

**Testimony on HB 2192 on Renaming Lake Scott State Park
To
The House Committee on Agriculture**

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HB 2192 seeks to amend K.S.A. 32-837. **The Department requested introduction of the bill.** The provisions of the bill would be effective upon publication in the statute book.

Lake Scott State Park is located along the Western Vistas Historic Byway about 11 miles north of Scott City, west of US-83 on K-95.

Listed by National Geographic as one of the country's 50 must-see state parks, Lake Scott State Park is a stunning oasis of natural springs, deep wooded canyons, craggy bluffs and early American history. The 1,020-acre park is located in Ladder Creek Canyon and surrounds the 100-acre Scott State Fishing Lake. Several active springs and Ladder Creek feed the lake. A 160-acre wildlife area lies west of and adjacent to the park.

The park is one of the most historic locations in Kansas. The remains of the northernmost known Native American pueblo – El Cuartelejo – are located in the park. The El Cuartelejo Archeological District National Historic Landmark is encompassed almost entirely by the park. More than 26 archeological sites have been documented within and around the park. El Cuartelejo was the name given to a Plains Apache village in the High Plains where Taos Indians fled in 1664 to escape Spanish rule in the Southwest, and they built and occupied the pueblo for about 20 years. The pueblo was reoccupied ca. 1700 when a large group of Picuris Indians, also fleeing Spanish rule, settled there for about six years. The last known reference to El Cuartelejo was in 1727, after which it was abandoned and left to the ravages of weather and erosion.

About one mile south of the park is Battle Canyon. It is the location of the September 1878 Battle of Punished Woman's Fork – the last battle between Native Americans (Northern Cheyenne) and the U.S Cavalry in Kansas.

The Herbert and Eliza Steele home, the dwelling of early settlers in the area, was completed circa 1894 and has been preserved much as it was more than 120 years ago. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Register of Kansas Historic Places. The Steeles' willingness to share the beauty of their land with the general public led to the creation of Lake Scott State Park, and their understanding of the important history of their land paved the way to the discovery of El Cuartelejo and the subsequent Archeological District National Historic Landmark.

Between 1911 and 1917, a short-line railroad ran through the Steele property, bringing with it local tourists, who were welcomed by the Steeles. Portions of the old rail bed can still be seen in the park.

In 1922, the Steeles, who were then in their 60s, deeded two acres of the historic El Cuartelejo site to the Kansas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), so it could be preserved and shared with the public. They built a monument at the site, which still exists. The DAR has since deeded the site to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

Many area residents became accustomed to visiting Ladder Creek Canyon to fish, hike, picnic and camp, so it was with abundant support that the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission completed land acquisition for the state park in 1928, including the purchase of 640 acres from the Steeles. In 1929-1930, Ladder Creek was dammed at the northern end of the canyon to create a lake that was originally called Lake McBride. The park was opened in June 1930 to considerable fanfare and was known then as Scott County State Park. It was one of the first state-operated parks.

On Friday, August 4, 1933, an estimated 15-inch downpour between Sharon Springs, Kansas and Cheyenne Wells, Colorado sent a torrent of water eastward along Ladder Creek. The floodwaters swept through the canyon, killing one local resident. The flood destroyed about 100 feet of the dam. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was quickly enlisted to repair the dam and make other park improvements, and they completed their work in May, 1934. Remnants of the CCC camp are still visible in the park.

Another notable feature of the park is a beach house built in 1930 at the swim beach. It is an example of revival Spanish architecture and currently serves as concessions for the public. It is privately owned and operated under an agreement with the department.

In early 1966, the park was renamed to Lake Scott State Park when ownership was transferred from the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission to the Kansas Parks and Resources Authority. Both agencies were forerunners of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

Given the historical significance of the land and the lake to Native Americans, the State of Kansas, Scott County and surrounding areas, the department respectfully requests that Lake Scott State Park be formally renamed, "Historic Lake Scott State Park."

The Department appreciates the opportunity to address the Committee and requests favorable passage of the bill.