



Kansas Recreation and Park Association

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Erika Devore, Executive Director, Kansas Recreation and Park Association

Date: January 22nd, 2024

RE: HB 2541 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2541. The Kansas Recreation and Park Association represents 1400 members working and contributing to the thriving park and recreation industry. Outdoor recreation is a continually growing segment of the services our members provide. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB 2541.

Conservation is the proper management of our natural resources and there are few investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state is failing to provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

Supporting the outdoor recreation economy includes conserving our state's recreation lands and waters. Access to quality places to play outside is not only critical to our businesses but is also fundamental to recruiting employees and lies at the heart of healthy and productive communities. Open spaces and recreation areas act as magnets, drawing local activity and tourists alike.

To ensure that the outdoor recreation economy continues to thrive as a growing generator of jobs and an economic powerhouse, it is essential to manage and invest in Kansas' parks, waters, and trails. Developing a state outdoor recreation system designed to yield economic dividends for Kansas is key. The sustained growth and success of this American industry depends on providing outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone.

In 2022, the outdoor recreation economy in Kansas generated 36,663 jobs and \$3.9 billion in total added value.

As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support HB 2541.

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