

2/9/23

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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 15 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 can find that #lehighportlandstatepark is almost entirely composed of my photos.

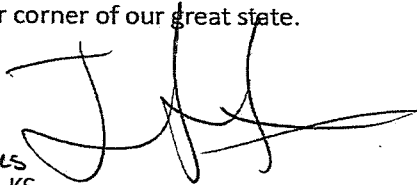
I say all that to say this, I really love Lehigh. It has been a tremendous blessing to our quality of life. When my wife and I moved here six years ago we figured we would need to go to Cross Timbers State Park to hike and enjoy nature. We knew nothing about Lehigh back then. We were elated to find out 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 my shot as the cover), volunteered countless times for trail maintenance and clean up, and I've just become an all around unofficial ambassador. These are the attractions and amenities that make an area sticky. They make you want to move here and stay. 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 complimenting Humboldt's breathtaking Base Camp. 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, KS



2/10/23

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

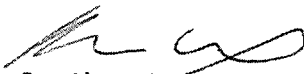
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I'm writing you as a small business owner in southeast Kansas and lola 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 lola 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.

- In southeast Kansas, we are also very close to northwest Arkansas, a region that has become virtually synonymous with mountain biking as an engine of rural economic development.
- 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 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 lola. 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 lola, Kansas

February 2, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

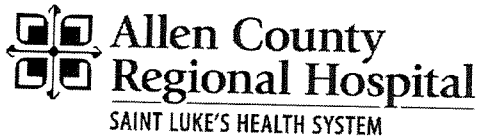
I, Stephanie Anderson, am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I was born and raised in the Coffey County area. I grew up camping and boating at Melvern lake. My family of 4 now have a passion and love for outdoor life which includes camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, etc. We are fortunate to have Melvern Lake, and Eisenhower State Park, just 20 miles away from where we live. My family, as well as others, would benefit from having access to the Lehigh Portland State Park as a new destination to visit, just a short driving distance from where we live.

Kansas will always benefit from having more locations such as these for tourists to really appreciate the beauty of a Kansas sunset. This brings in revenue from outside of our county, as people staying at the park stop at our gas stations, eat at our local restaurants, etc. With camping reservations being booked 6 months or more in advance, I believe there is a need for a state park in Southeast Kansas.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Anderson
Resident of Lebo, Kansas



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

February 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I am writing on behalf of Allen County Regional Hospital to express our support for 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

Saint Luke's Health System is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. Saint Luke's Health System shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, pregnancy status, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, veteran status, gender identity or expression. Saint Luke's Health System cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo. Saint Luke's Health System tuân thủ luật dân quyền hiện hành của Liên bang và không phân biệt đối xử dựa trên chủng tộc, màu da, nguồn gốc quốc gia, độ tuổi, khuyết tật, hoặc giới tính. Saint Luke's Health System: 遵守適用的聯邦民權法律規定，不因種族、膚色、民族血統、年齡、殘障或性別而歧視任何人。

February 10, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I, Brent Bartram, am writing to express my support for [HB2331](#), creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

As an avid cyclist and hiker, and through my participation as board member of Friends of Lawrence Area Trails group, I have seen how important safe, well-maintained trails are to both me and the community. While I have preached to everyone that will listen about the pleasures of cycling, there are still many people that can't (understandably) get over their apprehension about riding on streets next to cars. The proliferation of trails – paved, gravel, and singletrack – in Lawrence and surrounding areas now give these people the ability to enjoy the freedom and fitness that cycling provides without having to cover the same ground on every trip. The Prairie Spirit, Southwind, Flint Hills, and other trails have provided great outdoor access and fitness opportunities for not only local residents but for all Kansas residents. I have driven to trailheads all along the Prairie Spirit and Flint Hills trails (and as a result, ridden the Portland Lehigh trails) and have enjoyed seeing different scenery and towns. I dream of Lawrence having a connector to one of these great trails someday. However, creating these trails and maintaining them are two different things, trails that are not maintained often become dangerous to use and are soon avoided by most people. That is why I think it is important for the Lehigh Portland trails to be given designation as a state park. This is the most efficient and cost-effective way to ensure these trails will be kept in excellent shape for years to come.

Sincerely,

Brent A. Bartram

Brent Bartram
Treasurer – Friends of Lawrence Area Trails
Lawrence, KS

February 13, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

My name is Richard Boyd and I grew up in Iola during the late 40's, 50's and 60's while Lehigh Portland Cement was still in operation. Although I didn't spend much time in the industrial area, I regularly enjoyed fishing in the adjoining Lake Bassola and am thrilled to learn that it may be part of a state park. I haven't any exposure to the abandoned plant site but I remember that the surrounding area would be a strong drawing card for travelers as well as local citizens interested in nature and wildlife. I am sure that a local state park would be a great source of pride for the current residents as well as those like me who have many pleasant memories of the area being considered for a state park.

Respectfully,

Richard K. Boyd

February 9, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

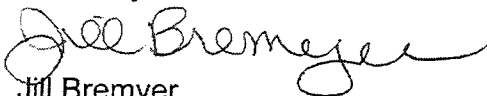
We are writing to express our support for the Kansas House Bill to create the Lehigh Portland State Park. We do not have the number of the bill.

Brad was raised in Downs, Kansas and was a professor of Veterinary Medicine at KSU. I was raised in McPherson; Kansas and I am an adoption lawyer. Although both of us have lived in other parts of the United States, we both love calling Kansas home and especially exploring Kansas's State and National Parks. We are nature lovers, birders, hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.

Jill has been involved in the development of the Meadowlark Trail from McPherson to Lindsborg for many years. The trail offers wonderful opportunities for locals and others from Kansas and elsewhere to participate in healthy outdoor activities with family and friends.

We urge you to designate Lehigh Portland State Park as a Kansas State Park. Such a designation will offer opportunities for healthy living and impact positively the surrounding region regarding local businesses, recreation, and resources.

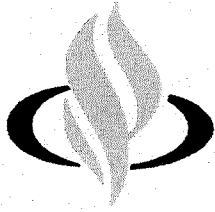
Sincerely,



Jill Bremyer
Resident of McPherson, Kansas



Brad DeBey
Resident of Wichita, Kansas



PRATT HEALTH FOUNDATION

February 7, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

My name is DeWayne Bryan and I am the Executive Director of the Pratt Health Foundation located in Pratt, Kansas. The mission of the Foundation is to "support health and financial support for Pratt Regional Medical Center." Consequently, we spend a lot of time on the Built Environment which includes outdoor recreational sites (parks, lakes and trails).

I am writing to express my support for creating Lehigh Portland State Park which:

- Encourages people to live active lifestyles which decrease medical costs and improves the quality of life locally as well as across the state.
- Improves access to a scenic part of Kansas.
- Promotes tourism and associated economic opportunities.
- Establishes a precedent for building state parks and encouraging families to pursue outdoor recreational activities.

Please join the Kansas organizations who are working to make Kansas a recreational destination as well as a state with healthy citizens by supporting the Lehigh Portland State Park project.

Sincerely,

DeWayne Bryan, Pratt Health Foundation Executive Director
Resident of Kiowa County and Pratt County

January 7, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I, Barry Carroll, Founder of Bike Walk Wichita, Inc. and the Andover Augusta Railtrail Initiative, Inc., I am writing to express my support for a proposed House Bill creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Listed below are some of my many reasons for supporting this project:

- *Since Kansas ranks last in open public spaces in the nation, the Lehigh Portland a state park would benefit me, my family and the state of Kansas;*
- *When this proposed park opens, there are many of my friends who will willing travel to Allen County to walk, ride on the multiuse and support the local economy; and*
- *By opening this park, trail users, tourists will have a dramatic and positive impact on the economic development of the local community.*

In closing, I enthusiastically support the gift of the Lehigh Portland Trails and lake property to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks with the intention that it become a state park!

I would be pleased to answer any questions that you might have pertaining to my letter of support.

Sincerely,



Barry L Carroll

1134 N. Coolidge Ave, Wichita, KS 67203
barrycarr@aol.com
316-249-2804

February 13, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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.

2-13-23

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources, I Kelsy Carroll, 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 pocket prairies are truly a sight to behold.

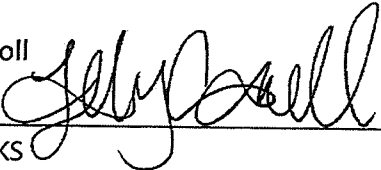
The park would also bring numerous economic benefits to the area. It would create new jobs in the local area and attract even more tourists from outside the region. This increased tourism would not only bring more money into the local economy, but also improve the quality of life for the people living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



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

Chairman Ken Rahjes and
Members
House Committee on Agriculture
and Natural Resources
State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Representative:

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



P

Date: February 16th, 2023
To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Representative Ken Rahjes, Chair
From: Justin Cobb, Government Relations Manager
The Nature Conservancy in Kansas
RE: Written-only Proponent Testimony – HB 2331

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2331. The Nature Conservancy is a nonpartisan, conservation nonprofit that has worked for over 30 years in Kansas to fulfill our mission of conserving the lands and water on which all life depends. We have permanently conserved over 150,000 acres in Kansas including five preserves that are open to the public. In 2018, we partnered with the state to facilitate the creation of the Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park in Logan County.

Even before the Little Jerusalem Badlands, The Nature Conservancy had worked to provide over 48,000 acres of land as public access for Kansans included the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and the Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve. Public access is critical to conservation because it allows for everyone to appreciate nature's beauty and pass that appreciation on to the next generation. The Nature Conservancy applauds efforts to provide this access, such in the case of HB 2331 and the donation of over \$2 million of land by Iola Industries for the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County.

Thanks to this generous donation, Kansans can now have access to another display of a beautiful Kansas landscape. The Nature Conservancy urges the committee to pass HB 2331 and not delay in providing this opportunity to their constituents.

A BOLDER HUMBOLDT'S LETTER OF SUPPORT

02.12.23

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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



Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Resources
Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Ks.66612

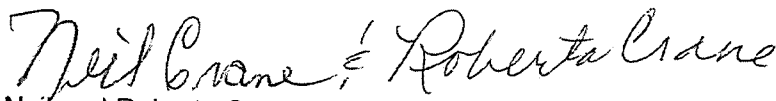
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee
Of Agriculture and Natural Resources:

We are writing this letter in support of the proposed State Park here in the lola area. It would be such a positive impact on all of our local businesses, our schools, and our recreational activities which in turn would promote a healthier and happier Allen County. We have lived in lola since 1975 and have seen this small town prosper under the direction of lola Industries and their leadership. We have seen companies like Gates, Russell Stover, and Peerless Windows choose to build here and we also now have a new Allen County Regional Hospital and new elementary school.

Once again, lola Industries is looking to improve our home town by donating the property for the Lehigh Portland State Park. In addition there is a lake already in place and many wonderful walking trails in the area also. As senior citizens we would visit this park with our children and grandchildren when they come to visit and we are sure our many out of town friends would love to visit it also.

We would certainly appreciate your support for this project as it is presented to the Kansas Legislature so this wonderful addition to our town and all of Allen County can be approved.

Sincerely,



Neil and Roberta Crane
824 Garfield Rd. N.
lola, Kansas

Blue River trail

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!

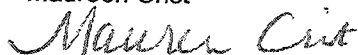
Please make the investment in these trails that connect our people, our communities and our states!

Email
info@blueriverrailtrail.org

Website
blueriverrailtrail.org

Facebook
Blue River Rail Trail

Maureen Crist



Board Treasurer
Marshall County Connection

February 9, 2023
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,
I, Rev. Daniel M. Davis, am writing to express my support for bill HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

My wife and I moved to lola in late February 2019 and first visited in October of 2018. We were visiting lola and the First Presbyterian Church, lola as I considered taking a call to serve as pastor. The call system allows for pastors to serve as 'free agents' when seeking a church to serve, this means we can choose which churches to send our resumes to in hopes of being considered. For us lola checked several boxes – proximity to family, performing arts center, biking/hiking trails, small town that was the county seat and had a community college.

While checking out lola and Allen County online before our visit I was delighted to see two lakes near lola. When taking a tour of the town hosted by a couple of church members, I asked about the lakes hoping they were public. Sadly, we found out that both the Elks Lake and Lake Bassola were private. I specifically asked about the Elks Lake since it was apparent it had a dock and some areas dedicated to parking, camping. That's when I was told about how it was owned by lola Industries who had tried to sell it to Allen County (as I recall) many years ago after the cement plant closed and ended up renting it for \$1.00 a year to the local Elks club. I have since lamented that it was too bad that such lake with so much potential was private.

When the rumors of the possibility of this lake becoming a public park of some kind I was excited about the possibilities and that such a great area would become better utilized. In the meantime, my wife and I had become users and even volunteers in the upkeep of the Lehigh Portland hike/bike trails.

Once the announcement was made and I learned that the potential park would include all of the hike/bike trails so carefully laid out and maintained in the past 15 years I was I became ecstatic! What a great opportunity for our community of lola, Allen County, and the State! Much of the work in developing the lake has been done by the Elks Club. Nearly all the work in developing the trails has been accomplished by Thrive Allen County and nearly countless volunteer hours. I know I would continue to be willing to volunteer to help with upkeep on the trails as that is a big job to keep them in good condition for riding and hiking and I believe many others would also.

I hope the State of Kansas seriously considers this proposal

Sincerely,

Rev. Daniel M. Davis

Rev. Daniel M. Davis
Resident of lola, KS



KRPA

Kansas Recreation and Park Association

2.14.2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St
Topeka, Ks 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 2331 to create a new Kansas State Park with the gift of Lehigh Portland Trails and Recreation area from Iola Industries.

The Kansas Recreation and Park Association (KRPA) is a non-profit, professional organization representing the parks, recreation, and leisure industry in Kansas. We represent nearly 1,300 professional, commercial, agency, board/commission, student and retiree members throughout the state.

With members in nearly every county, KRPA has a vast network of support and active professionals who are dedicated to improving the quality of life in Kansas by providing high-quality park and recreation services. Local parks and recreation agencies and state parks serve millions of Kansans and tourists each year at parks, open spaces and recreation facilities, and through healthy programs for children, adults, and senior citizens.

645 Vermont St, P.O. Box 1283, Lawrence, Kansas 66044
Phone (785) 235-6533
www.krpa.org



Kansas Recreation and Park Association

Outdoor recreation, including activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing is a major contributor to our economy, generating several billion dollars annually in consumer spending. Two in three Kansans take part in some form of outdoor recreation each year. Investing in outdoor infrastructure, such as parks, trails, and natural areas, provides quality of life, attracts businesses to communities, and provides safe places for families to recreate and experience the physical and mental health benefits of being outdoors. It has become even more so since the coronavirus pandemic.

For these reasons, we fully support HB2331

Sincerely,

Erika Devore
Executive Director
Kansas Recreation and Park Association

2-14-2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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

As an initial supporter my husband and I gave our time and use of equipment to help build The Lehigh Portland Trail. We felt at that time it was a great idea for the growth of our community which we support.

Now that we have this opportunity to make it a State Park we believe it would bring new visitors to our community which in turn will help support our local businesses. We own and Tammy operates, The Market Place, an antique/flea market on the Square in Iola. We have many customers from out of town that stop in and they ask "what else is there to do in Iola?" It would be great to add a state park to the list of things to do.

We have enjoyed the lake area with our previous employer, Iola Pharmacy, Inc. As an Elks member, we were able to have company picnics at the lake where we enjoyed fishing and day camping and exploring the woods.

We also believe that our trail and lake area, is a beautiful place to explore nature at its finest. If this became a state park, then it could be enjoyed by everyone!

Sincerely,

Tammy Dieker

Resident of Colony, Ks.

Business owner in Iola, Ks.

February 10, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

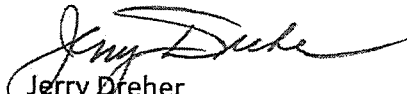
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

Feb. 9, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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.

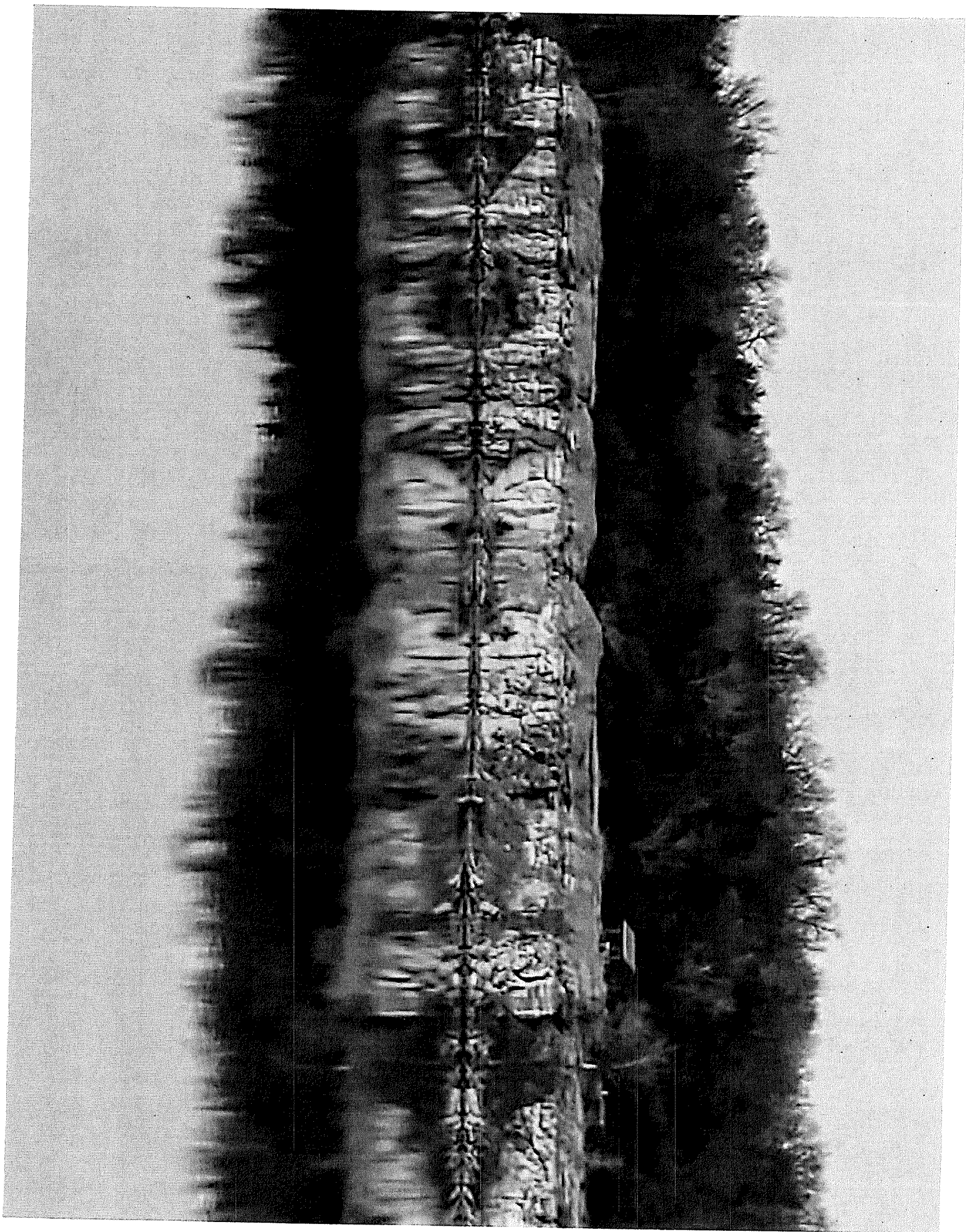
Having the State Park in Iola will encourage healthful living, emphasizing that Allen County is a cohesive forward thinking community providing opportunities and fun for all ages and ethnic groups. Also, the bigger and more lavish the park becomes, means more fame and free publicity, which everyone knows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

Having the State Park and its phenomenal lake completely adjacent to Iola'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 Iola 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.

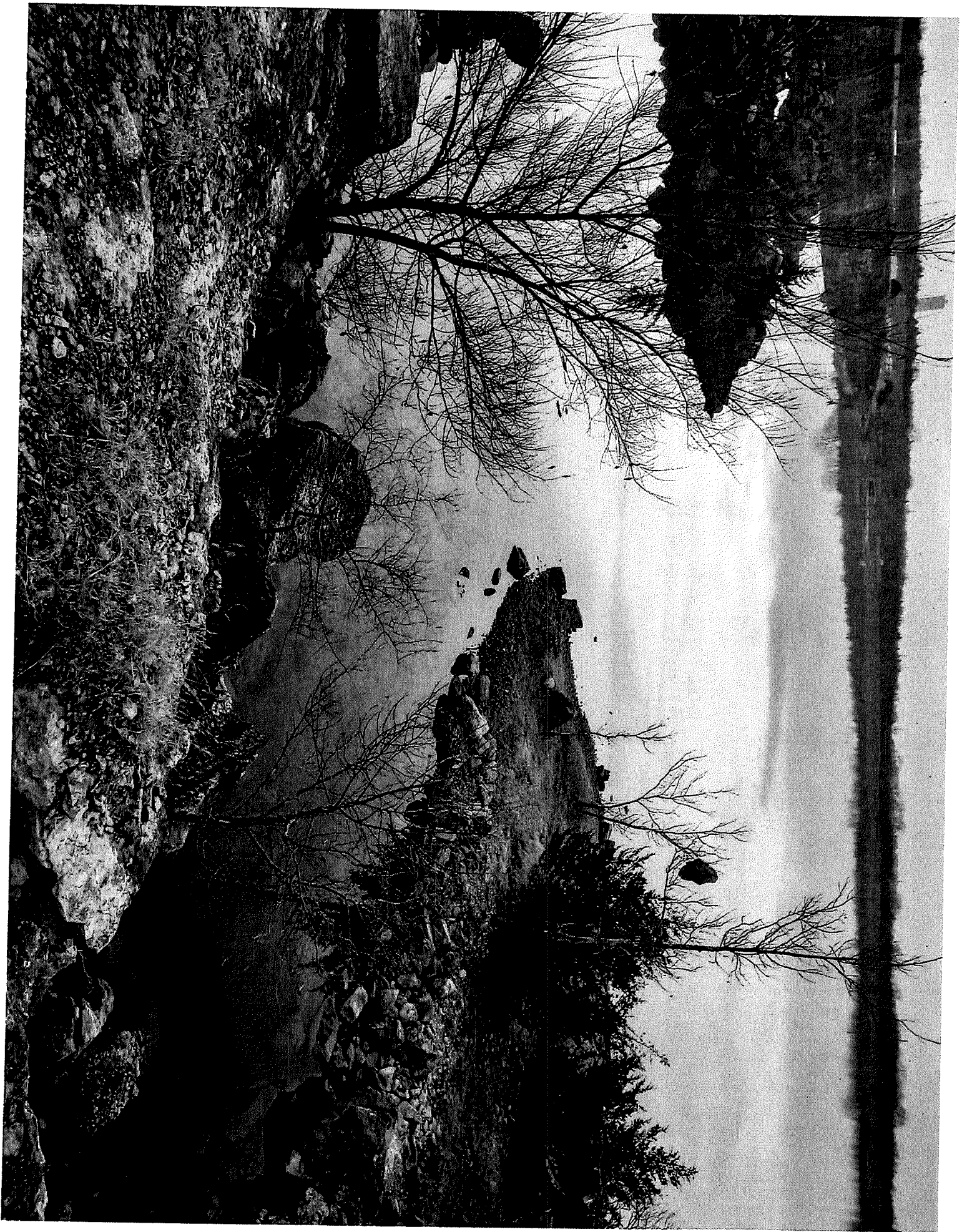
The park development can lead to more cafes, restaurants, hotels, fast food venues, retail shops, all with electric charging stations. Can you imagine...

Sincerely,


Tom Ellis
Resident of Iola







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



Mr. Stacey Fager
Superintendent

Jenna
Higginbotham
Curriculum Director

Aaron Cole
Director of Operations

Teresa Taylor
Human Resources/
Payroll Clerk/ Board
Clerk

Marcie Boring
Business Manager/
Accounts Payable

Staci Talkington
Food Service
Coordinator

Ben Prasko
Technology
Coordinator

Phone:
(620) 365-4700

Fax:
(620) 365-4708

www.usd257.org

February 9, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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.

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

Sincerely,

Mr. Stacey Fager
Resident of Allen County, KS

Feb. 13, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes & Members of the
House Committee of Agriculture and
Natural Resources.

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

I plan to retire in less than 2 years.
I'm interested in finding low
cost or no cost activities. I think
most people enjoy the opportunity
to exercise outdoors.

Sincerely,

Roger Fogelman

Roger Fogelman
Iola KS

February 13, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

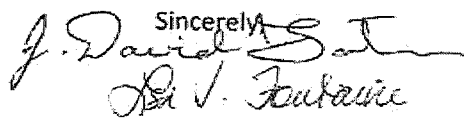
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

We have been involved with trails for over 25 years, starting with the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, which is now a state park. We enjoy hiking and biking and the great outdoors. We were part of a group of 12 that built the Southwind Rail Trail that 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 trails.

Transforming the Lehigh property 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. It's been great to see the cultural change in our community in recent years. People are focusing more on healthy lifestyles and getting out on their bikes and hiking the trails. We see firsthand how much they are used by people of all ages. We know it helps with not only physical health, but mental health as well. With the Lehigh property connecting to the Southwind and Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, it would provide one more way for people to get out and really see what the great State of Kansas has to offer.

We're in full support of making this a state park so we can be assured that all the effort put into making Lehigh a popular destination will be sustained for future generations to enjoy.

We appreciate your support in getting HB2331 through the legislative process and making the Lehigh Portland State Park become a reality.

Sincerely,


J. David Fontaine
Lisa J. Fontaine
1906 US Hwy 54
Iola, KS 66749

February 8, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

As a member of the THRIVE Allen County board and having lived and raised my family in Iola for over 40 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 everyone, but the lake was open to only the ELKS club members because of their lease. ELKS members made many improvements on the south side of the lake and the lake was highly utilized by their members.

With the lake being close to both Iola 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.

Sincerely,

Karen Gilpin
Resident of Iola, Kansas



February 13, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources:

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

First, the Lehigh Portland Park gift to the State of Kansas in Iola 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 Iola quarry was one of the first in eastern Kansas to mine limestone for cement production over a century ago.

The geologic formation present is called the "Iola 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.

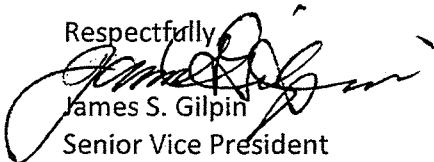
Finally, the State of Kansas can do something tangible to promote, “Kansas as a Healthy Place to Work and Live”. Did you know Allen County is already a healthy place to live? Having a facility with trails and a lake like Lehigh is one of the reasons!

In 2017, Allen County was one of 8 winners in the “Culture of Health” National Competition of the Robert Woods 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

February 13, 2023
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10 th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

February 10, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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 house 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

February 8, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: HB 2331

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael W. Goodwin".

Michael Goodwin, Treasurer

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

FEBRUARY 13, 2023
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

FEBRUARY 13, 2023
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10thSt.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

FEBRUARY 13, 2023
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I MAX GRUNDY am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating 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 a more healthy lifestyles for all.

Sincerely,
MAX GRUNDY

Resident of IOLA, KANSAS



CITY OF HUMBOLDT
OFFICE OF CITY ADMINISTRATION

725 Bridge, PO Box 228 · Humboldt, KS 66748-0228 · Ph: (620)473-3232 · Fax: (620)473-2133 · www.humboldtkansas.org

February 9, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I am Cole Herder, writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. Humboldt is my hometown just a few miles from the proposed sight of the park. As resident and City Administrator, I recognize this as a tremendous opportunity to the State of Kansas, Allen County, and surrounding towns.

The Prairie Spirit Trail was extended and opened to Iola in 2008. A local group then extended access from Iola to Humboldt by developing the Southwind Trail. The extensive Lehigh trail systems has been growing for many years.

I was amazed at the interest level of these trails when I started my position as City Administrator. People called from all over the State to ask about the Southwind Trail. It has brought many people to Allen County one rider that came from Ohio to ride these trails. The trails have been very good for local lodging and other businesses.

The creation and development of the Lehigh Portland State Park will be synergistic with the trails that are already in place and encourage development of new trails. Public access to this incredible quarry lake will provide a local and regional outdoor recreational treasure.

Several years ago I participated in a community conversation where it was discussed that Allen County is one of the only counties in Southeast Kansas that doesn't have a public lake. Opening the Lehigh Portland State Park would check that box in grand style.

I support HB2331 to create Lehigh Portland State Park. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cole Herder
City Administrator

Address your letter to
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Ks. 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources

As an elderly resident in Iola, I can't think of anything better than a state park right here in Iola. It's a grand place, with wonderful trails that improve all the time, and it would be a boom to our area.

I'm a full time volunteer, and along with other volunteers, we have worked many years to make our town be a place where anyone could come, and spend several days just to get away to relax. We have a free disc golf course, and a pickle ball court, and both are really fun for ages. Also, the disc golf course is very near the area where this park would be. There are trails leading right to it.

We have a historical square where a person can walk around it to see plaques on the old buildings, and also, as they're walking, there are signs on posts that show pictures of that block to depict the town as it was. The signs are different on both sides, so the person can walk the opposite way to see another view of the buildings, along with some of the people who were part of our beginnings.

Many other things are happening here. We have 4 buildings that are free museums. Also, our Riverside Park is an updated WPA area.

The people in Iola need a place to go where they can enjoy the lake area as well as bring people in from other places. We're a small town, and we try to make our area fun for anyone, and most is free. We are currently raising money for a splash park, again to show we care about our town, our lives, and how to improve our area. This park would be an asset that we could never make happen without the area becoming a state park. We need it, and that area has been important to our history since 1900. Please try to make our dreams come a reality.

Sincerely,

Donna Houser

120 W. Garfield

Iola, KS 66749



February 10, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

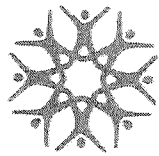
I am writing to express the Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commissions support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Creating Lehigh Portland State Park will add to the quality of life for the residents of Southeast Kansas, increasing the number of outdoor recreation activities available, and allowing spaces to encourage healthy lifestyles within the region. The creation of the State Park will also increase tourism revenue for the region. The Lehigh Portland trails, a portion of the land to be donated, connects to other biking trails in Franklin County, and a State Park designation will only increase the visitors, in turn increasing revenue for local businesses, and other tourism attractions within the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Taylor Hogue'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'H'.

Taylor Hogue
Deputy Director
Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission



Sunflower Foundation

February 10, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes,

We are writing this letter to support 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.

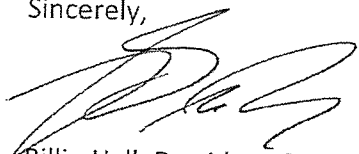
Through our partnerships, we have seen how Kansans deeply appreciate their state parks. Many state park trails are developed and maintained solely by volunteers with oversight from state park staff. During COVID, state parks provided a critical refuge, and that trend to "travel Kansas" continues even 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 (*photos of a few group members, 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



Prairie Travelers, Inc.

Promoting multi-use trails in Kansas along linear parkways

Feb 8th, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

The Board of Directors of Prairie Travelers is writing to express our support for creating Lehigh Portland State Park & Trails.

Trails provide critical habitat for wildlife, but more importantly in this hectic world, they allow nature to touch and restore us by promoting a healthy active lifestyle. Your designating LeHigh Portland as a State Park is an important investment in the quality of life for Kansans of all ages now and in the future.

Day after day we encounter Prairie Sunset Trail users who thank us for having such a haven for exercise, re-fueling one's soul and quality family time. Having 340 acres of Portland Trails and lake area as a Kansas Wildlife and Park property is an opportunity we would encourage you to embrace without hesitation.

Kansans would then experience a healthy lifestyle available at their doorstep and not have to go to neighboring MO to the Katy Trail to experience the great outdoors. Embrace it and folks will come from adjacent States. The economic impact would be a great boost for Allen County.

Forever grateful for your support,

Larry Hatfield, Pres

Rick Sroufe, VP

Ruth Holliday, Sec

Matt Moore, Treas

Kelly Wenz, Trail Manager

Larry Zimmerman


Renee Boyd

Larry DeBolt

Tony Flax

Matt Freund

John Moore

 , PRESIDENT

Sharing Kansas Outdoors
Prairie Travelers, P.O. Box 781033, Wichita, Ks. 67278-1033
prairietravelers@yahoo.com

February 9, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Kansas State Capital
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

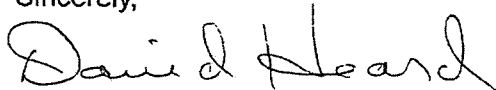
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I am writing in support of the Lehigh Portland State Park Bill. My family has lived in lola since 1941. We were long-time merchants with the Western Auto Associate Store in lola. My wife and I are retired now but our families continue to have businesses in lola and LaHarpe. Our oldest son, John, has Beyond Engineering, a computer consulting business, our daughter, Sharla Miller, is a Farm Bureau Insurance agent and our granddaughter, Savannah Flory, owns TLC Greenhouse. We are vested and invested in lola and this area. Kansas is our home and lola is our address.....

The opportunity to have a State Park right in our backyard is amazing. This land has been privately held for 40 years and now could be enjoyed by all of our families. We all use the wonderful trails but the prospect of being able to enjoy the lake with swimming and fishing would be such a blessing. Our granddaughters could ride their bikes to the Park!! We are business people and we strongly believe a State Park would be an economic opportunity for all of this area.

Our family asks you to support the Lehigh Portland State Park Bill. We are all excited about this possibility!!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Heard".

David Heard
901 N. Sycamore
lola, Kansas 66749