

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,

Please accept this as my letter of support for the **HB2331** creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Just recently I moved to Topeka, Kansas to be nearer family but I lived in Southeast Kansas for over 60 years. Our communities in Southeast Kansas need more accessible and affordable recreational options.

***Here are some of my personal experiences on the Lehigh Portland Trails;***

Community college students and friends enjoyed field trips to the Lehigh Portland Trails and to the nearby John Brown Cave.

My friends and family have kayaked on the Lehigh Lake numerous times.

Many of us have trained for half marathons or other running events on the Lehigh Portland Trails. Local area teams also train on the trails. It is MUCH safer and easier on knees than pavement.

My family that visited brought their bicycles for 6 and 9 year old grandsons and we biked at the Lehigh Portland Trails.

While participating in all of the activities listed above, we stopped for gas, lunch, ice cream or shopped in the bike store downtown.

There are so many advantages to the public having access to this wonderful park; physical and mental health, boost to the local economy, and, of course, educational opportunities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nancy Isaac  
Topeka, KS

February 7, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> 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 House Bill creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

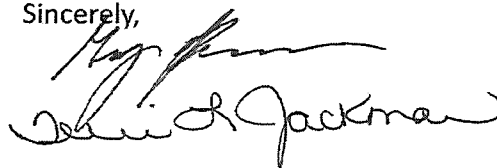
We have loved camping, fishing, and boating our entire lives. We, along with our kids and grandkids, frequently go to Eisenhower State Park (Melvern), Pomona Lake, Cross Timbers (Toronto) and Fall River, but they are an hour or more away which makes it difficult to go as often as we would like. It would 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 style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

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

February 13, 2023

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

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

I, April Jackson, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I am a proud Allen County resident and life long Kansas resident. I hope you will consider supporting the Lehigh Portland area into a state park. This area of Allen County, over the years, has become a passion project for several of my family members and friends.

My uncle, cousins and my son worked together on their Boy Scout Eagle Project of building a shelter on the Lehigh trails - which is connected to the proposed state park area. Volunteers in Southeast Kansas started building trails in this area for much needed outdoor recreation and continue to work to ensure access for all. Having free public access to the proposed area becoming a state park ensures the continued care of the area for not only my grandchildren but for the many future generations to visit this wonderful part of the state.

Please support HB2331.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "April Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish over the last name.

April Jackson

Resident of Iola, Kansas - Allen County

February 8, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

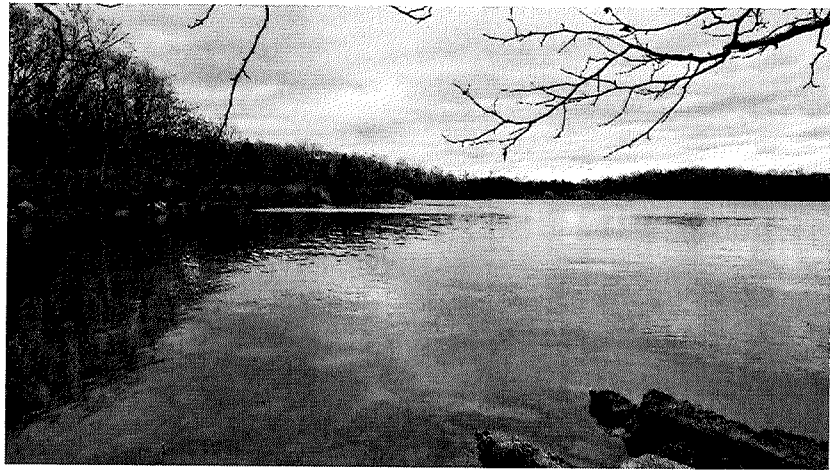
Sincerely,

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

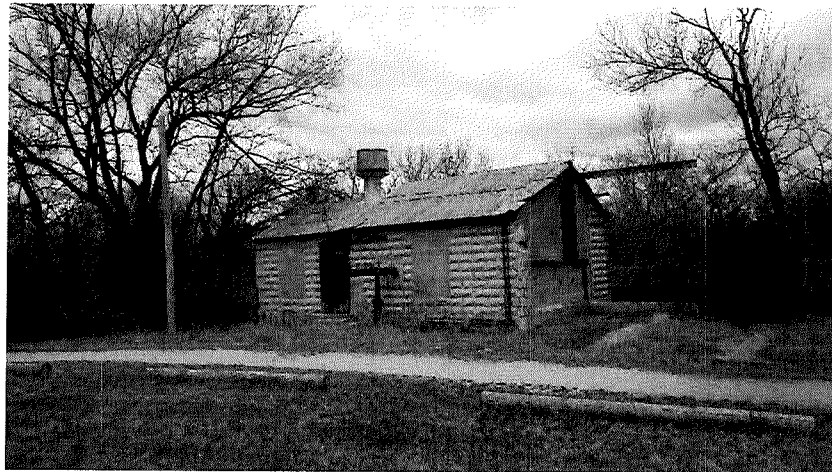
Enc: Photos of Lehigh Portland



On the trail



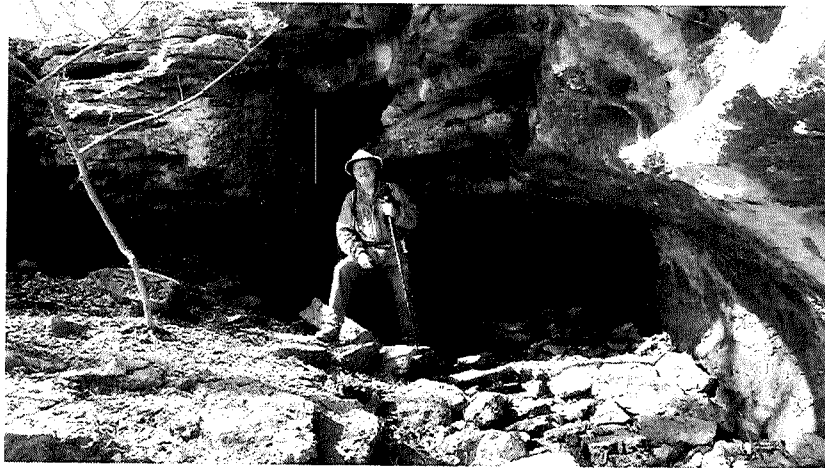
Lake Lehigh



Water distribution building



Elm Creek



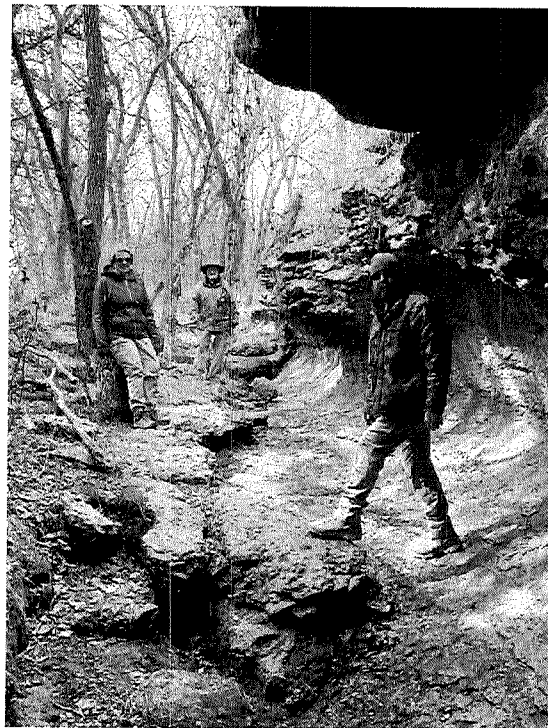
East end of cave



Rock fence along the trail

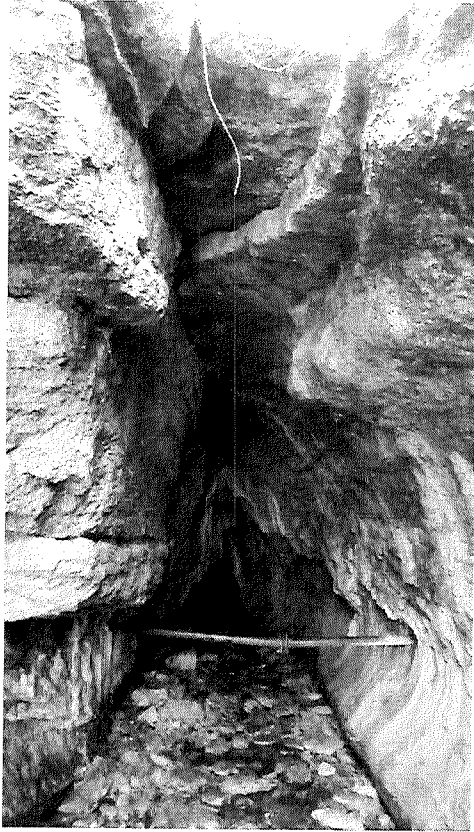


West end of cave

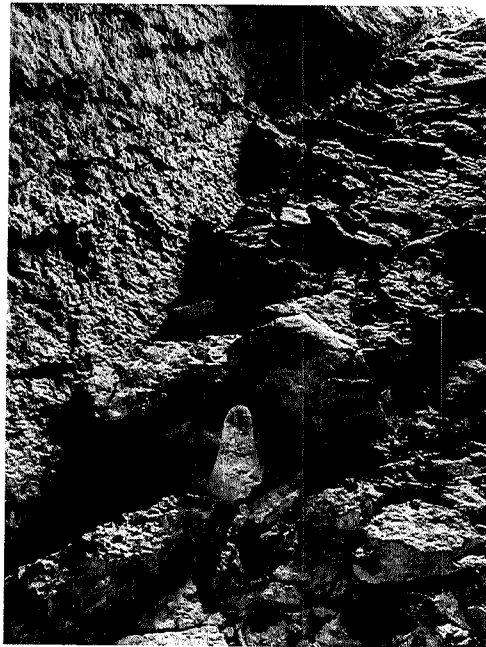


Looking out from the cave





Looking into the cave



An ice stalagmite in the cave



February 13, 2023

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

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

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 35-year-old, \$70-million health philanthropy located in Hutchinson. Our mission is to improve the health of Kansans. We focus on three strategic areas—access to care, early childhood development, and Healthy Congregations, 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. We have the opportunity to improve community health through greater engagement of our congregations and through new partnerships. Healthy congregations and interfaith partners are positioned to lead their communities toward better health and the Health Fund is positioned, as we are here today, to support their work.

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](mailto: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)

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

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February 6, 2023

Representative Ken Rahjes, Chairman, & Committee Members  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

**Re: Lehigh Portland State Park, Iola, Kansas**


Dear Chairman Rahjes and Committee Members:

A bill, no number yet assigned, was introduced on February 2, 2023, to provide for a new state park near Iola, Kansas, and the new park to be named Lehigh Portland State Park. I understand the Kansas House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources is the committee assigned with the task of determination and recommendation.

I very strongly support the house bill to create 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



Thursday, February 9, 2023

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

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

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

Jay Kretzmeier  
116 W. Edwards  
Iola, Kansas 66749

February 09, 2023

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

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

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 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 your committee and subsequent 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 the residents of the Southeast Kansas area.

Respectfully yours,

  
Jay Kretzmeier  
Iola, KS

13 Feb. 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, April Kroenke, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. As a native Iolan who has moved all over the world 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 does not have any State Parks or lakes within our county.

Sincerely,



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

13 February 2023

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

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

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)<sup>1</sup>; Iola has 28 full-time firefighters and officers<sup>2</sup>; 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

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran\\_population.asp](https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp)

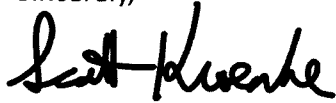
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cityofiola.com/269/FireEMS>



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 also have economic impacts on our rural community, with travelers staying, playing, and shopping within the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Kroenke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Scott Kroenke

Resident of La Harpe, KS

2/6/23

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Kansas State Capitol

300 SW 10 th St.

Topeka, Kansas 66612

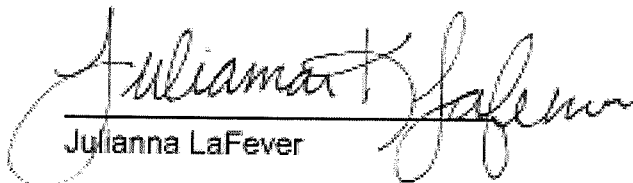
Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

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

Lehigh Portland Trails are a great asset for our 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. 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 our state.

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

Sincerely,



Julianna LaFever

Resident of Kansas City, MO

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. 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

February 7, 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 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

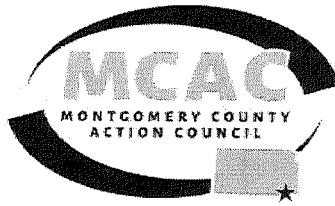
In conclusion, please strongly consider Lehigh Portland State Park as the latest addition to the Kansas State Parks family. As a native Kansan, Kansas small business owner, self-proclaimed Kansas ambassador and member of the Kansas Explorers Club, I could not think of a more deserving addition.

Sincerely,



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

115 S. 6<sup>th</sup>  
P.O. Box 588  
Independence, KS 67301



Phone: (620)331-3830  
Fax: (620)331-3834  
[www.actioncouncil.com](http://www.actioncouncil.com)

2/8/2023

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

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

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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

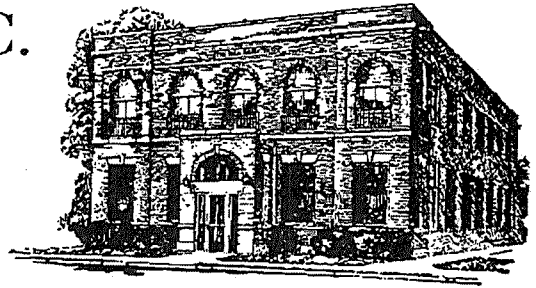
Executive Director, Montgomery County Action Council

# THE IOLA REGISTER, INC.

302 S. Washington Ave. • P.O. Box 767  
Iola, Kansas 66749

Susan Lynn, Editor and Publisher

Phone (620) 365-2111  
Fax (620) 365-6289



February 10, 2023

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

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

My name is Susan Lynn and I am writing in support of HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I'm also editor and publisher of The Iola Register, Iola's daily newspaper.

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.

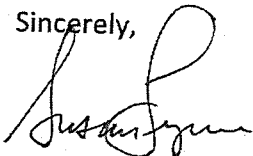
Young families expect, and deserve, amenities that improve their quality of life. That's often where small towns like lola fall short. Forty years ago, lola's population was 7,000. Today, it's 5,300.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Susan Lynn".

Susan Lynn,  
lola, 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, Olive and Bruce, of Topeka. When they come to visit, an outing on the rail trail is a must.



February 13, 2023

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

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

I, Mary Ann Magnuson, am writing to express my support for bill 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. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann Magnuson".

Mary Ann Magnuson  
Resident of Iola, Kansas

February 14, 2023

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

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

My name is Frank Halsey, from Fort Scott, and I am writing to express my support for HB????, creating Lehigh Portland State Park, in Allen County.

Being an outdoor enthusiast, park lover and trail builder in Fort Scott, I have witnessed and admired the volunteer efforts of Thrive Allen County and others develop the trails in and around Lehigh Portland Park. I was excited to learn of the proposal to convert this to a state park.

I have personally been part of creating mountain bike trails in Fort Scott. Anybody from the area, including Representative Trevor Jacobs, should be able to confirm the positive impact these have on a community.

My wife and I often take our camper, mountain bikes, kayaks and grandkids to state parks across the state for long weekend trips. These parks include Wilson Lake State Park, Fancy Creek State Park, Fall River State Park, Clinton Lake State Park, Perry Lake State Park, to name a few. These parks all have one thing in common, mountain bike trails as an amenity.

The mountain bike community will continue to grow across the country. Providing additional opportunities for this type of healthy life choices seems like a legitimate reason to support Lehigh Portland State Park.

Sincerely,



J. Frank Halsey  
1222 Burke St.  
Fort Scott, KS 66701  
620-704-2730

February 11, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman  
House Agricultural and Resources Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Agricultural and Resources Committee

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.

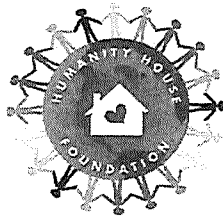
Iola is my hometown. I have many fond memories of Iola and I've remained impressed with all that has been done within the city to offer not only the educational aspect. In particular, Allen County Community College but also the Allen County Regional Hospital/Clinic and the Bowlus Fine Arts Center.

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  
February 9, 2023

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

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

I Georgia Masterson on behalf of Humanity House Foundation, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Humanity House is a 501(c)3 non-profit that provides assistance to the financially strapped and underserved population of Allen County as well as counties surrounding us. Making the area a State Park would increase the recreational opportunities for those we serve. In the past, having to belong to the Iola Elks Club kept our clients and others who have no money to spare from using the lake.

Besides benefitting our clients, it will be an economic boon to Allen County by attracting campers and hikers to our area. Please support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Georgia Masterson  
Board Treasurer  
Resident of Iola



**Health Forward**

FOUNDATION

HealthForward.org

2300 Main Street, Suite 304

Kansas City, MO 64108

(816) 241-7006

healthforward.org

February 10, 2023

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

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

We are reaching out to express our support for HB2331 to create the Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County, Kansas.

Health Forward Foundation has been a proud supporter of efforts throughout Allen County that connect community resources to make them more accessible thus improving health and economic wellbeing in support of an inclusive, powerful, and healthy Allen County.

In 2017, we provided a \$75,000 grant to the City of Iola to support the completion of a 170-foot pedestrian and bicycle bridge to cross Elm Creek, creating connections to the Lehigh Portland Trails, South Elm Creek Park, Gates Corporation, South Industrial Park employees, Elm Creek Disc Golf, and the town of Iola. This not only provided opportunities for people who are paid low wages to participate in physical activity, it also connected them to facilities, infrastructure, and employers that were often out of reach.

Designating the Lehigh Portland State Park will expand upon these efforts to positively impact surrounding areas in the region regarding local businesses, recreation, resources, and healthy communities. It ensures that Allen County residents' tax dollars given to Kansas Wildlife and Parks are locally invested to create a destination for all Kansas taxpayers to enjoy, and it honors local history to create a legacy for future generations in Allen County.

Sincerely,  
McClain Bryant Macklin  
Vice President of Policy and Impact  
Health Forward Foundation

**OUR  
PURPOSE**

*Every day we work to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems.*

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 Kansas House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources:

My name is Patricia Miklos. I am a resident of rural Allen County, Kansas. I am writing in support of HB 2331, which 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,

Patricia A. Miklos  
Rural Moran  
Allen County, Kansas

February 11, 2023

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

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

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Moessner', written in a cursive style.

John Moessner

Resident of Kansas City, Missouri

February 10, 2023

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

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

I, Dr. Bruce Moses, President of Allen Community College, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Allen County is fortunate to have access to both the Lehigh Portland and the Southwind Rail Trails. Allen Community College employees over 100 full-time faculty and staff on the Iola campus and is the home to more than 400 visiting students each year. Access to these resources, including a connecting trail on our campus, allows for recreation and exercise for our stakeholders.

Since the inception of the trails, our athletic teams utilize them on a regular basis for training. Included with this letter are pictures taken of our cross-country teams on the Lehigh Portland Trails. These trails allow for a safe place for our student athletes and coaches to train all year long and are often used as a recruitment tool for both students and employees.

Lehigh Portland trails also provide a living laboratory for our classes. Students in environmental science can take water samples from the lake or students in photography can learn to take photographs of nature. Allen Community College students can bike or walk to Lehigh Portland for a quiet place to read or just relax.

Please know that Allen Community College is in full support of designating Lehigh Portland a State Park. It will not only be a positive addition to Allen County, but a great place for all Kansans to visit.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bruce Moses  
President  
Allen Community College  
Resident of Allen County



February 13, 2023

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

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

I, Max Patterson, am writing to express my support for bill 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. 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,



Max Patterson, DDS  
Resident of Iola, Kansas



February 12, 2023

Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chairman  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Kansas State Capitol

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

Thank you for your consideration about creating another trail state park with bill HB2331.

With each added state park trail system, we push Kansas forward into becoming known as a trail state. Not only is this a message to recreation enthusiasts but also for those choosing whether or not to live in Kansas. When the state shows interest and support for recreational options, this sends a strong message to the young audience we are seeking to retain or attract in Kansas.

This investment by the state for trail state parks has led to private economic enhancements like bike shops, coffee shops, microbreweries, Air BnB's, and restaurants. These businesses change the vibe of a community. These communities change the way Kansas is viewed.

I've biked the Lehigh Portland Trail and enjoyed it so very much. If this trail would become a state park, it would be a positive imagemaker for southeast Kansas and help all who use the trail see the unique characteristics of this region.

Additionally, when the legislature and administration support trail systems it sends a message to opponents of rail trails through agricultural areas. With philanthropic support, there is so much potential for developing trails in every region of the state, which means a path to more economic opportunities for cities in proximity to these trails.

The development of multiple trail state parks is impressive and this committee and all the trail advocates are to be commended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marci Penner".

Marci Penner, co-director  
Kansas Sampler Foundation

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 to express my support for designating Lehigh Portland as a Kansas state park.

I was born and raised in Iola. Growing up, my father was an Iola Elks member and we frequently spent time at the quarry lake swimming, fishing, and boating. After living in the KC metro area for nearly two decades, I returned to Iola with my husband to raise our family in my hometown.

As Elks members, our family has continued to enjoy the quarry lake area, which has been significantly enhanced by the addition of the surrounding trail system. We hike, bike, kayak, canoe, swim, and fish - and we do it together. Having nearby access to outdoor amenities means that we participate and are active more often - and the time spent as a family and with friends has immeasurable value.

I was not upset when I learned that the Elks' lease on the lake was not renewed - I knew something bigger was in store - and I was excited to learn of the possibility of a state park.

Designating the quarry lake and surrounding trail system as a state park would not only give other families the opportunity to enjoy lake recreation as my family has, but it would attract visitors to the area, make Allen County a destination for outdoor recreation events and festivals, and benefit our local economy.

A partnership with the state is important to help improve safety measures for the area. With more people accessing the quarry lake and surrounding trails, added support from the state would lend the expertise and resources needed to properly maintain and monitor the public green space, helping to ensure that everyone has a safe experience so that these resources can continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,



Traci Plumlee  
Resident of Iola, Kansas