



## Lehigh Portland Rail Trail Opens

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The 2.3-mile Lehigh Portland Rail Trail opened in south Iola last June to great fanfare. The rail-trail connects to the 6.5-mile Southwind Rail Trail which opened in 2013. Sunflower holds the easements to both trails. Local volunteers, Thrive Allen County and Allen County built the crushed limestone paths. The Lehigh Portland trail serves as a backbone to a seven-mile network of single-track mountain biking

and hiking trails. The trail goes along scenic wooded Elm Creek and the shore of rugged, rocky bluffs along Lake Lehigh, a spring-fed lake. The current plan is to provide a better connection to the city proper by building a bridge over Elm Creek from S. Washington Avenue. A \$300,000 fundraising campaign for this has just been successfully completed.

Iola is fast becoming the small-town trails capital of Kansas primarily due to Thrive Allen County which has generated the vision for the trail network and has secured the grants for trail development. Not only does it have the Lehigh Portland and Southwind rail-trails, it has the Prairie Spirit Trail and the MO-PAC Rail Trail. This is just one way Iola is working to enhance the quality of life of the community.

### Highlights of the Landon Nature Trail:

- Only trail in U.S. to link both Santa Fe and Oregon Trails.
- First long-distance rail-trail to be railbanked in Kansas (1989)
- Follows picturesque and clear Camp Creek.
- Passes by two waterfalls and two wetlands teaming with waterfowl.

## John Brown Cave to Open to Public

Efforts are underway to transfer an easement from Iola Industries to the Sunflower. The tract of land features John Brown Cave, a natural cave with bats and which will be one of the few caves in Kansas

open to the public. According to local legend, John Brown stayed in the cave on one of his Underground Railroad journeys. Single-track trails will also be built around the cave. The tract is adjacent to the

Lehigh Portland Trails area easement. City leaders have a sustained effort to retain young people and to attract new residents. Recreational areas are part of this plan. The cave is not yet open to the public.



## Grants Awarded for Coldwater Trail

The Dodge City-based Mariah Fund and Sunflower's Short Grass Prairie Division have announced that the Fund has awarded \$5,000 to assist in the construction of a one-mile section of the Short Grass Prairie Trail which stretches between Coldwater and

Coldwater Lake. Further, the Community Foundation of SW Kansas and the Division have also announced that the Foundation has awarded a \$3,900 grant for the project. These grants will serve as financial matches for this project. The opening of

the trail segment will generate enthusiasm and support for developing additional sections of this 78-mile trail. Currently there is no safe route for children and teens to access Lake Coldwater which has become a very popular recreational facility.



## Landon Nature Trail Links Historic Trails

Remarkably, the 38-mile Landon Nature Trail is the only trail in America which crosses and connects both the Santa Fe and Oregon National Historic Trails! It intersects both the Union Ferry Branch of the

Oregon Trail at SE 42nd Street in Topeka and the Santa Fe Trail north of Overbrook. There is no other trail in America that links these important historic trails. At Overbrook, a short side trail can be built to allow

trail users to view swales or ruts of the Santa Fe Trail. Sunflower rail-banked/conserved the trail in 1989 and Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy is continuing to develop this outstanding rail-trail.



## Flint Hills Trail Segment Opens

The Kansas Dept. of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) will soon announce that another section of the Flint Hills Nature Trail has been completed. This seg-

ment stretches between Pomona West for four miles to Quenemo. This means that a trail user can now travel from Ottawa to K-68 north of Quenemo, a distance of

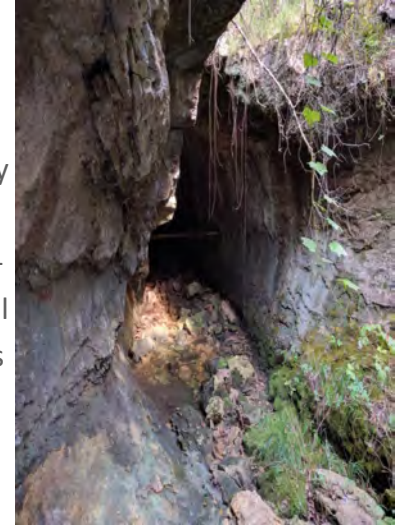
11 miles. The section between 110 Mile Creek and K-68 is particularly scenic with its woodlands. It is also where the Flint Hills trail links up with the Landon Nature Trail.

## Board Rules in Sunflower's Favor

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) has issued a Declaratory Order finding that Neosho County's 2004 foreclosure and sale of three parcels within Sunflower's railbanked Western Sky Trail at Chanute is preempted by federal law. The three

parcels of land are part of the rail corridor which was railbanked in 1998 in accordance with the National Trails Act and the STB's regulations. The STB stated, "As such, the parcels are still part of a line in the national rail network and subject to the Board's

exclusive jurisdiction. By foreclosing on and then selling the three parcels, the County unreasonably interfered with the railbanked line and the possibility of reactivating rail service. The foreclosures and sales are therefore preempted by federal law."



*Photo of John Brown Cave*

## Andover-Augusta Trail Segment to Open

Another section of the 10-mile Andover-Augusta Rail Trail is scheduled to be completed by the end of May. Volunteers with the Andover-Augusta Rail Trail Initiative have cleared the rail right-of-

way for 2.5 miles and a work crew with the City of Andover will soon blade the railroad bed into a smooth surface. Then crushed limestone will be installed on the original rock ballast. "The City of Andover has been extremely helpful

in this trail development project, says AARTI's Byron Rupp. "They have the heavy equipment and the ability to work well with adjacent landowners." Rupp further reports that an additional two miles could be completed in late

summer or early fall making a total of 6.4 miles stretching from 159<sup>th</sup> Street (at Andover) to Kellogg Avenue (US 54/400). The trail connects with Wichita's Redbud Trail in Andover.

## SRTC Membership Renewal Form

**Complete, enclose check, and mail to SRTC**

- \$25 Pathfinder
- \$50 Wanderer
- \$100 Trail Explorer

Checks may be made out to:

**Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy**

Mail remittance along with this form to:

**SRTC**

**P.O. Box 442043**

**Lawrence, KS 66044**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SRTC**

**P.O. Box 442043**

**Lawrence, KS 66044**