are distributed to sportsmen's clubs who support the Darlington Game Farm. At its peak, the hatchery produced as many as 150,000 quail per year. At full capacity, the hatchery could produce over 200,000 quail and 15,000 pheasants per year. In 1995, the hatchery produced 66,514 quail which were distributed to 135 sportsmen's clubs. None were placed on public hunting grounds. Approximately 35,000 quail eggs were given to 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) groups in 1995; and

WHEREAS, while a 1987 study indicated raising and releasing quail is not profitable, other current studies completed in 1992 and 1993 indicated the game bird population increased when hatchery birds were introduced. There are indications that the use of flight pens could improve the survivability rate of young birds and make the process more efficient and effective; and

WHEREAS, at one time Oklahoma was considered one of the premier quail hunting states in the union. However, the decline in the number of quail in Oklahoma is reflected in the decline in the number of hunters who purchase sportsmen gear, fuel, camping supplies, guns, ammunition and other items at local stores throughout the state. These items include the sale of bird dogs, veterinary care, training fences, dog food and other commodities and services which could disastrously decline should bird hunting continue its steady slide toward collapse. In 1987, there were 125,000 hunters who harvested more than 3.2 million quail. However, by 1994 the numbers declined to only 85,000 hunters and 2.2 million quail. The declining pattern is expected to be repeated in 1996. Yet the impact of the facility on the state economy has yet to be adequately measured; and

WHEREAS, there are 24 public hunting areas in the state managed and operated by the Wildlife Conservation Commission. If the Darlington Game Farm were fully producing to its maximum and using flight pens to prolong young bird survival, the appropriate public hunting areas throughout the state could be stocked with an abundance of quail, pheasants and other game birds which could mean an economic revitalization to this state as it regained its proper place of preeminence in the game bird hunting world; and

WHEREAS, there are periods during the year which are labor intensive and require additional personnel. Trustees from state correctional institutions could be given meaningful work which would benefit themselves as well as the entire State of Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, plans to close the hatchery also include termination of a records storage facility, a paint shop and a children's zoo which includes two of the last surviving prairie dog towns in the state, including the only white prairie dog town known to exist. All these facilities are located at the Darlington Game Farm; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, there were 2,710 school children who visited the game farm. Besides these, there were another 4,763 visitors from throughout the United States and five foreign countries. This count is from weekdays only. On weekends and holidays the farm is open to the public but no count is taken. Reader's Digest, the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Smithsonian Institute all recommend a visit to the farm in their respective tourist guides. Likewise, the area has many historical sites which would be of interest to the public if properly developed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 45TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the Department of Wildlife Conservation reconsider its decision to cease the production of bobwhite quail at the Darlington Game Farm.

THAT the Department of Wildlife Conservation accomplish a new study on the release of pen-raised quail and the effect of flight pens in increasing the survivability rate of young birds, the use of trustees from state correctional facilities during peak periods which require additional personnel, and the proper utilization of the area as a major tourist attraction.

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to the members of the Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Adopted by the Senate the 28th day of February, 1996.

President of the Senate

Adopted by the House of Representatives the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
1996.

Speaker of the House of  
Representatives