

**TESTIMONY OF LINDA LANTERMAN  
DIRECTOR OF STATE PARKS  
KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, PARKS AND TOURISM  
BEFORE  
THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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Chairman Farenthold, Ranking Member Plaskett and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today. I am Linda Lanterman, the Director of Kansas State Parks of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. I have worked for the Department for 25 years and have been the Kansas State Parks Director since 2010. We manage 26 state parks with an annual budget of \$12 million. I am also Vice-President of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD), an organization dedicated to helping state park systems effectively manage and administer their state park systems. I also serve on the National Transportation Research Board (TRB) which helps address access needs on National Parks and public lands. Additionally, I serve on the board of the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers (NASORLO) who provide a liaison to the Department of Interior for administration of matching funds for outdoor recreation.

I am here to discuss the Kansas State Parks program, as well as the national state parks landscape, and how state park systems work to improve outdoor recreational opportunities for their constituents and conserve natural resources through partnerships, innovation and reducing barriers.

Nationwide, there are 10,314 state park areas comprising over 18 million acres serving more than 791 million visits annually. Those state park lands may be owned outright by the states or consist of lands leased from federal agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. As a result, federal partnerships are crucial to the success of state park systems, as well as to the success of the federal agencies which make their lands available for public use. Of special importance to state park systems are federal programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails grants and AmeriCorps Program.

State parks around the country collectively serve the public with more than 37,000 miles of trails; 241,255 campsites; 9,457 cabins and cottages along with 161 lodges in 29 states. Operating expenditures

total \$2.5 billion, with less than half of those expenditures coming from the general funds of the states. 19,008 full-time state park staff and an additional 29,069 part-time and seasonal staff work tirelessly to provide top-notch, memorable visitor experiences. Nationally, it has been estimated that there may be as much as \$95 billion in unfunded capital improvements and maintenance needed just to sustain state park systems.

In Kansas, our capital improvements and maintenance needs total more than \$25 million. The Kansas State Parks Division and the Department do not receive any state general funds. Instead, our state parks are funded primarily by revenues from state park vehicle permits, camping permits and cabin rentals. In addition, we also receive a portion of the Department's allocation from the Economic Development Incentive Fund (EDIF) which is funded by proceeds from the Kansas State Lottery. Many states however, benefit from dedicated funding.

Land and Water Conservation Funds, the Recreational Trails grant program and AmeriCorps Program have always been important and efficient funding match for Kansas State Parks. We also rely heavily on partnerships with friend's groups, volunteers and other park supporters to provide financial, labor and advocacy support.

With the support of Governor Sam Brownback, Kansas has implemented several measures to meet the challenges of operating a primarily fee-based state park program. For example, we aggressively market our state parks within Kansas as well as nationally and internationally, we hold staff positions open for a certain time to reduce staffing costs, we have been successful with matching permit fees with demand. Additionally we have added special events to attract visitors and encourage their ongoing loyalty. Some of the events include outdoor music concerts, live bands, guided nature hikes, Halloween events, Black Friday #OPTOUTSIDE marketing, Governor's Campouts, and First Day Hikes.

To be competitive in today's leisure market, it is important that we address the changing needs and expectations of our customers. Some of the land use policies of the federal agencies need to be modernized so our parks can compete for the nation's young family's leisure time. Among the immediate changes we recommend concerning our federal landlord partners are more flexible lease agreements, more streamlined processing of concessionaire contracts and the ability for our department to retain all net proceeds arising from the hosting of special events designed to attract visitors. On some USACE properties we have both state parks and USACE parks. Efficiency could be improved if these two levels of government parks were not duplicating services such as camping.

Kansas State Parks and those in other states attract a diverse clientele who enjoy traveling in their home state and visiting parks in other states. Staying at a state park is truly a form of recreation that is important on a national level.

From my brief testimony, I hope you will see the important role federal partnerships and funding has in our state parks system and how important the partnership with State Parks are nationally to an efficient public lands strategy.

I will be happy to address any questions you may have.

Linda Lanterman