

**Proponent Written Testimony
for HB 2331
Creating Lehigh Portland State Park
(Last Names A-H)**

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First Name:	Last Name:	Organization:
Jonathon	Adams	Citizen
Benjamin	Alexander	Southwind Cycle
Helen	Alexander	Citizen
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Elizabeth and Greg	Burger	Citizen
Dan	Carroll	Citizen
Jeff	Carroll	Ottawa Bike and Trail
Kelsy	Carroll	Citizen
John	Castellaw	Citizen
Rodney	Chaplin	Citizen
Paul	Cloutier	A Bolder Humboldt
Clark	Coan	Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy
Maureen	Crist	Citizen
Tiffany (& Devin)	Davidson	Citizen
Marcia	Davis	Citizen
Jerry	Dreher	Citizen
Tom	Ellis	Citizen
Stacey	Fager	USD 257
Dave (& Lisa)	Fontaine	Citizen
Steve	French	City of Iola
Wanda	Gard	Citizen
James	Gilpin	Community National Bank & Trust
Karen	Gilpin	Citizen
Myra	Gleason	Citizen
Brock	Godinez	Citizen
Jonathon	Goering	Citizen
Michael	Goodwin	KTC
Michael	Goodwin	Citizen
Ace	Grundy	Citizen
Candice	Grundy	Citizen
Church	Grundy	Citizen
Max	Grundy	Citizen
Billie	Hall	Sunflower Foundation
Jennifer	Hamelman	Adventure Cycling Association

3/19/2023

Dear Sen. Renee Erickson and the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Jonathan Adams (Lehigh Portland Trail's biggest fan), am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park as the newest addition to our wonderful state park system. I have already been to Little Jerusalem, Kanopolis, and Mushroom Rock State Park in 2023. Additionally I have been to Lehigh probably at least 25 times. According to my camera roll I have taken over 8,000 photos there just with my camera phone in my six years of living in Iola, not to mention those taken with my professional camera. I invite you to look at my photos on Instagram @JonathanAdamsKansas. Many of my shots are from Lehigh. You will find that #lehighportlandstatepark is almost entirely composed of my photos.

I say all that to say this, I really love Lehigh. It has been a tremendous blessing to our quality of life. When my wife and I moved here six years ago we figured we would need to go to Cross Timbers State Park to hike and enjoy nature. We knew nothing about Lehigh back then. We were elated to find out that we had this incredible outdoor bonanza basically on the edge of our little town. Since then I have hiked, mountain biked, photographed, led tours, dragged all my friends and family out there, participated in a Kansas! Magazine cover story with Michelle Terry (with my shot as the cover photo), volunteered countless times for trail maintenance and clean up, and I've basically become an all around unofficial ambassador.

It is attractions and amenities like these that make an area sticky. They make you want to move here and stay. They make you want to stick around for the weekend instead of going out of town. We need more public areas like this. My wife and I own three AirBnBs and we have already had guests who visited our area just for the bike trails. I think this could easily grow with the addition of Lehigh Portland State Park as the southern terminus for the Prairie Spirit Trail and the northern bookend of the Southwind Trail complimenting Humboldt's breathtaking Base Camp facility. This would most certainly become a premier bicycling destination. We also have a thriving bike shop/outdoors store on our town square which is almost unheard of in rural Kansas. We have so much going for us and the addition of a State Park is just the next natural progression. We have provided the proof of concept, now we just need to take it to the next level.

Lehigh has been an incredible blessing for our town. Volunteers have made it what it is today but we would definitely welcome the support of the state and also their expertise in managing it. We would also love for more people to enjoy our little slice of heaven here. Southeast Kansas has many challenges and investing in a State Park here would be a great encouragement and investment in the health and wellbeing of our corner of our great state.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Adams

Resident of Iola, hometown Newton, student of Roger Erickson, son of Jinny Iserhardt

3/20/23

Senator Renee Erickson, Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I'm writing you as a small business owner in southeast Kansas and Iola resident to express my enthusiastic support for HB2331, to create Lehigh Portland State Park. I opened Southwind Cycle and Outdoor, an independent bicycle shop in Iola in 2018, and have spent countless hours working on the trails, riding mountain bikes with others, and hiking. The development of the trails in this area has made my business and other recreation- and tourism-oriented businesses in the area possible, and inspired other communities in Kansas to follow our example, and the transition of the property from private ownership and management to public stewardship is a must to ensure the natural beauty remains.

- In southeast Kansas, we are close to northwest Arkansas, a region that has become virtually synonymous with mountain biking as an engine of rural economic development, so we know how important mountain biking and hiking can be.
- Natural surface trails and opportunities for hiking and mountain biking are rare and unique in Kansas, particularly nearby a small town that can provide the other services regional tourists look for.
- The Lehigh Portland Trails provide a uniquely nature-centric experience in a state where the overwhelming majority of land is managed for agricultural production.
- A potential Lehigh State Park would create a publicly accessible and publicly available area for hiking, biking, birdwatching and other natural recreation. The relative lack of those spaces in Kansas is a stark contrast to Oklahoma, Colorado, Missouri and Arkansas. Thankfully, this is an opportunity to change that!

On a personal note, I love spending summer evenings or frosty winter mornings riding a bike through the woods, introducing others to the up-close-and-personal experience of finding wildlife using the same trails we use, and watching the sun set across the lake, feeling like we're a hundred miles from anywhere while only a short hike from Iola. Please vote "yes" to HB2331 and let's add a new park to southeast Kansas!

Sincerely,


Ben Alexander

Owner, Southwind Cycle and Outdoor

Resident, rural Iola, Kansas

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I, Helen Alexander, am a resident of Douglas County and am someone who visits state parks all the time. I am writing in enthusiastic support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

State parks are an important part of Kansas—my family and I hike, camp, and picnic at parks all the time. I'm very excited to hear about the opportunity to add Lehigh Portland to the state park system. The open space, trails, and historic features are all important. I'm particularly interested to hear that park trail system links to Prairie Spirit Trails.

Outdoor recreation areas are increasingly important in the 21st century—they provide open space and habitat for wildlife. Getting people outside has been shown to benefit their physical and mental health. Rural communities in Kansas are also facing many challenges – having Lehigh Portland State Park in the Iola area will surely help bring income into the community.

Sincerely,



Helen M. Alexander



P.O. Box 540
3066 N. Kentucky St.
Iola, KS 66749
620-365-1000 • 620-365-1133 fax

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Allen County Regional Hospital to express our support for HB 2331, designating Lehigh Portland as a Kansas state park.

Like other rural hospitals, we have a consistent need to attract and retain qualified employees, particularly physicians, clinical staff, and other leaders. To appeal to top candidates in this competitive market, we not only need to stand out as being a great place to work, but our community must also stand out as being a great place to live and raise a family.

The trail systems in and around Iola are frequently top on the list when giving community tours to physician candidates. To boast a state park with public access to additional outdoor recreation options such as camping, lake swimming, and kayaking will most certainly help make our community and all we have to offer rise to the top.

We are proud to be part of a community that prioritizes health and wellness and we're excited to realize the many benefits of having expanded public access to this green space. A partnership with the state will improve safety measures and ensure sustainability for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill which is so important to our community.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Armstrong, Administrator
Allen County Regional Hospital

saintlukeskc.org

March 20, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson,

As private citizens, longtime taxpayers and registered voters (Republican) from Lecompton Township, we are writing to show our support for HB 2331, the creation of Lehigh Portland state park in southeast Kansas.

My husband and I both work long hours and have many commitments and responsibilities; we are also volunteer first responders for our rural community. Right now we don't have the time or frankly, the budget, for anything more than weekend "vacations." What a gift, then, to have such beautiful state parks, literally in our backyard! Our Kansas state parks are all so different and unique, as are the small rural towns around them. Although we live on the east side of the state, we were thrilled when Little Jerusalem Badlands opened in western Kansas – and we will be equally thrilled if Lehigh Portland opens as a state park near lola.

The National Park System is wonderful, but not everyone has the time or finances to visit the marquee parks. State parks give the average working Kansan the chance to get away and enjoy some of the best that our state has to offer - on a budget! I also like the fact that the vacation money I'm spending stays in my state, supporting the park and the small towns around it. Finally, I love the fact that people from surrounding states may come to Kansas specifically to visit our state parks – and then spend their vacation dollars here as well.

Everyone keeps saying that the Lehigh Portland SP would be great for southeast Kansas, and that's true. But it's also great for the **entire** state. Case in point: I believe Kansas has 28 state parks? Our neighbor state Missouri has 92... Triple our amount! Missouri is also a conservative state that doesn't like to waste money, but somehow they've realized that state parks are a rock solid investment for today and for the future. Although it pains me to say this - let's follow their lead on this one.

Please vote in favor of HB 2331 and give Kansans like us another reason to be proud of our state.

Thank you,
Elizabeth & Greg Burger
1847 E. 800 Rd
Lecompton, KS 66050
785-331-9355
785-218-5523

3/20/23

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Daniel Carroll, am writing to express my strong support for HB 2331, the designation and creation of Lehigh Portland Trails as a State Park.

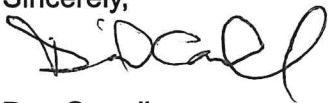
Since moving to this area about 10 years ago, I have yet to find a more enjoyable place to spend time outdoors. I have taken part in volunteer work days out on the trails with Thrive Allen County as well as ventured out with family and friends to take in the beautiful sights and fresh air. But from the short time I've spent here I've learned that, much like southeast Kansas, Lehigh has much more to offer than just nature.

It's important to preserve and maintain the few "wild" places that still exist. Conservation isn't just a neat idea. It's our responsibility to take care of what we've been given. It would be a terrible waste of an opportunity to *not* make Lehigh Portland Trails a State Park for this reason alone. Countless volunteers have done a remarkable job of keeping the trails safe and clean for years, but with the entirety of the property open to the public, I can only imagine the potential this park holds.

The pristine wilderness is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Lehigh Portland Trails. As I mentioned, through my involvement on the trails, I've made life-altering relationships as well as lifelong memories. We may have some impact on the landscape, but it certainly has an impact on us. Possibilities for learning particularly spark my interest, as I have a background in education. I was also in Boy Scouts growing up, so I have a special appreciation for what one can learn in the great outdoors.

The designation of the Lehigh Portland Trails (and the accompanying land/lake) as a State Park would have tremendous economic - as well as - health benefits for the area. However, I know that people far and wide (and down the line) will enjoy this treasure for years to come. Thank you for your time, and I hope you see what is clear to everyone who visits Lehigh: sharing is caring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Carroll", written in a cursive style.

Dan Carroll
Resident of Chanute, KS



03/17/2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Senator Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Jeff Carroll and I am the owner of Ottawa Bike and Trail. We are a full-service bicycle shop in Ottawa, Kansas at the intersection of the Flint Hills Trail and Prairie Spirit Trail State Parks. I am writing to provide support for the State Park designation for the Lehigh Portland Trails near Iola.

I think our experience as a trail-friendly business is a testament to how investments in trails can generate economic activity and quality-of-life benefits in a community. **I believe the investment in the Lehigh Portland trails will have a significant impact on the economy in the area by attracting tourists, visitors, and new businesses to the area.**

We opened our business in October 2018 because we saw the enormous opportunity for our local trails to attract cyclists, tourists, and businesses to the area. As cycling and trail enthusiasts, we've visited trails all over the country and around the world and have seen firsthand the positive impacts that a well-planned trail system can have on the economy and quality of life in the communities that embrace it.

We decided to put our business in Ottawa Kansas because we saw the amount of investment the state, county, and city were making to expand the state park trail system. These initial investments have led to increased interest and economic activity all along the trail. For example, several new privately owned camping areas for cyclists and trail users have become big draws. Base Camp Humboldt and Base Camp Flint Hills are attracting visitors to parts of the state that were never considered tourist attractions. We've also seen many "trail-friendly" businesses starting up in towns all along the trails. We know of two new breweries, multiple coffee shops, a new bookstore, several local gift shops, and other businesses. In talking to these business owners it is clear that the increased activity and investments in the trails were significant factors in their decision to open for business.

I know that our experience with trail investments in Kansas is not unique. The same stories are happening all over the country where trail investments are being made. I recently visited Northwest Arkansas and I was blown away by the activity in the small towns like Bentonville, Rogers, and Bella Vista which have all worked together to form the OZ Trail System. Northwest, Arkansas, and the OZ Trail System has moved beyond a state and regional draw to become recognized as one of the best recreational trail areas in the world!

I believe investments in the Lehigh Portland trails will increase tourism in the region. In the three and a half years that we have been in business, we've seen exponential growth in the number of people using the trails in our area. We've seen significant growth not only by the local users but we've also seen people coming from all over the state, the region, and the country to enjoy the trails. This growth has been good for our business but also for other businesses like hotels, restaurants, and other stores. While we were seeing significant growth before Covid-19 the growth during the pandemic accelerated as people were seeking healthy outdoor activities for their families. This level of usage has continued to grow.

Perhaps the biggest reason to make Lehigh Portland Trails a State Park is that it will dramatically increase the value of the connected Prairie Spirit Trail and Flint Hills Trail State Parks. Leigh Portland Trails will diversify the trail offerings by connecting 14 miles of single-track (mountain bike trails) to the existing 200+ miles of rail trail and create an outdoor space for camping and other activities that will benefit all trail users. This additional attraction will provide a more diverse trail offering and increase tourism by attracting a much broader audience of cyclists and outdoor visitors. This will provide another reason for visitors to bring their families to extend their stay in the area.

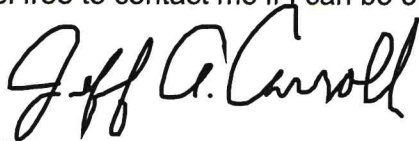
The Unbound Gravel Race in Emporia has put Kansas on the map and made Kansas a destination for cyclists. This event brings an estimated \$6 million in economic benefits to Emporia in a single weekend! Cyclists from all over the world travel to Kansas to enjoy the wide-open spaces, traffic-free roads, and beautiful scenery that Kansas provides. However, the audience for an event like Unbound Gravel is fairly narrow as riders must be fit enough to complete a 100-200 mile race on gravel roads.

Adding the Lehigh Portland Trails as a State Park will expand Kansas's reputation as a cycling destination while adding an attraction that can draw younger riders and families to the area. The audience for Leigh High Portland Trails is much broader and can be used by riders and walkers of any experience level. The Leigh High Portland Trails are especially important because it adds a missing element, mountain bike trails, to the existing mostly rail-trail offerings. Linear rail trails like the Prairie Spirit and Flint Hills trails are flat and cover long distances which generally attracts older cyclists. Mountain bike trails attract younger riders and families who may not be interested in riding on a linear rail trail.

I believe strongly in this project and I hope that my input is beneficial in helping move it forward.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any further assistance with this project.

Sincerely,



Jeff Carroll
Ottawa Bike and Trail
jeff@ottawabikeandtrail.com
913-951-1070

3-17-23

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear State Senator Erickson, my name is Kelsy Carroll and I am writing to express my support for HB 2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park. As an avid outdoors woman (and the current Bike and Trail Coordinator for these trails), I understand the incredible value this park would bring to the local community and to the state.

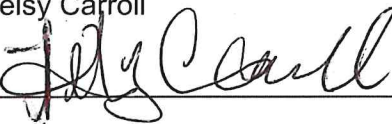
Lehigh Portland Trails and Lehigh Lake offer exceptional opportunities for outdoor recreation from hiking and biking to fishing, swimming, and kayaking. The park also provides a beautiful natural setting for birdwatching, camping, and picnicking. The entire area is teeming with wildlife and the recently restored remnant prairies are truly a sight to behold.

The park would also bring numerous economic benefits to the area. It would create new jobs in the local area and attract even more tourists from outside the region. This increased tourism would not only bring more money into the local economy, but also improve the quality for the people living in the area.

Finally, Lehigh Portland Trails and Lehigh Lake will serve as an important educational resource for the region. People from all over the state can come to the park and learn about the natural history of the area as it is a wonderful place to observe ancient marine fossils. This will be particularly helpful for children, who can learn about history and the environment in an engaging and hands-on way.

We hope to be able to continue our conservation and educational efforts and the best way to ensure that is to create Lehigh Portland State Park.

Sincerely,
Kelsy Carroll



Chanute, KS

March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chair Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, John Castellaw, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park.

The Lehigh Portland Trails have had a positive impact on me since I moved to Iola back in Nov. 2020. Never would I have imaged such a beautiful and intricate trail system in rural southeast Kansas. I've been a runner since 2007 and started what is known as a running streak (running a least one mile a day) on Dec. 31st, 2015, and lasted until July 22nd, 2022. That's 6 years, 6 months and 22 days, or 2395 days, of not missing a day of running. 600 of those days have been in Iola. I've easily ran hundreds of miles on the Lehigh Trails, either for my running streak or training for races. And if the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park goes through, I know that number will double if the trail wraps completely around the lake.

Without the Lehigh Trails I would have had to train in the neighborhood, risking running on the uneven roads, stepping in potholes, potentially twisting an ankle or getting hit by cars (which does happen a lot more than people think). Out on the Lehigh Trails I never worry about any of that. I get to focus in, see my running pace get faster and faster, breath in the fresh air, and allow myself to think. I want others to be able to experience that feeling.

My fiancé and I frequently volunteer with Thrive Allen County to help maintain the Lehigh Trails. We are happy to keep volunteering to ensure the future Lehigh Portland State Park always has someone to look after it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Castellaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark ink on a white background.

John Castellaw
Resident of Iola, KS.

March 19, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I Rodney Chaplin, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Outdoor recreation opportunities are an important resource we need to protect and expand in our wonderful state. Time spent in the great outdoors is proven to be extremely beneficial to a person's physical and mental well-being. I was fortunate enough to spend a decent amount of time growing up in the outdoors (including Kansas State Parks) primarily through the Boy Scouts. This helped shaped me into the person I am today.

In addition, the creation of a new Lehigh Portland State Park would bring a needed economic boost to the southeast Kansas area surrounding the park.

Sincerely,

Rodney Chaplin

A BOLDER HUMBOLDT'S LETTER OF SUPPORT

03.20.23

Dear Sen. Renee Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce.

I'm writing on behalf of A Bolder Humboldt in support HB2331 the Lehigh Portland State Park initiative. We are in strong support of this plan, and see it as a necessary effort, contributing to the continuing success of our rural community. Tourism drives an enormous amount of our growing economy in Humboldt and Allen County.

A Bolder Humboldt is an organization in Humboldt Kansas focused on the commercial, economic, and community development of our 2000 person town. We have worked to restart the economic engine of our community by supporting new businesses, home building, encouraging new residents and bringing the community together. It all starts with creating experiences that remind people that there are incredible opportunities in our rural places.

Just one year ago our town was recognized as one of the New York Times's 52 Places to Visit bringing heightened attention to a different kind of rural life. People have come from all around the world to visit, expressing their enthusiasm and surprise at the beauty and opportunity in our incredible region.

One of our projects—the non-profit, camping destination Base Camp Humboldt—lies at the end of the Southwind Rail Trail: a direct connection to the Lehigh Portland trail system and our KDOT grant-funded trail extension to our downtown. The momentum that is gathering in rural Humboldt will be greatly magnified by a state park, bringing more attention and visitors to our area.

As business owners of The Hitching Post and Idle Hour Books my wife, Alana Cloutier and I also welcome any opportunity to highlight the new and progressive business environment in Allen County and see bringing visitors to our community. Additionally as a city council member in Humboldt I see these visitors as a vital way to capture tax revenue for our municipal coffers that have to do everything possible to maintain and improve our infrastructure.

The Lehigh Portland State Park would be an incredible accelerator for much of the hard work that is being done in Southeast Kansas and Allen County in particular. A Bolder Humboldt would work hard to promote and amplify its presence with our many projects in Humboldt.

We look forward to further testifying to help bring this project to life and supporting this effort to give rural Kansas a leg up.

Sincerely,

Paul Cloutier
Partner
A Bolder Humboldt
paul@abolderhumboldt.com
415-515-7625
www.abolderhumboldt.com





PO Box 44-2043
Lawrence, Kansas 66044
785-842-3458
info@kansastrails.org

Chairman Renee Erickson and
Members
Senate Committee on Commerce
State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Senator:

Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy wholeheartedly supports HB 2331 which would establish a Lehigh Portland State Park at Iola. This remarkable tract of land features native prairies and forests plus a spring-fed lake, a natural cave, and riparian habitat along Elm Creek. The 2.3-mile Lehigh Portland Rail Trail on the property connects with the 6.5-mile Southwind Rail Trail which in turn connects with the 52-mile Prairie Spirit Trail State Park. Our organization obtained the railbanking for the Southwind Rail Trail under the National Trails Act and volunteers and Allen County built the trail.

State parks attract visitors to the state who want to camp, hike, bike and fish and nature-based tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. In 2019 each visitor to Kansas spent \$200 on average per day and overnight visitors spent \$378 (*Economic Impact of Tourism in Kansas, 2019*, by Tourism Economics, prepared for KDWP). This park will attract visitors from Missouri and Oklahoma as well as the Kansas City and Wichita metro areas.

The state park will benefit the residents of Southeast Kansas for years to come. This investment in the infrastructure will return many benefits, especially the enhancement of the health and quality of life of the region's residents. A modest investment in the infrastructure in the region today will yield benefits many times over in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,
Clark H. Coan
Clark H. Coan
Treasurer

Blue River

Marysville, KS

**Marshall County
Connection, Inc**

Randy Brown
Chairman

Maureen Crist

Todd Frye

Mark Hoffman

Fred Nieberding

Kathy Smith

Mike Stech

Shelby Temps

Dustin Zutterman

When I heard the news that the Lehigh Portland Trails could become a state park I was all too happy to write a letter of support. I am on the board of the Blue River Rail Trail in Marshall County with our trail beginning in Marysville.

Marshall County is on the Nebraska border and the Blue River Rail Trail (BRRT) stretches from Marysville to that border where it connects to the Chief Standing Bear Trail and the expansive Great Plains Trail Network. This connection has drawn visitors to the BRRT riding from Lincoln, Nebraska and beyond. Soon, the Great American Rail Trail, sponsored by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, will stretch from Washington state to Washington, D.C. through twelve states including Nebraska! These twelve states are committed to completing the trail because it is a catalyst for economic development. Kansas connects to this amazing trail by way of our BRRT. Kansas has the opportunity to connect with other nearby states as well. Missouri is well known for it's award winning Katy Trail with an economic impact of over \$29 million in 2022. My husband and I have ridden the Katy trail and contributed to that impact. We've also loaded up our bikes and travelled across the country stopping in cities and towns to ride, have lunch, visit the local sites, and stay the night. We are not unique. The economic benefit of trail tourism is very real and we are seeing the effects in Marysville.

I recently spoke with a Kansas rancher who loves the outdoors but never considered that everyone does not have the same access to nature as she does. Trails provide that connection to the outdoors and healthy living to all but they're not just for tourists and bikers. In Marysville, our trail users are those that are wheelchair bound, the developmentally delayed, and seniors with limited mobility that we take out on the trail in golf carts on special days. You can imagine their excitement to be outdoors, feeling the breeze. The trail has been a gift to our community!

Please make the investment in these trails that connect our people, our communities and our states!

Email

info@blueriverrailtrail.org

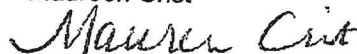
Website

blueriverrailtrail.org

Facebook

Blue River Rail Trail

Maureen Crist



Board Treasurer
Marshall County Connection

March 17, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th S.
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Senator Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce:

We are writing to express our support for the House Bill 2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

We have both grown up camping, fishing, and boating. We have both camped with our parents since we were infants. We now have two small children of our own, and it would be wonderful to have a nice facility close to home. In order for us to camp, we have to go an hour or more from home, which sometimes is difficult with two small children.

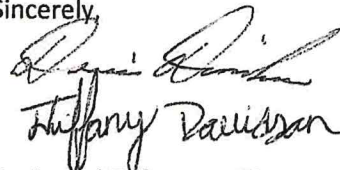
We would love to have our children to be able to enjoy this wonderful area close to home while growing up.

I (Devin) love to fish, frequently participating in fishing tournaments, and for me to be able to have such a nice facility to fish at close to home would be so helpful. There could possibly be fishing tournaments held here that would also bring in more revenue.

Designating Lehigh Portland State Park will bring more people to Allen County to enjoy all the wonderful amenities at the lake as well as all the surrounding trails and beautiful scenery. Those same people will bring more revenue to the local businesses.

We cannot express to you enough how much this would mean to not only the people of Allen County and surrounding areas (We are residents of Anderson County) but also those throughout the state and beyond. Being in the outdoors is very beneficial for your physical and mental health and is something that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Devin and Tiffany Davidson in black ink. The signature of Devin is on top, and Tiffany's is below it.

Devin and Tiffany Davidson
405 Maple Street
Colony, KS 66015

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

Good afternoon. My husband and I moved to lola 4 years ago. One of the reasons we considered moving to lola was the many miles of bike trails in Allen County. The Lehigh Trail and the many single-track trails around the lake are a favorite site for us. The trails provide a great space for outdoor recreation and relaxing in nature. Conserving this area for outdoor recreation and public use is very important to me and my family.

Allen County is a great place to live, work and raise a family. The economic impact a State Park will bring to lola and Allen County will help the area grow and continue to thrive.

I fully support the bill HB 2331 and am excited about the possibility of a State Park in lola.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia R. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Marcia R. Davis

March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Sen. Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I Jerry Dreher, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Our community needs to utilize the 138 acre quarry lake and surrounding acres in a better way. In designating this as a State Park this will stimulate economic growth, competitiveness and an opportunity for business. In addition will insure Allen County residents' tax dollars given to Kansas Wildlife and Parks are invested locally furthermore will create a destination for not only local people but for all Kansas taxpayers.

Please support HB 2331 as it is in the best interest for Kansas.

Sincerely,


Jerry Dreher
Iola, KS

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

My name is Tom Ellis, am writing to express my support for bill HB 2331, creating a Kansas state park at the former Lehigh Portland Cement Plant.


I grew up on the south edge of the Lehigh Portland cement plant on property that my grandfather acquired at the turn of the century. I would ride my horse along brick lined Kentucky Street into town for art lessons, to see grandma, enjoy the creek or just to visit town. The sound of the horse's hooves on the old brick street is a fond memory. I went away to college and during this time the plant expanded and ate up Kentucky street. When the plant closed in the early 70's the water level rose, and now I am 79 and the lake is completely filled and continues to rise... a perfect spot for a grand experiment in tourism development, artistic expression, ecotourism, and adventures.

Having the State Park in lola will encourage healthful living, emphasizing that Allen County is a cohesive forward thinking community providing opportunities and fun for all ages and ethnic groups. Also, the bigger and more lavish the park becomes, means more fame and free publicity, which everyone knows is the biggest draw of all for tourists.

Having the State Park and its phenomenal lake completely adjacent to lola's population will make it perfectly accessible on a 24-hour basis. Entrances to the park from the town and surrounding areas will encourage healthy activities and will cut down on crime (thanks to the friendly Park Rangers), and will help save money with medical expenses from obesity and other diseases that are a scourge in our community. The new state park will most certainly increase tourism dollars in lola and the neighboring area. The park will not just be for fishing and swimming, it will become a focal point for every member of our community and multitudes of visitors in hundreds of different ways with the proper development.

The park development can lead to more cafes, restaurants, hotels, fast food venues, retail shops, all with electric charging stations. Can you imagine...

Sincerely,


Tom Ellis
Resident of lola

Board of Education
Unified School District #257
305 North Washington, Iola, KS 66749



Mr. Stacey Fager
Superintendent

March 18, 2023

Jenna
Higginbotham
Curriculum Director

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Aaron Cole
Director of Operations

Dear Chairwoman Erickson & Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Designating Lehigh Portland a state park would benefit the area community and/or State of Kansas in many ways:

- For area recreation, this could be enjoyed by many for the walking/bike paths already in place and boating/fishing opportunities.
- Not many areas are as picturesque as this location currently is – which amenities could add to this natural appeal.
- Area businesses would benefit from the creation of a local state park, with additional tourism to assist in economic growth in SEK. In addition, this area with its natural beauty could become one of the most attractive locations for a HS/College Cross-Country course in the State of Kansas.

Teresa Taylor
Human Resources/
Payroll Clerk/ Board
Clerk

Please consider these possibilities for adding to the already impressive list of state parks currently available to Kansas residents.

Marcie Boring
Business Manager/
Accounts Payable

Sincerely,

Staci Talkington
Food Service
Coordinator

Mr. Stacey Fager
Resident of Allen County, KS

Ben Prasko
Technology
Coordinator

Phone:
(620) 365-4700

Fax:
(620) 365-4708

March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: HB 2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee:

We have been involved with trails for over 25 years, starting with the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, which earned state park designation in 2010. We enjoy hiking and biking and the great outdoors. We were part of a core group of 12 who built the Southwind Rail Trail which runs from Iola to Humboldt. After the Southwind opened in 2013 and construction of the Lehigh trails began, we again jumped into help. Throughout the years we have spent countless hours keeping up maintenance on the two trail systems.

The Lehigh property is currently a popular destination spot for hiking and biking but it's truly just a hidden gem at this time. Transforming it into a state park with a lake and trails accessible to the public would be a *HUGE* win for our community and the entire state park system.

We've been witness to a cultural change in our community in recent years. People are focusing more and more on healthy lifestyles. All ages of people are getting out on their bikes and hiking the trails. We know firsthand how this impacts their physical as well as mental health. With the Lehigh property connecting to both the Southwind Rail Trail and the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, putting it on the map as a state park will turn it into the shining star it really is and ensure it will be treasured by future generations.

This incredible gift from Iola Industries to the State will provide numerous economic benefits along with healthy recreational opportunities and should receive your wholehearted support.

We appreciate your assistance in getting HB 2331 through the legislative process and making the Lehigh Portland State Park become a reality.

Sincerely,



Dave & Lisa Fontaine
1906 US Hwy 54
Iola, KS 66749



March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

The City of Iola is proud to express support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

The City of Iola sees Lehigh Portland's designation as an opportunity to improve the lives of the citizens of Iola and southeast Kansas. The designation will enrich the fabric of our community by increasing recreation opportunities for boating, fishing, and swimming. The state park will provide a trail system for increased physical activity for walkers, runners and bicyclists.

Additionally, the state park provides the opportunity to become an economic hub for the City of Iola and other southeast Kansas communities. Establishing the Lehigh Portland State Park also presents the unique opportunity of establishing a state park within the city limits of Iola.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven C. French".

Steven C. French,
Mayor
City of Iola

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew S. Rehder".

Matthew S. Rehder,
City Administrator
City of Iola

Iola City Council Members:

Josiah D'Albini
Nickolas Kinder
Joel Wicoff
Carl Slaugh
Nicholas Lohman
Kim Peterson
Joelle Sallah
Mark Peters

March 19, 2023

**Senator Renee Erickson
Senate Committee on Commerce**

Communities in Southeast Kansas are struggling for new ways to introduce activities for people to improve their physical and mental health, bring new tourism dollars into their cities and encourage educational opportunities with our outdoors as classrooms. I fully support HB2331.

I personally have hiked, biked and enjoyed this trail as well as kayaked in the lake with friends and family. I look forward to enjoying this trail and lake in the future with grandchildren!

Thinking outside the box and using Kansas as more of a destination for various outdoor activities will help our small towns continue to survive and thrive.

**Sincerely,
Wanda Gard,
Chanute, Kansas**



March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce:

I, Jim Gilpin, am writing in support of HB-2331 – Lehigh Portland State Park. I'm a semi-retired banker and Lola Industries board member and life-long resident of Lola and Allen County. I would like to make four points:

First, the Lehigh Portland Park gift to the State of Kansas in Lola is an unique example of industrial site recycling – from abandoned barren quarry site (1971) to forested mountain-bike/hiking trail and lake destination (2023). No one dreamed when Lehigh's Allentown Pennsylvania corporate leaders announced the abandonment and closing of one of its large plants, that a half century later, the once ugly industrial site would become a beautiful lake with trails; a recreational destination. The transformation is amazing and we believe should be shared with all Kansans.

Second, as a state park, the Lehigh Portland quarry could showcase in its visitor center the 100+ year history of the cement industry in Kansas. There once were plants from Kansas City, Kansas to Independence in the Eastern part of the state manufacturing cement. As a consequence of international competition, changes in manufacturing technology and stringent environmental regulations, most of them closed. The last two producing cement plants in Kansas are close by in Humboldt and Chanute and the Lola quarry was one of the first in eastern Kansas to mine limestone for cement production over a century ago; it was one of the largest at the time.

The geologic formation present is called the "Lola Limestone" and is 40 feet thick in Allen County. It's the main reason the lake is so deep and fills with water- the bottom of the walls of the quarry are lower than the water table and the space naturally fills with water from underground springs. We understand the lake depth is sufficient and the water is cold enough for adding trout to the bass and crappie fishing already available.

Third, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism can make available to everyone what has become a popular destination for some. Cyclists have made Allen County a destination with not only Lehigh Portland Trails but the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail (Humboldt to Ottawa) it connects to; it is used by riders and walkers from surrounding communities and metro areas, as well as our own. A look at the license plates in the bike trail parking lots confirms our trails attract enthusiasts from a wide area.

But access to the water has been limited. The Iola Elks Club who leased the lake and the south entrance area for decades from Iola Industries, made many improvements and provided fishing, swimming, kayaking and camping for their 400+ member families. Providing public access to the lake, in addition to the trails, will only increase the appeal of the park as a recreational destination for all Kansans, but especially those living in the eastern part of the state.

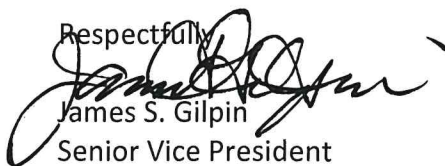
Finally, the State of Kansas can do something tangible to promote, “Kansas as a Healthy Place to Work and Live”. Did you know Allen County is already a healthy place to live? Having a facility with trails and a lake like Lehigh is one of the reasons!

In 2017, Allen County was one of 8 winners in the “Culture of Health” National Competition of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (I understand Allen County is still the only community in Kansas to have won this recognition.) And this prestigious “culture of health” designation was due in part to the impact of healthy life-style facilities – like the trails - as well as to the countless hours of hard work of dozens of local volunteers and, in particular, the THRIVE Allen County Organization, which helps maintain the trails, among other things.

For the State of Kansas to maintain its population and attract both retirees and young families to our communities, is there value in being able to say, Kansas is a healthy place to live? We think so in Allen County. Many here are working hard to maintain that culture of health. We believe, also, that Allen County can become a role model for all counties in Kansas that want to improve their quality of life and physical health for their citizens.

We hope you will accept this gift on behalf of the State of Kansas and consider it an opportunity to 1) highlight a good example of industrial site recycling, 2) showcase some of Kansas’ unique mining history, 3) make available to the public a beautiful lake and trail complex and 4) promote healthy lifestyles in Kansas. With these four reasons in mind, I would like to invite you to favorably consider HB-2331 – The Lehigh Portland State Park.

Respectfully,



James S. Gilpin
Senior Vice President

March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson

Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce

Kansas State Capitol

300 SW 10th St.

Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Sen. Renee Erickson and Senate Committee on Commerce Members,

I Karen Gilpin, am writing to express my support for HB2331 which was recently passed by the House and sent to you to consider, creating Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County.

As a member of the THRIVE Allen County board and having lived and raised my family in lola for over 45 years, I have worked with many volunteers to clear the brush and trees and build the trails on the north side of the lake. Our goal has always been to make this a place that everyone could use. The trails have been open to the public, but the lake was open to ELKS club members only because of their lease. ELKS members made many improvements on the south side of the lake and the lake and south side was highly utilized by their members.

With the lake being close to both lola and Humboldt and trails from both communities leading to the site, people can walk or ride bikes to the lake easily. We already have visitors from Lawrence, Wichita, and KC driving down to ride the trails and picnic. The trails have also been a positive influence when recruiting employees and students at Allen Community College, the hospital, and other businesses and industries in Allen County. There is no doubt that opening up the lake and having a visitors' center with bathrooms and electricity available would be a great asset and increase the numbers using the park. I hope you vote to add this property to our State Park System.

Sincerely,

Karen Gilpin

620-228-4281

Resident of lola, Kansas

March 19, 2023
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10 th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Senator Renee Erickson and Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Myra Gleason and I am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

As someone who was raised in two states with dozens of pristine state parks (Oregon and California) the presence of one such recreational spot among the prairie land of Iola is testament to its importance in both fostering tourism and small business growth. These trails can draw in tourists who wish to explore this corner of Kansas and contribute to the economy with purchases at local shops. As a small business owner in Iola, Kansas, the surrounding areas would benefit immensely from the creation of Lehigh trails leading to a state park. Because of the efforts to make the Lehigh Trails a place of destination for locals in town, making it an official state park would help increase tourism and tie together different underground venues like parks, restaurants and stores into one cohesive experience. Investing in the development of a state park could open up an array of job opportunities for people and would ultimately lead to creating a strong economic base in the region. The Lehigh trails have the potential to be something extra special for Iola, elevating it as a destination for travelers who are looking for new and exciting places to experience.

Sincerely,

Myra Gleason

Myra Gleason

Iola, Kansas, Owner Fillmore Coffeehouse

03/18/2023

Sen. Renee Erickson Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce

Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chair Renee Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce

I, Brock Godinez, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

- Making Lehigh Portland a state park would benefit lola and definitely the rest of the Southeast Kansas area. This is because, in the surrounding towns, I haven't seen trails as impressive as the ones in lola. Also, the other towns do have lakes however, they're not as stunning as Elks lake which is an amazing spot for multiple activities and could be even better with state funding and oversight.
- For four years and even before I was a member of the Chanute cross country team our coach would have a Saturday practice from time to time on the lola trails. These trails are perfect for cross country and any running in general. The scenery around is very beautiful and you don't get bored of it even after miles. Some of the trails are more enclosed in trees which look stunning to walk or run through. It definitely feels like going on an adventure. My family has also enjoyed walking the trails and fishing before we were unable to due to no fishing. However, we still take our dogs down quite frequently and our dogs absolutely enjoy every bit of it as well.
- lola and the surrounding cities will benefit greatly from the tourists that will stay overnight at our local hotels and dine at our restaurants. The tax revenue generated will likely be more than any other tourist attraction in Southeast Kansas.
- The lake and trails of this park are absolutely spectacular for the surrounding cities that don't have these amazing spots where they live. It is perfect for nature lovers, fishermen, runners, and dog walkers and could be even better with the guidance of the state.

Sincerely,

Brock Godinez
Resident of Chanute
Chanute High School Class of 2023

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Jonathon Goering, and I am writing to express my support for **HB2331**, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I spent two-and-a-half years leading economic development efforts in the City of Iola and Allen County, and I can tell you with confidence that the creation of this state park would be a gamechanger for the area.

Attracting workers is one of the biggest challenges facing businesses large and small operating in rural communities. One primary reason for this is the lack of amenities often found in larger urban areas. I heard this from multiple employers who were struggling to meet their workforce needs. The development of a state park in Iola would have a tremendous impact on their recruitment efforts, and it would be the perfect compliment to the area's extensive existing hiking and biking trail system.

I ask that senate committee members keep this in consideration when they make their decision. The future of Allen County and its residents would only be brighter if this long-held dream becomes a reality.

Warm regards,

Jonathon Goering

Jonathon Goering
Resident of Wichita, KS



KANSAS TRAILS COUNCIL

P.O. BOX 695

TOPEKA, KS 66601-0695

www.kansastrailscouncil.org

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: HB 2331

Dear Senator Erickson and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 2331 which would create the Lehigh Portland State Park. We believe that this would be beneficial to the Southeast Kansas region and the communities surrounding Iola. It would not only economically benefit this area of the state but would enhance the quality of life for area residents.

By way of background, the Kansas Trails Council is the oldest and largest trail organization in the State. Our members and Affiliates represent thousands of trail users across the state many of whom use the Lehigh Portland trails on a regular basis.

We have been building and managing trails for the past 48 years and have been fortunate to have worked with Thrive Allen County over many years. The trail system they have created at Lehigh Portland would be a valuable addition to the State Park system. At 14.5 miles in length, it is indeed a first-class, destination trail system that attracts users from across the state and beyond.

In addition, the adjoining lake and the proximity to Prairie Spirit State Park would provide unique synergy in the State Park system. This generous donation to the State and the designation of the area as a State Park would preserve this land into perpetuity thus securing its use by many generations to come.

We hope that you will support this bill for the benefit of all Kansans.

Regards,

Michael Goodwin, Treasurer

Written Testimony of Michael Goodwin before the
Senate Committee on Commerce in support of HB 2331

March 20, 2023

My name is Michael Goodwin and I am on the Board of Directors and the Treasurer of the Kansas Trails Council (KTC).

First, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you in support of HB 2331 which would create Lehigh Portland State Park.

By way of background, the KTC is a non-profit, all volunteer organization that is dedicated to developing public access trails in Kansas. We have been building and managing trails for the past 48 years and our members and affiliates represent thousands of trail users across the state. We often sum up our organization by saying simply – We love trails!

We have a special appreciation for the Lehigh Portland trails for a number of reasons that are best understood when you know some of the history of this trail development.

Back in 2014, we were contacted by an aspiring trail builder in Iola who wanted to borrow some trail building tools and equipment from the KTC. We had recently started our Trail in a Box program where we loaned a trailer full of trail building equipment to people who wanted to build a new trail. So we arranged to deliver a Trail in a Box one Saturday morning in October and the local volunteers started clearing their first trail corridor.

Over the ensuing nine years, these trail builders in Iola developed an amazing 14.5 mile trail system that rivals the quality of any trail in the state. The Lehigh Portland trail system is a truly first-class destination trail that will make an incredible contribution to the State Park system and draw visitors from around the region for years to come.

In addition to the beautiful trail system, I fondly recall hiking along the scenic bluff above the lake and thinking about the many water activities that could be enjoyed there if it were open to the public. From kayaking to fishing to scuba diving, this is would now be available to the public as part of a State Park.

So in closing, thank you again for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of this bill that will make the Lehigh Portland State Park a reality.

Kind regards,

Michael W. Goodwin

Kansas Trails Council
PO Box 695
Topeka, KS 66601

March 18, 2023
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Ace Grundy, am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

My favorite thing to do on the Lehigh Portland trails is to count how many different animal tracks I can see. I usually see deer, rabbit, coyote and raccoon tracks. Sometimes I see herds of deer walking through the trees! I love to stand on the cliffs and look at the lake and listen to all the geese. There's a LOT! I love to go walking with family and my dogs on the trails especially when all the leaves are changing colors in the fall.

I volunteer with my dad on the trails clearing sticks and burning brush. I would like to see some of the people that work so hard keeping the trails nice get some money for all of their time and the equipment and tools they need to make their job easier.

I'm glad I live in a town that has such a cool place to enjoy nature.

Sincerely,
Ace Grundy

Resident of IOLA, KANSAS

March 18, 2023
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Candice Grundy, am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

There is no better way to start your day in the lovely state of Kansas than walking the Lehigh trails! The abundant fresh air and beautiful scenery invigorates our mind and gets our blood pumping! My family and I are new to Kansas and have found that this system of nature trails has been one of the most impactful resources our community has to offer. Whenever we have friends and family visiting we are sure to take them to the trails and show them how much Kansas has to offer. We are so proud of our community and everyone we take to the trails is always very impressed by this gem. We feel designating Lehigh Portland a state park will benefit us in that it will give the park much needed funding for maintenance expansion and improvements needed to the trail system. It is something that the entire community of IOLA and/or the state of Kansas will benefit from.

My family and I volunteer at the trail on a regular basis and would love to see more funding go to the workers and regular maintenance of the trails. I, personally, would love to see restrooms and watering stations for the walkers, runners, cyclists and dog friends that frequent the trails. We love it there and would love to see it benefit the community for generations to come. A new legacy! Rural communities like ours need spaces like these to encourage a more active and healthy lifestyle for people with limited financial resources as well as the economic support that increased tourism provides. We walk our dogs there everyday and feel it greatly contributes to our mental and physical health having such easy access to the trails.

We feel designating Lehigh Portland State Park will positively impact surrounding areas in the region in regard to local businesses support, recreation for residents and visitors, as well as creating a more healthy lifestyle for all.

Sincerely,
Candice Grundy

Resident of IOLA, KANSAS

March 18, 2023
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Church Grundy, am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

The Lehigh Portland trails are fun to hike and explore. I love to see what cool plants, flowers, rocks, and animals I can see every time I go. Spending time on the trails is great exercise and helps me to learn about nature.

I volunteer with my dad on the trails helping to keep them nice and clean for all to enjoy. I would like to see Lehigh Portland trails become a state park so that there is more money to keep the trails nicer for longer and so that everyone can hear about them and will want to visit Kansas! I think more people will want to move here and that means more friends for me!

I hope that I can take my kids on the trails in Lehigh Portland State Park someday.

Sincerely,
Church Grundy

Resident of IOLA, KANSAS

March 18, 2023
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I Max Grundy am writing to express my support for HB2331creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

We frequent the Lehigh trails daily and enjoy the many benefits of open nature for our health and the health of the community. We feel designating Lehigh Portland a state park would will benefit us in that it will give the park much needed funding for maintenance expansion and improvements needed to the trail system. It is something that the entire community of IOLA and/or the state of Kansas will benefit from.

My family and I volunteer at the trail on a regular basis and would love to see more funding go to the workers and maintenance of the trails. We love it there and would love to see it benefit the community for generations to come. A new legacy! We walk our dogs there everyday and feel it greatly contributes to our mental and physical health having such easy access to the the trails. Its always the first place we take visitors! We love it and take pride in it!

We feel designating Lehigh Portland State Park will positively impact surrounding areas in the region in regard to local businesses support, recreation for residents and visitors, as well as creating more healthy lifestyles for all.

Sincerely,
Max Grundy

Resident of IOLA, KANSAS



Sunflower Foundation

March 20, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chairwoman
Senate Commerce Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson,

We are writing this letter with enthusiastic support for HB 2331, the legislation to create a new Kansas State Park with the gift of Lehigh Portland Trails & Recreation Area from Iola Industries.

Sunflower Foundation is a statewide health philanthropy, working in all 105 counties through grants and initiatives to improve the health of all Kansans. One of our most popular programs is Sunflower Trails, which partners with communities and nonprofits to increase access to outdoor recreation and nature via public trails. Over the past 18 years, we've invested in 210+ trail projects in 85+ counties. Although we first funded trails to improve physical and mental health, we have been delighted to see the additional benefits of community cohesion, pride and economic development.

Through our partnerships, we have seen how Kansans deeply appreciate their state parks. Many state park trails are developed and maintained solely by volunteers with oversight from state park staff. During COVID, state parks provided a critical refuge, and that trend to "travel Kansas" continues even today. We have seen firsthand the positive impact of the Flint Hills Trail and Prairie Spirit Trail State Parks in many rural towns, both in quality of life and economic potential.

We are truly excited about the proposed next step for Lehigh Portland. Sunflower has been a longtime partner with Thrive Allen County and thus, have witnessed firsthand the careful development and enjoyment of the land - and subsequent spark of new businesses. When Humboldt was mentioned in the New York Time's list of "Top 50 Places to Visit in 2022," the trails at Lehigh Portland were noted.

Designating this area as a State Park is an obvious win for the nearby residents, but it's also a win for the entire state. Outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine, generating more than \$887 billion in

consumer spending and \$59.2 billion in local and state tax revenue (Outdoor Industry Association, 2022). As the neighboring state of Missouri demonstrates with the KATY Trail, a “culture” of outdoor recreation extends beyond the physical borders of a single park.

The collective enthusiasm for public parks and trails was on full display at the state Capitol just last month. More than 125 residents from 35+ Kansas counties converged in the Rotunda (*see photo, below*) to showcase trail projects and network with each other and legislators. The demographic and geographic diversity of this group demonstrates the widespread desire from across the state for ensuring that Kansas is known as a state with plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities. For this reason, we fully support HB 2331.

Sincerely,



Billie Hall, President & CEO
Sunflower Foundation
Topeka, KS





Adventure Cycling Association

March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

On behalf of Adventure Cycling Association, I am writing in strong support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Adventure Cycling's mission is to inspire, empower, and connect people to travel by bicycle. Our advocacy work focuses on four key aspects of bicycle travel: more miles of connected routes, bike-accessible transportation, safer conditions, and bike-friendly services. Our organization is proud to have more than 50,000 members, and with the power of the community behind us, we work to align the people, places, and infrastructure needed for meaningful bicycle travel.

Adventure Cycling is working with KDOT and local agencies along the east side of Kansas to designate U.S. Bicycle Route (USBR) 55. Currently, 70% of the needed local agencies have approved this route on their roads, streets, and trails. The route will use the Prairie Spirit Trail and the Southwind Rail Trail. USBR 55 will add to the nearly 19,000 miles of designated US Bicycle Routes in 34 states and the District of Columbia. KDOT has already designated USBR 76 and USBR 66.

The proposed state park is immediately adjacent to the USBR 55 route and would provide needed amenities for the long-distance bicycle travelers who will be attracted to KS for bicycle tourism. It would be another gem in the KS parks system and a specific attraction for bicycle travelers.

Bicycling as a form of tourism is a fundamental way for communities to capitalize on sustainable economic development opportunities. Touring cyclists travel more

Adventure Cycling Association

A member-supported nonprofit organization, inspiring and empowering people to travel by bicycle.

(800) 755-2453 • (406) 721-1776 • info@adventurecycling.org
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slowly, resulting in longer stays and greater spending across a locale. Data from a 2013 Montana study shows that bicycle travelers spend 40% more compared to the average motorized tourist, due to their slower pace. The Michigan DOT reported in 2015 that touring cyclists spend an average of \$71/day with the average trip length of 6 days and 69% of out of state self-supported touring cyclists reported using two of their three USBRS routes.

Overall, this park will provide a solid long-term investment for east-central Kansas. I strongly hope you consider funding this project and I am optimistic that you will agree it is a worthwhile project to pursue. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact me at jhamelman@adventurecycling.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Hamelman".

Jennifer Hamelman
U.S. Bicycle Route System Program Manager
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