

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

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Samantha	Moon	City of Osawatomie
Rachel	Moore	Citizen
Sharon	Moreland	Citizen

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce

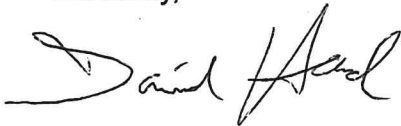
Dear Senator,

I am writing in support of the Lehigh Portland State Park Bill #HB 2331. My family has lived in lola since 1944. 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 black ink that reads "David Heard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

David Heard
901 N. Sycamore
lola, Kansas 66749



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.humboldtks.org

March 17, 2023

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

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

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. The new USBR 55 will pass through Iola connecting to 18,000 miles of Bike Routes.

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

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 Jody Hoener and I am the President of Healthy Bourbon County Action Team. I am writing to express my support of House Bill 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

The last ten years has led me to many community and business development activities, — including increasing access to alternative transportation and creating spaces for public recreational activities.

I whole heartedly support the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park. Living in a county just East of Allen County, I have had the opportunity to visit and experience the Lehigh Portland area many times: on bike and on foot. It is a beautiful amenity that allows for anyone who knows it is there to take advantage of the more than 14 miles of trails throughout the property, as well as scenic vistas and overlooks.

I see many community leaders and advocates here who have worked diligently on Lehigh in many aspects: volunteers who have created the trails, Iola Industries members who have gifted land and allowed for the creation of trails to spur economic growth in our region, county and city representation that supports these efforts because they know how important they are to the vitality and sustainability of our rural areas. So many people have had integral parts to play in the process of bringing Lehigh Portland Trails to fruition. So many people are hopeful the next step in the future of this amenity is Lehigh Portland State Park.

I have worked alongside many of the volunteers and staff who have put their literal blood, sweat and tears into creating Lehigh Portland into what it is today. Together we also created a regional trail network connecting Allen, Bourbon and Crawford counties called, Prairie Pathways. This work intermingles so well into the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park. The Prairie Pathways route runs very close to Lehigh. And Lehigh is already connected into the Prairie Spirit State Park and the Southwind Rail Trail (an all-volunteer built and maintained trail). So many paths already lead directly into Lehigh!

As a region, we have seen the positive economic impact trails have made on property value, business climate, health outcomes and overall quality of life. Beyond that, increasing access to outdoor recreation is an evidence-based solution to health outcomes and thereby directly impacts workforce growth goals.

It is widely understood that business' follow where the talent pool is, and people live where they can enjoy a quality of life. This means living in a community that allows families access to diverse recreational opportunities and to safe non-motorized transportation options.



The creation of Lehigh Portland State Park will have positive local, regional, and statewide impacts for future generations to come. It leverages local strengths and maximizes return on investment. Infrastructure will be built to incentivize tourism, encourage rural revitalization, build healthy populations, and create business friendly environments.

As a region we have seen the positive impact on many goals whether they are economic, community, tourism, health outcomes, and so much more. We certainly have every reason to celebrate this opportunity lola Industries is providing by gifting the state Lehigh Portland with the intent of it becoming a state park.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to future of Lehigh Portland State Park and all the benefits it will have for the state of Kansas, especially those of us in southeast Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jody Hoener".

Jody Hoener

Resident of Bourbon County



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 Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing to express the Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commissions support for HB????, 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, flowing style.

Taylor Hogue
Deputy Director
Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission

120 W. Garfield

Iola, KS 66749

Dear Senate.

I hope you realize what a wonderful addition that the state park would mean for Iola and Allen County. My husband and I moved to Iola for a teaching job even though we were not used to a small town. However, almost 59 years later, I'm still here. I love the town, and I'm quite involved in it. As a registered dental hygienist, and in later years, I went back to school to be an English and drama teacher.

Having been in both professions, I found out that our this county needed help. My husband, and our girls were active in this community. After college, our girls left to get into the profession they wanted to do, and my husband continued to teach history and coach. Most of all he loved the history in this town.. He died eight years ago, but he taught me history, and the value of knowing it, and how we could improve things. We both volunteered at our museum, and now, I've been there 27 years. His last words to me were "To Never Stop Making Things Better." So, at 85, almost 86, I'm a full time volunteer, and I still am trying to make our community better.

This state park is a wonderful blessing to our area. Though out our lives, my family have gone to many state parks and national parks where we found treasures in both. To walk the paths is a dream for people who love nature, and to swim or canoe in the lake is a feeling of nature. Everyone should be able to use the state park instead of having to drive to Toronto, or to the Ft. Scott National Park. To learn how marvelous Kansas and all the other states in our great county is something everyone should be able to do, but if there's a reason they can't, it would be a dream for this park to be at the availability for our community. Please vote, "Yes."

Sincerely,


Donna Houser

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, run, and enjoyed this trail and kayaked in the lake with friends, family and grandchildren.

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

Nancy Isaac

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.

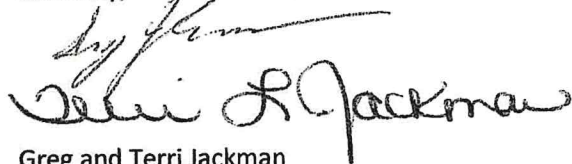
We have loved camping, fishing, and boating our entire lives. We, along with our kids and grandkids, frequently go to Eisenhower State Park (Melvern), Pomona Lake, Cross Timbers (Toronto) and Fall River, but they are an hour or more away which makes it difficult to go as often as we would like. It would be so wonderful to have a nice facility closer to home. That would allow us to more frequently be able to camp and fish.

We also have relatives from Wichita, Kansas, as well as Texas and New Mexico that would be able to use the facility when they come back to visit as they all enjoy camping and the outdoors also.

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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg and Terri Jackman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg and Terri Jackman
2 West Mulberry Street
Colony, KS 66015

February 8, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce
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, Robert Johnson and my wife, Rita Johnson, are writing to express our support for the house bill creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

We live in Towanda, KS in Butler County. We enjoy outdoor activities, especially hiking. We do most of our hiking on the trails at Kansas State Parks.

- El Dorado Lake
- Elk City Lake
- Cross Timbers (Toronto Lake)
- Fall River Lake
- Kanopolis
- Elk City Lake
- Wilson Lake
- Scott City Lake and Battle Canyon
- Little Jerusalem

Last year we discovered the Lehigh Portland Trails in Iola. We have been so impressed with the trails at Lehigh Portland, we have returned several times to hike the various trails. The last time we went we took our daughter and son-in-law. They were also impressed with the many trails, and varied landscapes at Lehigh Portland. They are just as enthusiastic as we are to have access to the trails that Thrive Allen County and local volunteers developed and maintain at Lehigh Portland.

These trails offer the chance to enjoy the varied landscapes in the area, from trails through the woods to trails that wind around pasture land to trails that skirt the small lake to trails that follow alongside Elm creek. There are even trails that will take you by some of the structures and remains of the old quarry and cement factory or by the remnants of old rock fences and foundations where homesteads

used to be. Along the way, you can even visit a small cave. We have done a lot of hiking in Kansas, and we have never found hiking trails with more diversity.

All the trails we've been on at Lehigh Portland are first rate, however, the facilities are not what we are accustomed to at the various Kansas State Parks. We drive over an hour and a half from Towanda, KS to get to the trailhead in Iola. The first thing we need after the long drive is a place to park and a restroom. Not necessarily in that order. Then, after a long hike, the first thing we need is a restroom or a fast drive into town.

We feel that if Lehigh Portland is taken into the Kansas State Park system, these and other improvements would benefit everyone who has the opportunity to enjoy what this area has to offer. In addition, state park status would bring more economic opportunities to Iola and Allen County. I say this as a proud resident of Butler County, Kansas, two counties away from Allen County where Lehigh Portland is located.

As I mentioned earlier, we drive an hour and a half to get to Lehigh Portland. The last time we were there we met two bicyclists who drove over two hours from Liberty, Missouri to ride their bikes on the trails at Lehigh Portland. So, if we can establish a Kansas State Park there, our state will have an opportunity for increased tourism from within and outside of the state of Kansas. We always post photographs that we have taken at Lehigh Portland on Facebook after every visit. Each time we do this, we get requests for more information from Facebook members in Kansas and from other states who would like to visit the area.

We are enclosing some photographs we have taken while hiking the trails at Lehigh Portland so that you can see some of the diversity that this area offers.

Sincerely,

Robert B. and Rita M. Johnson
401 North 10th Street
Towanda, Kansas 67144

Enc: Photos of Lehigh Portland



On the trail



Lake Lehigh



Water distribution building



Elm Creek



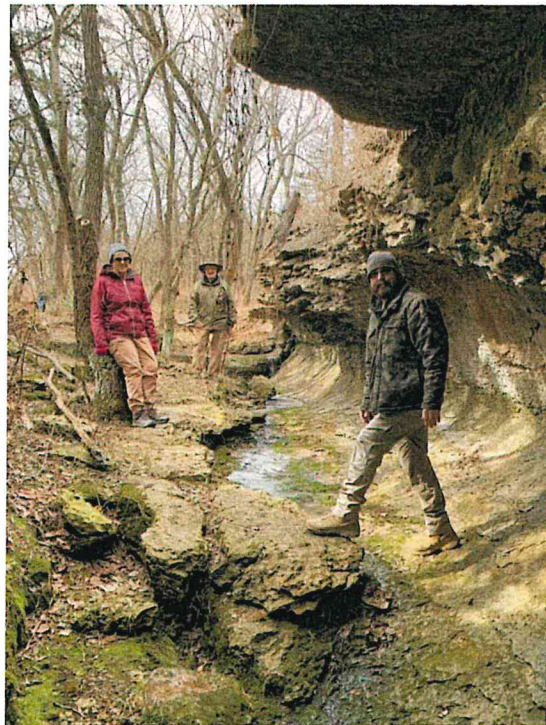
East end of cave



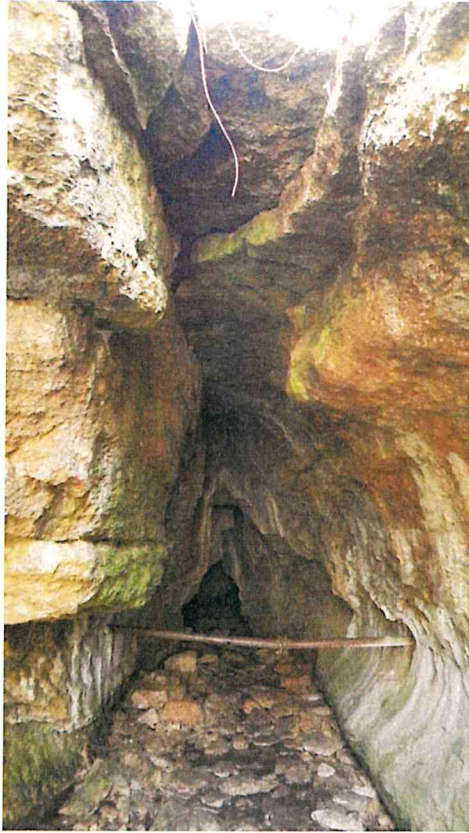
Rock fence along the trail



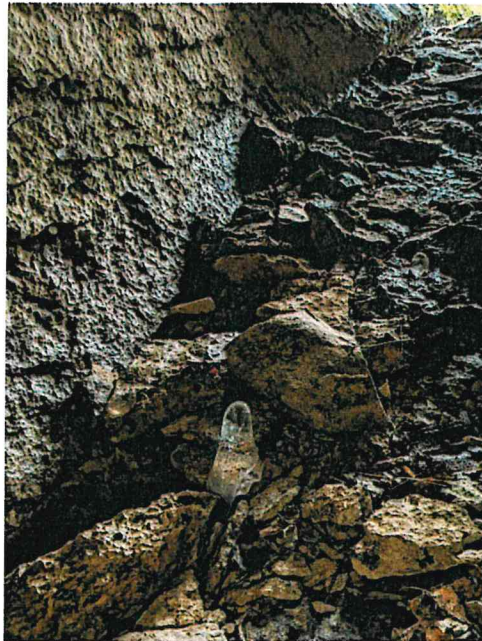
West end of cave



Looking out from the cave



Looking into the cave



An ice stalagmite in the cave



March 17, 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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on HB2331, which would create Lehigh State Park.

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) is a 7-year-old, \$60-million health philanthropy located in Hutchinson. Our mission is to improve the health of Kansans. We focus on three strategic areas—access to care, Thriving Children, and engaged congregations and communities, a program aimed at addressing community health by engaging churches throughout Kansas.

We are very supportive of creating Lehigh Portland State Park. Doing so will contribute to the community's health and economic vitality of the region. By creating Lehigh Portland State Park, we can improve community health by establishing new recreational opportunities. The new park and trails will offer new opportunities for recreation and physical activity that will benefit many of our congregational partners and residents of the state. The park will also stimulate the local economy, creating new jobs and tax revenue.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide public comment on HB2331. Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Jordan".

David Jordan
President and CEO
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

Lyle D. Kee, MPA

104 East Washington Street
Yates Center, Kansas 66783

Tel. 620-705-1822
E-Mail: chiefk@cox.net

Yates Center Chief of Police (Retired) (1986 – 2018)
Yates Center City Council, Ward 1, Position 1 (2022 – 2024)
President – Yates Center City Council (2022 – 2023)

Mayoral Appointments:
Chair, Administrative Committee
Budget & Finance Committee
Public Works Committee

March 20, 2023

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

Re: HB 2331, Lehigh Portland State Park, Iola, Kansas

Dear Senator Erickson:

I very strongly support HB 2331, a Kansas House bill that provides for a new state park near Iola, Kansas, and the new park to be named Lehigh Portland State Park.

The city of Yates Center owns and maintains two beautiful reservoirs that are constantly used for recreational purposes, and for which are professionally managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism. The reservoirs are not only a water supply for the city, Woodson County, and neighboring counties and cities, but they also provide fishing, hunting, camping, skiing, and other recreational uses.

Having a new state lake and park in the area would greatly enhance the area's recreational activities and promote local commerce through tourism, lodging, restaurants, gas stations, bait shops, grocery stores, and the list goes on and on. It's absolutely a win-win idea/project that should be passed unanimously by the Kansas Legislature and made a reality.

Sincerely,



Lyle D. Kee
Yates Center City Councilman
Ward 1, Position 1

March 17, 2023

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

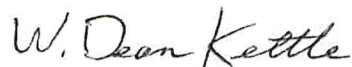
Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

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

This new park would provide outdoor opportunities, stimulate the local economy, and improve the quality-of-life for Kansans. Converting this land to a State Park makes sense economically given the existing investments of trails and enthusiasm from the local community.

I grew up on a farm outside Iola and my maternal grandfather was an electrician at the Lehigh Plant for many years. My wife and I took our children to state parks all over the country on family vacations. The Lehigh State Park would be the type of park we all would have enjoyed with its fascinating history, and ecological and geological features. It would be wonderful to see a State Park that all can enjoy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "W. Dean Kettle".

W. Dean Kettle
640 N1000 Road
Lawrence, KS 66047

March 19, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson
Senate Committee on Commerce

I have lived in Southeast Kansas my entire life, over 64 years now, and I want to encourage and support the passing of HB2331. Many individuals have been working tirelessly to create trails and parks that everyone can enjoy. This area of the state is in need of more avenues that support the physical, emotional and mental health of its citizens. We also desperately need the dollars that opportunities like this can bring into our communities, and most certainly, struggling small businesses owners would benefit greatly from the increased traffic this bill would help create.

Since my retirement a few years ago, I have discovered the benefits of hiking, biking, kayaking the area with friends and family. The passage of this bill will help to sustain our area and give Kansans and non-residents alike the ability to discover the beauty that Kansas has to offer in a real, experiential way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lori Kiblinger
Chanute, Kansas



Monday, March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson
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, Andrew Kraft, am writing to express my support for creating the Lehigh Portland State Park.

The Iola community and the State of Kansas would benefit from Lehigh Portland becoming a State Park by:

- Improving visibility to bring tourists to Allen County
- Building on a local getaway for residents to improve their health & wellbeing
- Expanding resources to protect the ecosystem
- Strengthening the partnership between local and state entities

Sincerely,

Andrew Kraft

MUPP Board
City of Emporia

To: Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce

Dear Senator Erickson and members of the committee.

Kansas has an opportunity to benefit several counties and perhaps even a good portion of southeast Kansas. I hope your committee will help Kansas do so. Clearly the benefits that will grow from this legislation will substantially outweigh the costs. Thank you for your consideration. --

Thomas Krajewski

Solarseeder

214 Marcou Rd

Onalaska, WI

54650

608 5191656

Jay Kretzmeier
116 W. Edwards
Iola, Kansas 66749

March 19, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce

Dear Senator Erickson,

I write to you to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I present to you here three messages, my demographic, my observations and experiences, and my request as to the advancement of Lehigh Portland State Park legislation.

I am a 70 year-old retired public accountant. Except for college years I am a lifelong resident of Iola, Kansas. I have served as a past president of Iola Area Chamber of Commerce and six years as a Trustee of the Allen County Regional Hospital. I am a Charter Member of the volunteers who constructed the 6.5 mile Southwind Railtrail in the year beginning in 2012, have maintained it since, and for the past 4 years have been serving as the Trail Manager of the Southwind Railtrail. I point out the Southwind Railtrail is adjacent to, and with a connector trail, connected to the Lehigh Portland Trail system. I became a cycling enthusiast in 2007 and since 2008 have ridden the Prairie Spirit Railtrail from Iola to Ottawa 26 times. In 2013 I experienced a serious heart attack. There is very little question my previous cycling activity provided secondary heart muscle strength sufficient to save my life. I believe in the importance of exercise and recreation.

During these past ten years I have spent hundreds of hours each year side trimming, mowing, and maintaining the Southwind Railtrail. During those hours I witness the large number of our local population who utilize that trail along with the Lehigh Portland offerings. Also observed are individuals from our metropolitan areas, and out of state visitors, who utilize these in conjunction with travel on the Prairie Spirit Trail. The connection to the Lehigh Portland backbone trail and single-track, along with the quarry/lake offers diversity to walkers, nature enthusiasts, and cyclists. I have observed firsthand the local trails have been one factor in the decision of young families to take up residence in our area. It has also been a factor in retired persons moving back to this area.

It is with my heartfelt request that the entire legislature take up the initiative to accept and give state park designation to the Lehigh Portland property. Doing so will deservedly return to local residents environmental resources for their tax dollars given to Kansas Wildlife and Parks. It will assure both, the local communities with the advancement of outdoor recreation and exercise, along with being a resource for bringing others to the area in support of the local economy.

I thank you for your consideration of this very important opportunity to all of the residents of Kansas and the Southeast Kansas area.

Respectfully yours,


Jay Kretzmeier
Iola, Ks

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

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

I, April Kroenke, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park as a native Iolan who has moved worldwide and throughout the United States with my husband, Major Scott Kroenke, supporting his 26+ years of Army career. One of the things that we used as an excellent resource for help with dealing with mental health stressors, physical healing, and family bonding has been the area state parks that were close to us everywhere we lived.

My husband is preparing to retire later this summer, and he decided to move our family back to our hometown area. Since being home, I was excited to discover the availability of the Lehigh Portland trails. The positive impact of these trails has been phenomenal. I have been able to use the paths to go for runs to clear my head while my husband spent the last year in Kuwait on a final tour overseas, walking with friends from church, hiking with my family, and exploring caves.

Designating the Lehigh Portland trail area and the lake connected to it as a state park would offer even more activities for our community, including camping, kayaking, fishing, and discovering more trails to hike and run. It has been nice to see so many people taking advantage of the use of the trail system.

HB 2331's passing would have a significant economic impact on our rural community by having a location for those traveling through can take advantage of a place to stay, play, and visit for shopping and exploring. In addition, our community economy would also have a positive impact since the State Park would be within the Iola city limits. Currently, Allen County has no State Parks or lakes within our county.

Sincerely,
April D. Kroenke
April Kroenke
A resident of La Harpe in Allen County, 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,

I, Scott Kroenke, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I am a native of the Iola area and have had the privilege to serve in the Kansas National Guard from 1997 through 2004, then transferred to Active Duty, which I am still serving. I will retire this summer after spending 26 years serving this great state and nation and returning to the Iola area. I have had the privilege to move to new locations, allowing me to enjoy many National and State Parks.

Allen County currently has approximately 962 veterans, per the Veteran Population Projection Model 2020 (VetPop2020)¹; Iola has 28 full-time firefighters and officers²; these numbers do not include the Iola Police Department, Allen County Sheriffs Department, police officers, and firefighters from Humboldt, Gas, La Harpe, or the countless volunteers throughout the county or those that are no longer serving but are still residing in Allen County. Many of these veterans and first responders have lived through, seen, and experienced situations, myself included, that the citizens of Allen County will never experience. I was stationed in Fort Gordon, GA, and had the privilege to participate in a program that provided veterans and first responders with outdoor recreational wellness experiences. The primary modality was kayak fishing which has proven cognitive and emotional benefits. Additionally, these programs incorporated structured activities in a pressure-free environment, creating opportunities for community building and personal healing and providing much-needed camaraderie and support.

The creation of Lehigh Portland State Park will allow my fellow veterans and first responders a centralized location with Allen County where we can come together and provide much-needed camaraderie and support to each other. Iola is the only town that does not have a public lake near the population center of the respective county compared to Neosho, Bourbon, and Anderson counties. My vision is to provide outdoor recreational wellness within the Iola area. I have personally experienced the benefits that outdoor recreational wellness offers. The Lehigh Portland State Park is the perfect location, with the lake providing kayak fishing trips and hiking trails for a more personal approach. I have spoken to many community members and expressed

¹ https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp

² <https://www.cityofiola.com/269/FireEMS>

my desire for recreational wellness. Support is abundant, but the biggest concern is that there is no location near lola without having to drive for at least an hour.

The passing of HB2331 will provide a much-needed park for outdoor recreational wellness and have economic impacts on our rural community, with travelers staying, playing, and shopping within the community.

Sincerely,

Scott Kroenke

Resident of La Harpe, KS

3/17/23

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, Julianna LaFever, am writing to express my strong support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland Trails State Park. This area is a stunning example of the natural beauty of the state of Kansas and provides a great opportunity for people to connect with the outdoors.

The Lehigh Portland Trails are a great asset for the Kansas community. They provide a place of refuge and recreation for local residents, and attract visitors from all over the region. For example, I live in Kansas City, MO and often long for a quiet location to be able to relax and enjoy nature away from the business of the big city. These carefully maintained trails are only 2 hours from downtown Kansas City, which is a huge draw for those of us who live here! It is a unique and exciting experience for hikers and nature lovers. It is also a great resource for the local community and a source of pride for the state.

I strongly urge you to support the bill to make Lehigh Portland Trails a state park. It is an incredible asset to our part of the country and makes a valuable contribution to the environment, economy, and quality of life of the region's residents.

Sincerely,



Julianna LaFever

Resident of Kansas City, MO

March 16, 2023

Senator 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 Leahy, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I have had the privilege of being the steward of the Lehigh Portland trails for the past year and a half, as well as the Director of Trails for Thrive Allen County. One of the most important parts of my job is to tell the story of how Lehigh Portland came to be, and where it has yet to go.

That said, I should give you a tiny bit of my background. I'm a transplant to Kansas. My fiancé and I moved from Minnesota in 2018 to be closer to family, fulfill her lifelong dream of being a teacher, and reconnect with a slower pace of life away from the Twin Cities. There was some trepidation on behalf of my friends and family because they didn't understand why I'd move to rural Kansas, but all I could see was opportunity. Willa Cather is often attributed a quote that says, "anybody can love the mountains, but it takes a soul to love the prairie," and I can't think of a better Kansas-focused analogy. I saw the opportunity to, through hard work, help nature reclaim its place in my own life, and others I care about. Ad astra per aspera. My work with both the land and people of this area has taught me Lehigh Portland is the best opportunity here to connect folks with nature. Lehigh truly has something for everyone.

One particularly unique facet of Lehigh Portland is that it is a living museum. It is as rich in history as it is in its landscape. It is the beating heart of lola and has been for more than a century. One of the first mentions of the area is described in Zebulon Pike's journal from 1806, when the indigenous tribes of the area met the party and Pike's men hunted deer near Elm Creek. A century later the first miners would start quarrying for the newly established lola Portland Cement Company. Quickly the area would be enveloped with the homesteads of the factory workers. In 1917 Lehigh Portland Cement Company bought the lola plant and would continue to be Allen County's largest employer until the plant's closure in 1971. Pieces of the industrial past can be seen in the ever-present cement silos, old cars peeking in the woods, abandoned railbeds now used for parts of the trails, foundations of long-lost homesteads, meticulously stacked stone walls, a water pumping station, and old access roads marked by brown Neosho River gravel. Newspaper articles can be found on the history of the cave on the eastern side of the property that describe a popular picnic spot, and potential hideout for bootleggers during prohibition. These visual markers live in locals' minds, and they have stories generations old to share if one listens.

In the years following the cement quarry closure, nature started to reclaim the land. The quarry slowly filled with water, the rocky soil left by mining was once again covered by native grasses, and wildlife began to appear again. That's when a vision of incorporating more organic and intentional ways of interacting with nature on the land started. This manifested in trails being carefully constructed following the contours of the aforementioned history. This process is easily seen when traversing the property but what might not be as readily apparent is all the work that's gone into fostering the wonderfully diverse ecosystems in close proximity to each other. Lehigh is a tapestry of ecosystems. Along the northern edge of the property cottonwoods and sycamores line the Elm Creek riparian area, with stalwart oaks foresting the uplands. Moving eastward one will pass through the pleasantly shaded savannah grasses, then into the rugged and colorful limestone glades, remnants of unplowed prairie that likely used to house livestock. Arid outcroppings overlook the quarry lake, and the alien features of prickly pears and yucca stand out in contrast to the lush green present on the western shore of the lake. Moving southeasterly, trees become scarcer and open to the widest swaths of prairie, which with care can be restored and in Pike's words, "produce a very beautiful appearance." All these areas have been carefully curated and fought for by a different breed of volunteer: the conservationist.

It's with these volunteers that I've found my passion. Balancing the ecology of the land with carefully maintained human infrastructure became woven into the fiber of my being. I became aware of Aldo Leopold's concept of land ethic, the idea that people and land are inherently intertwined, in my college years, and it fundamentally changed me. However, it wasn't until generous volunteers passed their knowledge on how to balance diversity in the context of Lehigh's ecosystems that I truly understood it. I have spent hundreds of hours managing invasive species, collecting seeds for native wildflowers, thinning overgrown forest, executing prescribed burns, and working to feather ecosystem edges; but that's only a drop in the bucket compared to the thousands of hours volunteers have put into the sustainability of Lehigh. Working beside them to ensure the longevity of both the land and the trails is among the most rewarding work I have ever done. In fact, the gift of the voluntary exchange of knowledge passed on by community volunteers is perhaps the most valuable gift that this community has to offer. Not to mention we're working to preserve one of the fastest disappearing ecosystems in the entire world: the great American prairie. Passing on the knowledge and story of this land is key to its survival, just much as maintenance and preservation. With the folks who care for Lehigh, educating the next generation of stewards is not just about passing on knowledge, it's about giving them the tools to build upon the existing legacy and chart their own course moving forward.

The Kansas legislature has the opportunity with this bill to continue the tradition already ingrained at Lehigh Portland and cement a sustainable legacy for future generations of Kansans. If my mentors in this work have taught me anything about the work it takes to care for the land, it is that paying attention is how we show love, and that sentiment doesn't just relate to the land; it's about the relationships we build together. Lehigh Portland can be the cornerstone for future generations of those willing to connect with nature and each other.

I will forever be comforted by memories of crackling grass fires creeping into russet fields, huge flocks of waterfowl seeking refuge in hidden coves along the lake's cliffs, the serene coolness of a light misting underneath a gray sky, crisp walks following a coyote's tracks in a fresh snow, light dancing on the back of an ornate box turtle sunning itself on the trail, a doe and her fawns silently resting in a newly cleared meadow, discovering an explosion of electric purple blazing stars flowers protruding from a rocky glade for the first time, and an owl waiting high in a cherry tree for dusk to settle in. I relish the work that lets me linger on these small moments, and it sustains me when times are hard. I found exactly what I was looking for when I came to Kansas: a way to connect with nature. I have Lehigh to thank for that.

Lehigh Portland healed me, and the people I've met because of this beautiful stretch of land in rural Kansas have healed me. Lehigh Portland is the place that taught me there is always more to see if you look closer. Lehigh Portland helped me realize what I can say now with pride: I'm a Kansan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Leahy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Leahy

Thrive Allen County Director of Trails, Board Member of Grassland Heritage Foundation,
Steward of Lehigh Portland Trails
Resident of Chanute, KS

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair Senate Committee on Commerce

Dear Chair Erickson,

I am writing in support of making what was the Elks Lake and previously Lehigh Quarry, a state park. There are many miles of bike trails with a varying degree of difficulty. Almost all of the trails are family friendly for biking and walking. It is a safe place for seniors to walk where they don't have to worry about tripping on uneven sidewalks, or walk in the streets where there are no sidewalks. People are now being encouraged to get outside to walk where there are trees as "forest bathing" is good for mental health. Surrounding the area are city parks offering disc golf, swimming, playground and ball fields. Picnic areas are near by the site in a couple of areas. As we all try to have healthy life styles, the more accessible outdoor areas are, the more inclined we are to use them. Iola has good highways intersecting north to south, east to west making a this a great location for a State Park.

Sincerely,

Karen Lee
Iola, KS

March 17, 2023

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

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

I am writing to express my support for HB2331 and the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park. Like so many wonderful destinations across the sunflower state, what we hope to be Lehigh Portland State Park can be even more special. This environment represents a confluence of outdoor amenities that bring together a diverse set of people from all across the Midwest. Highlighted by miles of trails and endless acres of native flora and fauna. All of this reflected in the beauty of quarry lake. This space has something to offer everyone and deserves the title and protection of becoming our 29th Kansas State Park.

Furthermore, the surrounding local communities have been hard at work for many years building Allen County into a place to live, work and play. A destination not just for Kansans but also for people from across the country wanting to learn more about our State. Recently, and thanks in part to private investment, county organizations and national media exposure, there is a "buzz" centered in southeast Kansas. These local communities deserve a partnership between state and local entities that stimulates and broadens regional economic competitiveness and provides additional opportunities for new and existing businesses. Adding a state park to Allen County would certainly help.

In conclusion, please strongly consider Lehigh Portland State Park as the latest addition to the Kansas State Parks family. As a native Kansan, Kansas small business owner, self-proclaimed Kansas ambassador and member of the Kansas Explorers Club, I could not think of a more deserving addition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Lisbona', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bryan Lisbona
Kansas Business Owner
Resident of Leavenworth County
(913) 515-6348
bryan@kinfolkcreative.com

115 S. 6th
P.O. Box 588
Independence, KS 67301



Phone: (620)331-3830
Fax: (620)331-3834
www.actioncouncil.com

2/8/2023

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

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

My name is Riley Lukomski and I am the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Action Council, we serve as the county's economic development organization. It is a pleasure to offer our support of HB2331. This is a project of tremendous importance and value, not only to Allen County, but the entirety of southeast Kansas.

As an economic development organization, we are chiefly concerned with creating a strong, vibrant, and sustainable local economy. We do this through the lens of the symbiotic relationship between business, talent, and community. Businesses provides jobs to talented people and investment to communities. Talented people are needed for businesses to succeed and for communities to be desirable. Communities provide the amenities that make talent and business want to stay and grow. I say this to emphasize the impact that HB2331 can have on the regional economy of southeast Kansas. The addition of a 4th state park to southeast Kansas would bluster the recreation and tourism economy of southeast Kansas as a whole. There is often a misconception about what southeast Kansas has to offer to visitors and potential new residence alike. Giving the Leigh Portland Trails and Lake property the distinction and protection of a state park will elevate the status of southeast Kansas as a destination with ample amenities to help attract and retain a much-needed workforce.

Once again, I want to extend my support for your efforts in Allen County and thank you for all your hard work on HB 2331.

Sincerely,

Riley Lukomski

Executive Director, Montgomery County Action Council

March 20, 2023

Rep. Sen. Renee Erickson
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

My name is Susan Lynn and I am writing in support of HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I grew up across the creek from the old Lehigh Cement Plant. Back in the 1960s, Lehigh was a noisy, bustling industry that captivated our imaginations. Loud explosions shook the ground as the limestone was blasted from the cavernous rock quarry. The plant's rail cars lumbered through the woods at all hours of the day and night.

The only downside we could see was that every summer my mother had us use muriatic acid and razor blades to scrape away the cement dust that had accumulated on the windows of our house. Of course, I made no connection that we were also breathing that same air.

After the plant closed in 1970, the site became a graveyard of abandoned equipment that over time was buried by the encroaching woods.

Where we once dared to venture became downright uninviting.

Two things changed the scenario:

1. The quarry began to fill with crystal clear water from underground springs and became a popular site for Elks Club members who rented the lake for \$1 a year from Iola Industries, and
2. Volunteers began to build walking and biking trails around the lake, turning the woolly woods into a wonderland. Today, couples, friends, and families; high school and community college athletes, biking, and hiking groups flock to the trails that only 10 years didn't exist. I can now do more outdoor activities with my grandchildren than was available to me as a child.

Young families expect, and deserve, amenities that improve their quality of life. That's often where small towns like Iola fall short. Forty years ago, Iola's population was 7,000. Today, it's 5,300.

By further developing the Lehigh Portland trails and the accompanying lake, Allen County's towns would have a better chance for a sustainable future by attracting people our way.

We know it can work by evidence of the trails' popularity among people from across a three-state region, usually avid bicyclists eager to experience new trails. It's not unusual to see cars from across a wide region parked at the trailheads.

In my mind, the most persuasive argument for making this site a state park is that it would preserve the pristine waters and the magnificent trails for generations to come. This is a precious resource that must be guarded as well as celebrated.

Sincerely,

Susan Lynn,
Iola, Kansas



Here is a photo taken the first of the year of my husband, Dr. Brian Wolfe, and our children and grandchildren, Nick and Louise Krug, and their children, Olive and Bruce, of Topeka. When they come to visit, an outing on the rail trail is a must.

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

As a longtime resident of Iola, I have experienced first-hand the benefits of the landscape that makes up the proposed State Park. My children have camped there with their scout troops, learning to canoe on the lake and sleeping under the stars. I believe that opening up these lands to the public will provide an inclusive environment where more people, young and old, can benefit from experiencing the joys of our little oasis here in Southeast Kansas. This would also connect it to existing trail systems, bringing more folks to the area to experience this hidden gem. With so many small communities being bypassed in the name of a faster route between larger cities, this project gives people a reason to stop right here and enjoy a respite from the frantic pace of life. I would also love for our community to benefit directly from the tax dollars we provide to the state for parks, while adding a little something to our community coffers as well. As this bill recently passed the House by an 80% bipartisan majority, it seems clear that we have found something that most folks can agree on, which is no mean feat, and an encouraging sign to all of your constituents that bipartisan cooperation is possible. On a practical, environmental, and financial basis, this park will have many benefits for years to come, and I urge you to vote for its creation.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Magnuson

March 17, 2023

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

Dear Senator Erickson:
(Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce)

I am writing to express my support of a State Park or specifically Lehigh Portland State Park in Iola, Kansas. This park would greatly impact local businesses but also allow recreational and fun/healthy lifestyles. Plus the lake could and would be open to the public.

Iola is my hometown. I have many fond memories of Iola and I've remained impressed with all that has been done within the city to offer not only the educational aspect. In particular, Allen County Community College but also the Allen County Regional Hospital/Clinic and the Bowlus Fine Arts Center.

Iola also has a two-block square which is one of its kind. The square houses the courthouse plus a clock tower from the original courthouse. This is the location of retail shops and restaurants.

In other words, a State Park would only enhance what Iola has to offer to its citizens and visitors.

Thank you.

Nancy (Cook) Martin
7200 Silverheel Street
Apt 109
Shawnee KS 66227



HUMANITY HOUSE FOUNDATION
110 EAST STREET
IOLA, KANSAS 66749
620-380-6664
3/20/2023

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 Georgia Masterson, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. Humanity House is a non-profit located in Iola. Our primary focus is keeping people fed and housed, however, we adamantly support anything that would make life healthier and more pleasant for our struggling residents.

Having Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County would provide opportunities for hiking and biking in wonderful natural surroundings. It has the potential to improve the health and well-being of many Kansans, not just those who live in Iola.

Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

Georgia Masterson

March 17, 2023

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

My name is John Masterson, and I am writing in support of HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I was pleased to be in attendance when the House Agriculture Committee passed it unanimously last Monday. I understand that it comes before your committee next week and I ask that you support this bill that will mean so much to my community and region.

I am a lifelong Kansan and except for college, the Navy, and four years on the Student Services staff at Emporia State University, a lifelong resident of Iola. I recently retired from Allen County Community College after a 40-year career at the College, the last 30 as its President.

I have been on the Executive Board of Iola Industries, Inc. for more than ten years and the gift of the lake and surrounding land to become a State Park would be a dream come true for our organization and would be completely within our mission. Even though the lake area is Iola Industries' most valuable asset, our desire has always been for it to become a public place. The lake and surrounding trails' ability to attract visitors from across Kansas and provide recreation and enjoyment to our area residents would make them great assets in attracting business and industry to our region. It would also benefit the recruitment of potential employees for those businesses and industries.

Thinking about the 300+ students housed at the community college or nearby, I can visualize students checking out bike-share bicycles from the College, riding the two blocks to get on the Southwind Trail, and then being able to ride to the Lehigh Portland Lake entirely on existing trails where they could picnic, swim, and enjoy the outdoors. What a fantastic benefit to the mental and physical health of the young people we serve!

Selfishly, as an elderly man, it is important that I, and those like me, take advantage of opportunities for healthy recreation. I have been an avid user of our trail system since it was established. The addition of this beautiful lake and its surrounding area will make me a regular there and I will add swimming and boating to my walking activities.

I urge you to support this legislation to make Lehigh Portland State Park a reality. Thank you for your service to our State.

Sincerely,

John Masterson

Vice President Iola Industries

President Allen County Community College - Retired

March 19, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairman
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 am John McRae, President of Iola Industries, Inc. The fifteen-member board of Iola Industries enthusiastically supports HB 2331, that was introduced by Representative Fred Gardner on February 2, passed unanimously by the Ag & Natural Resources Committee on March 15 and overwhelmingly passed by the House on March 16. As you are aware, HB 2331 proposes the creation of the Lehigh Portland State Park.

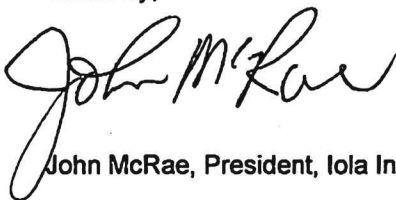
The board of Iola Industries is unconditionally committed to this project. Upon creation of the Lehigh Portland State Park, Iola Industries will gift the Lehigh lake, the Lehigh Portland trails and other associated real estate to the State of Kansas, so that it may be enjoyed by the public from this time forward.

Iola Industries is an all-volunteer economic development organization that has served Allen County since 1955. The site of the proposed park was acquired by Iola Industries from the Lehigh Portland Cement Company upon its closure in 1971. Roughly ten years ago, the Lehigh Portland Trails were developed north and east of the 137 acre lake, under the direction of Thrive Allen County. Developed almost entirely by volunteers, they have become a unique destination unequalled anywhere else in the State. The trails will become an important part of the Lehigh Portland State Park.

The lake had been leased to the local Elks Lodge for \$1.00 per annum for over forty years. As such it was a beautiful backdrop to the trails but was not accessible to anyone other than members of their organization. We terminated our lease with the Elks on January 1, 2023 in anticipation of transferring ownership to the State of Kansas for the benefit of the general public.

Thrive Allen County, an organization that exists to promote wellness and good health for Allen Countians, opened our eyes to the tremendous potential for recreation that combining the trails and the lake present. Our board has concluded that the best use of this property would be to make it available to the public, realizing that its development as a state park would help preserve the legacy of cement production in Kansas as well as provide economic benefit to southeast Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McRae". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

John McRae, President, Iola Industries, Inc.

March 17, 2023

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 am writing you about making a Kansas state park out of the Lehigh Portland grounds.

This would be the very best addition to the Kansas park system. The walking trails are beautiful and next to the lake. This property is close to the crossroads of U.S. highways 54 and 169 and within 100 miles to Kansas City, Wichita, Tulsa and Springfield. This alone would merit having it here.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Mentzer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "W" and "M".

William Mentzer

144 Meadowbrook Rd. W.

Iola, Kansas 66749

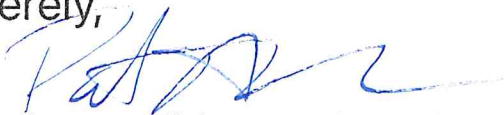
March 20, 2023

Dear Senator Renee Erickson and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce:

My name is Patricia Miklos. My husband Mark Boyd and I are residents of rural Allen County, Kansas. We are writing in support of legislation that allows for the creation of the Lehigh Portland State Park.

The trail system that would become the park connects to the Prairie Spirit trail, is stunningly beautiful and would add many recreation opportunities for Kansans. State resources would be well-utilized. The present trail is popular and a real attraction to the area. State support would ensure longevity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia A. Miklos and Mark A. Boyd', written over a faint, illegible background.

Patricia A. Miklos and Mark A. Boyd
Rural Moran
Allen County, Kansas

March 17, 2023

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

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

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

I had the pleasure, recently, of visiting the hiking trails on the western edge of Lehigh Portland Lake. As a resident of Kansas City, my wife and I are always looking for places close to the KC metro where we can enjoy the natural beauty of the region. Iola, Kansas, certainly offers this, but it is clear the Allen County has the incredible opportunity to increase its natural amenities and boost its economy exponentially. The designation of Lehigh Portland State Park would definitely make Iola and Allen County a favorite travel spot for me and my family.

The natural beauty of the lake and the surrounding land deserves to be preserved and cared for, and the people of Allen County deserve all the benefits this designation would bring them.

Sincerely,



John Moessner
Resident of Kansas City, Missouri



Osawatomi
KANSAS

Nick Hampson | MAYOR
439 Main Street, P.O. Box 37
Osawatomi, KS 66064
913.755.2146
info@osawatomiaks.org

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

Re: HB 2331 – Lehigh Portland State Park

March 17, 2023

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

My name is Samantha Moon and I am the Assistant City Manager for the City of Osawatomi, Kansas. We're a small community in Miami County, about an hour south of the KC Metro. We're the proud home of "Mile Zero" for the Flint Hills Trail State Park, and an ardent supporter of recreational trails in Kansas.

I'm writing today in support of HB 2331. The creation of and continued access to recreational trails is valuable to any community, but is especially critical for smaller, more rural communities. The economic impact and impact on health outcomes caused by recreational trails, such as Lehigh Portland or the Flint Hills Trail, cannot be overstated. These trail systems are creating enormous economic momentum in our communities and protecting and promoting them is something of a "once in a lifetime" opportunity (and we in Osawatomi are aggressively and enthusiastically jumping on board!).

Please support HB 2331 and Lehigh Portland State Park.

Sincerely,

Samantha Moon

Assistant City Manager
City of Osawatomi
smoon@osawatomiaks.org
(913) 755 – 2146 x103

March 17, 2023

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

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

I'm writing to challenge you to support HB 2331.

I am from Missouri. I'll pause while you say, "Ah, I'm sorry." In Missouri, we say the same thing about Kansas. One thing Missouri has going for it is that everybody knows about the beautiful and diverse landscapes and the outdoor recreational opportunities. Missourians, even though we are close neighbors, tend to think of Kansas as one big flat boring field.

LeHigh Portland proves that wrong. It is never going to be Mark Twain National Forest, but it is a jewel of its own. The beautiful lake, the single-track trails for mountain biking, the prairie and woodland habitats, and John Brown's Cave, not to mention the connection to the Southwind and Prairie Spirit Rail Trails make for an excellent and unique attraction.

LeHigh Portland State Park could be a beating heart pumping new tourism dollars into the state and lifting Southeast Kansas out of poverty--a desirable outcome for the rest of the state who will benefit from their higher tax revenues and their decreased dependence on public services. Also, if people come to see LeHigh Portland, they may get curious about the rest of the state and we can build more bike trails to connect all our state parks and recreation sites.

Even a Missourian can appreciate the beauty of Kansas when looking at a place like LeHigh Portland. In the name of state rivalry, if nothing else, please support HB 2331.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel E. Moore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel E. Moore
Lawrence, Kansas

March 20, 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, Sharon Moreland, am writing to express my support for HB 2331 to create Lehigh Portland State Park.

I moved to lola in May 2021 to take on the position of Director of the lola Public Library and Southeast Kansas Regional Library System and the Trail system was definitely a deciding factor. From where I live in south lola, I walk or bike to the trails for exercise, to decompress after a stressful day, and to experience the natural beauty of Kansas. The creation of a state park would expand access to this interesting natural area and preserve it for future generations.

Recruiting and retaining professional staff for the Regional Library System can be difficult, but having a state park to share with candidates as a 'quality of life' incentive will help tremendously. I am also concerned with growing our smallest communities to help sustain their public libraries and see this park as another way to entice more people to move to our region. lola's local businesses – the new coffee shop, restaurants, boutiques around the square, and even gas stations and the grocery store – will benefit from the increased traffic a state park brings, especially during the summer.

Having grown up in Manhattan, with memories of swimming, fishing, boating, and picnicking at Tuttle Creek State Park, I completely support creating those same opportunities for my neighbors here through the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park.

Sincerely,



Sharon Moreland

