

**Kansas House Agriculture Committee
Representative Kyle Hoffman, Chair
Representative John Willey, Secretary
Wednesday, March 7, 2018
3:30 pm, Room 582-N**

RE: Opposition to SB 331 - addition to the list of designated state parks the Flint Hills Trail State Park located in Miami, Franklin, Osage, Lyon, Morris, and Dickinson counties; and the Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park located in Logan County.

My name is Larry Patrick, and I'm a lifelong resident of Kansas. I grew up on a farm in McPherson County that has been in our family continuously since the 1870's. My current residence is in Wichita.

My opposition is to any of the rail-banked trails to be a part of the Kansas State Park system. This would include the Prairie Spirit Trail that recently received Kansas State Park designation. Please consider removing this trail from the Kansas State Park list.

As rail-banking evolved, the Surface Transportation Board's intention was for the trail sponsor to assume full managerial, financial, and legal responsibility for a right-of-way for which they applied. There are federal and state laws in place guiding the operation of trails. When trail sponsors realize they can't meet their obligations, they want the State of Kansas to bail them out.

My Concerns:

- 1) Trail groups have found out a small segment of the population is willing to volunteer to build the trail, finance the trail, maintain the trail according to Kansas Law, and now want the State of Kansas to finance what is required for them to complete. The only reason these trails seek Kansas State Park designation is to receive the funding and other support (KDWPT). Trail sponsors failed to raise the dollars through private funding or grants as was originally intended, and they failed to find the workforce necessary to build and maintain the trail.
- 2) The percentage of the population using these trails is extremely small. The trails might be good for avid off-road bicyclists, walkers, runners, etc., but for family outings to hike a long distance is not the target audience.
- 3) We have numerous Kansas State Parks already that have hiking/biking trails as part of recreation available in addition to many other activities including camping, boating, fishing, etc.
- 4) There is little to no measurable economic impact from trail use. Most people bring their own food/snacks/water and purchase little locally. They do not fill the motels and restaurants.
- 5) By providing the Flint Hills Trail, a Kansas State Park designation, the fiscal note indicates over a half million dollars is necessary for operation. Does that include all the mowing, weed control, culvert and bridge repair, etc. that comes with the care of the trail? Who will provide the safety, medical emergency, fire, and law enforcement services that have not been factored into the equation? **Please do not commit Kansas to another liability during difficult budget times. Spend our money wisely to benefit more Kansans and on projects that preserve landscapes unique to our environment.**
- 6) Once you add this trail to the list of Kansas State Parks, you can expect all the other trail groups in the state to come with their hands open. How and why will you turn them down then?

Regarding the Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park located in Logan County

This project has some real possibility. The Nature Conservancy of Kansas raised private funds to make the purchase of Little Jerusalem from the McGuire family, who'd ranched the canyons and buttes for five generations. A condition of the purchase was for these rock formations be open the public.

The Nature Conservancy of Kansas is also taking on the responsibility of caring for such a natural treasure. This certainly is more of a State Park venue and potential tourist attraction producing revenue for protecting a unique rock formation dating back to when Kansas was part of an ocean floor. The Nature Conservancy is a credible organization and has a track record of obtaining financing and seeing projects through with a long term plan.

Please look at this project closely and the track record of the Nature Conservancy of Kansas. Keep this issue separate from the addition of trails to the Kansas State Parks.