

UPDATED
SESSION OF 2023

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2331

As Recommended by House Committee on
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Brief*

HB 2331 would designate the Lehigh Portland Trails in Allen County as Lehigh Portland State Park.

Background

The bill was introduced by the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at the request of Representative Gardner on behalf of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP).

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by the Director of the Parks Division, KDWP; President and CEO of Thrive Allen County; representatives of the City of Iola, Healthy Bourbon County Action Team, and Iola Industries, Inc.; the steward of Lehigh Portland Trails and Director of Trails for Thrive Allen County; and five members of the public, including a 10-year-old resident of Iola and a senior at Iola High School.

The proponents stated the Lehigh Portland Trails are built on the site of a former cement plant and quarry, along the banks of Elm Creek in Iola. The trails consist of over 2.5 miles of wide gravel trails and over 12 miles of natural-

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

surface trails for mountain biking, trail running, and nature hikes. The former quarry is now a 138-acre lake surrounded by riparian woodlands and meadows mixed with native prairie.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by representatives of A Bolder Humboldt, Allen Community College, Allen County Regional Hospital, Anderson County Development Agency, Blue River Rail Trail, City of Emporia Multi-use Path Planning Board, City of Humboldt, Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, Community National Bank and Trust, Health Forward Foundation, Humanity House Foundation, Kansas Recreation and Park Association, Kansas Sampler Foundation, Kansas Trails Council, Montgomery County Action Council, Prairie Travelers, Inc., Pratt Health Foundation, Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission, Sunflower Foundation, Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy, The Iola Register, Inc., The Nature Conservancy, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, and USD 257 (Iola), and 65 members of the public.

No other testimony was provided.

The House Committee recommended the bill be passed on February 21, 2023, but the bill was withdrawn from the House Calendar and referred to the House Committee on Appropriations on February 23, 2023. The bill was then withdrawn from the House Committee on Appropriations and rereferred to the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources on March 1, 2023.

The House Committee again recommended the bill be passed on March 13, 2023, after holding an informational hearing on the bill, which included testimony from the Secretary of Wildlife and Parks and representatives of KDWP, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Thrive Allen County. The House Committee also heard testimony from three members of the public who expressed their concerns about the potential state park.

Fiscal Note

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, the KDWP states that it would require \$50,000 from its Parks Fee Fund in FY 2024 for costs associated with title work, surveying the 14 parcels of the Lehigh Portland property, performing a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, and closing costs.

In FY 2025 through FY 2027, \$200,000 would be spent for developing a master plan to determine which services should be included at the park. The design and building construction would cost approximately \$5.0 million to \$7.0 million.

The agency would also need to hire 2.0 FTE positions at a cost of \$129,600 that would be paid 80.0 percent from federal funds and 20.0 percent from the agency's Parks Fee Fund.

The agency has requested the entire project amount from the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas Economic Development Grant, but has not received verification of approval for the funds. If the proposal is approved, then these funds would pay for the entire project, including the \$50,000 paid initially from the Parks Fee Fund.

Any fiscal effect associated with enactment of the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2024 Governor's Budget Report*.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; state parks; Lehigh Portland State Park; Allen County