

of power boats, particularly airboats, traveling on rivers previously inaccessible to motorized craft. In effect, these motorized boats are able to enter those areas set aside for the protection of wildlife. If you ever, have ever witnessed the passing of one of these airboats, some of them equipped with airplane engines, I don't have to tell you how loud they are. There is simply no way they can pass by a group of birds resting on the river without unsettling them. For that matter, it is impossible for human beings anywhere in the vicinity who can ignore them either. In fact, most airboat operators themselves wear protective ear covering to prevent them from damaging their hearing. Allowing these boats unlimited access to refuge areas is inconsistent with the intent purpose of establishing these refuge areas. Refuge areas were established when the Legislature in the State of Nebraska recognized a desire on the part of the public to manage the waters of the state in a way that preserves recreational opportunities without harming the supply of food, habitat, and safety for wildlife. The designated wildlife refuge areas are not beneficial to wildlife as long as these motorized boats are allowed to continue to operate. Sportsman's groups and the Game and Parks Commission reported that there are fewer migratory birds stopping at the refuge areas. There is no doubt that the continued disturbance and harassment by airboat operators at least contributes to the decline of the migratory bird population. Committee amendments to the original LB 596 combines sections of 37-413 and 37-420 to ensure equal application of the violation provisions towards wildlife designations found in these sections. In addition, this amendment combines Section 37-414 and 37-421 so as to provide for an equal application of penalties to persons violating these provisions. The amendments to LB 235 would prohibit the use of motorized vessels only from October 15 through January 15 on a statutory game refuge established under Section 37-413 and 37-418. These are located on the Platte River from the western border of Dodge and Saunders County to the southern border of Douglas County. The area where the North and Platte South Rivers meet near North Platte, the portion of the North Platte River in Garden County and a portion of the Niobrara River along Holt and Boyd County border. Altogether there would be roughly 150 miles of river affected by this amendment. This is about 15 percent of the length of the Platte and Niobrara Rivers combined, and less than 1 percent of all rivers and streams in Nebraska. The prohibition would be in the effect for only three months of the year, so I don't believe there will be too great a restriction on recreational