

# Difficulties threaten state park system

PRATT — Kansas state parks are at a crossroads. Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) staff are consulting regularly with park patrons and state officials as they attempt to chart a course through the fiscal difficulties that threaten the state park system.

The problem is not declining park usage. Visitation counts continue their upward trend, confirming research that reveals nearly two-thirds of Kansans use state parks. State parks have hosted more than 7 million visits annually since 2000, including an all-time high of 7.9 million in 2002.

However, funding support of state parks is changing. Park users have assumed a greater share of the cost of operating state parks in recent years, as State General Fund (SGF) support has declined. Just 10 years ago, the SGF provided 65 percent of park operating budgets. Today, the SGF share is less than 15 percent. Additional SGF reductions are possible, as state officials seek ways to bolster budgets for education and other purposes.

"We agree with the user-pay concept, but it is important to remember that state parks benefit all Kansans, whether they visit state parks or not," says Jerry Hover, director of KDWP's Parks Division. "Research has shown that state parks, for example, generate about \$685 million in economic impact annually in Kansas."

Park visitors spend about \$190 million in Kansas each year on goods and services related

to their park visits. Those purchases generate more than \$13 million annually in state sales taxes. More importantly, those purchases create 1,850 Kansas jobs and \$46 million in wages.

KDWP and its partners are studying ways to establish alternative, long term sources of revenue for state parks, but KDWP officials and the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission are considering changes in some park fees beginning next year to help make ends meet in the short term. Part of the strategy involves reducing or deferring some operations to save money, but changes in some park fees will be necessary, Hover said, to carry the park system through the Fiscal Year 2006. Among the fee changes under consideration are the following:

- apply variable rates, from \$35 to \$150 per night, for state park cabins, according to season, day of the weeks, and type of cabin;
- change the fee for in-season motor vehicle permit purchase from \$45 to \$50;
- change the fee for in-season second motor vehicle permit from \$25 to \$30;
- apply a surcharge for long-term camping;
- change annual camping permit fee to \$249 off-season, \$299 in season;
- change 14-night camping permit to \$85 off-season, \$99 in-season; and
- apply a \$5 premium charge for prime sites Friday through Sunday.

Kansas residents are encouraged to contact the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission members to express their opinions on park funding options and to offer fresh ideas for park fund-

ing. Contact information for the seven members of the commission is available at the KDWP website, [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us), and in the 2004 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary, available wherever licenses are sold.

Park constituents also are encouraged to participate in discussions of the issue at upcoming meetings of the commission, which will be Aug. 26 in Great Bend and Oct. 28 in Atchinson. Check KDWP website for exact times and location, which will be posted in the future.

## Workshop set for Sept.

A 'Becoming an Outdoors-Woman' workshop will be held Sept. 24-26 at Rock Springs 4-H Center near Junction City.

Here is your chance to learn outdoor skills such as hunting, fishing, orienteering, backpacking, camping and boating.

Designed primarily for women, it is an opportunity for anyone 18 years of age or older and is for YOU if you... have never tried these activities, but have hoped for an opportunity to learn; you are a beginner who wants to improve your skills; or you know how to do some of these activities, but would like to try some new ones.

## Quail, chicken seasons won't be expanded

In a recent meeting of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks commission meeting it was decided not to grant a Wildlife and Parks request to expand quail and prairie chicken seasons.

Sportsmen and conservation groups expressed concern that low populations couldn't support the increased pressure.

A dove season of Sept. 1-Oct. 14, and Nov. 1-16 was set. The split was made to offer youth upland and waterfowl hunters and prairie chicken hunters the option of also harvesting doves.

Marvin Kraft, Wildlife and Parks waterfowl program coordinator, told commissioners that spring drought in the Dakotas and southern Canada probably hurt production on some species of ducks, but timely summer rains have helped others.

Though official federal guidelines won't be out until just before the commission's August meeting, when waterfowl seasons are set, Kraft predicted a shortened early teal and liberal regular waterfowl season for this fall.

**Norton Travel & Tourism**  
 109 South State - PO Box 132 - Norton, KS 67654 - Phone 785-877-2501

Where the Best Come to Stay!

**WELCOME TO NORTON**  
 STATE PARK AND SEBELIUS RESERVOIR—  
 Camping, Fishing and Wildlife  
 GALLERY OF ALSO RANS—  
 Unsuccessful Candidates for Presidency of the United States  
 STATION 15—  
 Leavenworth to Pikes Peak Stagecoach Stop  
[www.us36.net/nortonkansas](http://www.us36.net/nortonkansas)  
**"WHERE THE BEST COME TO STAY"**



*When You Travel—Stay With Us*

**CLEAN, COMFORTABLE ROOMS**

- ✱ 25 Air Conditioned Rooms
- ✱ Remote TV/HBO
- ✱ Outdoor Pool
- ✱ Electric Plug-Ins Available
- ✱ Major Credit Cards Accepted

**HilCrest Motel**  
 W. Hwy 36, Norton—1-785-877-3343  
 ROLAND AND LAURA WASHBURN, OWNERS  
*Reservations Only: 1-800-444-8773*



*Charles Worden*  
 ~ Attorney at Law ~

213 S. Kansas — P.O. Box 427  
 NORTON, KANSAS 67654

**785-877-3086 • 785-877-3506-FAX**

[cworden@ruraltel.net](mailto:cworden@ruraltel.net)

**Welcome Fishermen and Campers**  
**VISIT OUR DELI AND BAKERY TODAY!**  
 We Sell Park Permits and Hunting and Fishing Licenses

**jamboree**  
 FOODS

117 N. Second, Norton, Kansas — Phone 785-877-2551  
**OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK**