

**Opening Statement – Senator Inhofe**  
**Subcommittee Hearing – February 9, 2016**  
**“Federal Interactions with State Management of Fish and**  
**Wildlife”**

We meet today to discuss the federal government’s encroachment on state rights to manage fish and wildlife populations. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation dictates that fish and wildlife are for the non-commercial use of citizens and should be managed in a way that ensures they are available at the optimum population levels indefinitely. There is certainly a role for both the states and the federal government in this process.

In recent years, however, the federal government has expanded its role in both managing populations, and dictating how states should manage populations. Not only do states fund much of their conservation and management programs through local excise taxes, but they also have more on-the-ground expertise about local populations. Therefore, states should have a significant role in working with the federal government and the private sector to ensure the most sensible fish and wildlife management programs are adopted and implemented.

In Oklahoma, we have worked together with local landowners, businesses, and state agencies to develop a plan for the conservation of the lesser prairie chicken. The Five State Plan has worked. In fact, estimates show that population numbers for the lesser prairie chicken climbed by almost 25% between 2014 and 2015. This is just one of many examples of the strength and success of state management plans, when given the opportunity to thrive.

This hearing today explores the need to re-balance the relationship between federal and state governments. More directly, states must have more control over their fish and wildlife populations. I thank Senator Sullivan for holding this hearing today and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.