

News from the Sierra Club Kansas Chapter

Waypoints

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Kansas River, Manhattan
Photo: Gerry Snyder

Action Alert!

Save the Ornate Box Turtle - Stop Turtle Racing in Kansas

Photo | Benjamin Reed

Does turtle racing happen in your area? *With 141 races in Kansas alone, it's more than likely.*

Did you know, ornate box turtles (our state reptile) are the most commonly raced turtles? A recent field survey of ornate box turtles by seven zoos in Kansas found ALARMING population losses throughout the state.



These turtles, when raced, are often starved, dehydrated, and kept in unsurvivable temperatures. Not to mention, mixing turtles together promotes disease spreading; all it takes is just one sick turtle to make them all sick, and IF they are returned to nature, that sickness spreads further. Despite illness, if ornate box turtles are not returned to their exact home range, they struggle to find water, food, and shelter and die.

Read more [here](#).

Turtles are NOT toys. Our state reptile deserves better protection.

Sign our Petition to Stop Turtle Racing

Listen to NPR's 28:36 min news session, posted May 4, 2026 " [Box turtles are back for the summer. Here's how to help them survive another year](#)"

Read this 2024 publication by Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles "[Turtle Races: A Threat to Wild Turtle Populations?](#)"

Action Alert!

Tell Lawrence City Commissioners to Protect the Wakarusa Wetlands



Drone capture of animal tracks on proposed development location | Photo Eric Dyck

Tell Lawrence City Commissioners to Protect the Wakarusa Wetlands and vote "NO" on the amendment to the comprehensive plan (AMDT-25-0006) that would allow floodplain development for a project called Ten59, a 178-acre commercial complex that could include hotels, restaurants, a

convenience store, and a mega sports complex which would irreparably harm the Haskell-Baker Wetlands.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO COMMISSIONERS NOW

At Last...

Zack Pistora, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter Director

Cue up Etta James' song "At Last" because **the 2026 Kansas Legislative Session has officially ended**. On April 11th, state lawmakers finished their Veto Session and adjourned for the year. Unfortunately, the Legislature didn't advance significant environmental legislation. Our major focus this year was to protect Kansans' legal rights and recourse from pesticide harms as we challenged a bill that would've shielded pesticide manufacturers from liability. Sierra Club, with the help of concerned Kansans and state leaders of all political stripes, Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Trial Lawyers Association, and national groups, were successful in defeating the pesticide labeling bill ([HB 2476](#)). Read our testimony [here](#).

Stay tuned for a special Legislative Waypoints edition which will feature more our legislative work and key legislative votes.

**Thank you, Kansas City, for celebrating
Earth Day with us**



Sierra Club Earth Day Party on Rock Island Bridge KC | Photo Matt Kleinmann

Eliese Holt, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter Coordinator

Thank you to all who came out to celebrate Earth Day with us and the Missouri Chapter on the newly opened Rock Island Bridge in Kansas City, KS on Wednesday, April 22. Over 200 people

came together across state lines to celebrate this day and help us raise money for our local Sierra Club Chapters. With over \$3,200 raised for each chapter, our work can be more effective than ever.

At the Sierra Club, we take on a massive mission to protect our local environment and community health. With the funds we raised this Earth Day, the potential partnerships we formed, and the moment of relaxation we allowed for ([rest is resistance!](#)), we have the energy and ability to move forward in a more impactful way. Join us next year for Earth Day 2027.





Sierra Club Earth Day Party attendees on Rock Island Bridge KC | Photos Matt Kleinmann

Clean Energy Wins

Zack Pistora, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter Director

If you've read our Waypoints and other emails, you know that the Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club and our local partners have been busy pushing for clean energy adoption across Kansas. After many hours of community engagement, galvanizing support, and preparing testimony, it's our pleasure to report **two BIG wins for clean energy in both Shawnee and Wyandotte Counties.**

Read about them [here](#).



Photo | Stockpack

Kansas Solar Access Campaign

Bill Roush, Energy Committee Chair, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter

Lack of knowledge and advocacy have hampered solar options for Kansans. Now, we have a great opportunity to change that. **The Kansas Chapter Energy Committee has identified six actions that are right for Kansas; they're affordable, achievable, and popular on both sides of the political aisle.**

1. Legalize and popularize Balcony/Plug & Play solar.
2. Ease restrictions on Community Solar.
3. Remove unreasonable HOA restrictions on rooftop solar.
4. Encourage local governments to adopt SolarApp+ for instant solar permitting.
5. Help small business claim 100% bonus depreciation for new solar investment.
6. Continue support for utility-scale solar, wind and batteries.

[Join the Energy Committee](#) or [reach out to me](#) to help us achieve these solar goals in Kansas.

Data Centers banging on your door?

Zack Pistora, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter Director

If your community hasn't received a door knock from the developer of a hyperscale Data Center, I'd warn you to be ready. Across Kansas, from Garden City to Gardner, Spring Hill to Tonganoxie, Kansas City to Emmett, Osawatomie to Colwich/Andale area outside of Wichita, data center developers are chomping at the bit to set up shop in Kansas. Prospecting efforts for energy-intensive, water-sucking, and air polluting A.I. computer warehouses are a result of the [SB 98](#). This bill, passed overwhelmingly by Kansas Lawmakers in the final hours of last year's legislative session, later signed by Governor Kelly, provides a a state sales tax exemption up to \$250 million for large data centers aiming to do business in Kansas. The Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club was the only organization to [stand up and speak against](#) this bill.

In the next month, we'll be solidifying our campaign against "dirty data centers" and invite you to join us.

Inside Climate News article on **nitrites in our community water systems** quotes Kansas Chapter Director, Zack Pistora



Photo | Robyn Beck/AFP via Getty Images, Inside Climate News Article (linked below)

Craig Volland, Agriculture Committee Chair, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter

[In a recent article](#), *Inside Climate News* described the results of a new study by the Environmental Working Group finding that the “**drinking water of almost 1 in 5 Americans contains nitrates**”

linked to cancer and birth defects.” Kansas was listed among the 10 states with the highest levels of nitrates. The study noted that CAFO (animal factory) - intensive areas are especially exposed to nitrate pollution.

The article included an extensive quote from our Chapter Director, Zack Pistora, and referred to the fight against the new 88,000 head cattle feedlot going into southwest Kansas. (Note that this feedlot is being constructed in Pawnee County near Larned, not in Finney Co., near Garden City as stated in the article.) The concern about nitrate pollution still applies because the new CAFO will sit over the highly vulnerable Great Bend Prairie aquifer. [This map from the EWG study](#) shows the huge number of community wells impacted by nitrates in central and western Kansas. In that part of the state few continuously running streams remain for water supply due to the decline of the water table in regional aquifers since the 1960's. So the source is usually groundwater.

Read more about Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) [here](#) and [join our CAFOs Team](#) to support our **Sierra Club** campaign in Kansas.

EXPLORE KANSAS

Join the KDWP 250th Anniversary Recreation

Challenge

Stuart Bolt, Chapter Outings Chair, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter

The Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club is thrilled to invite you to participate in KDWP's (Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks) 250th anniversary challenge, a one-of-a-kind recreation challenge, running until July 4th.

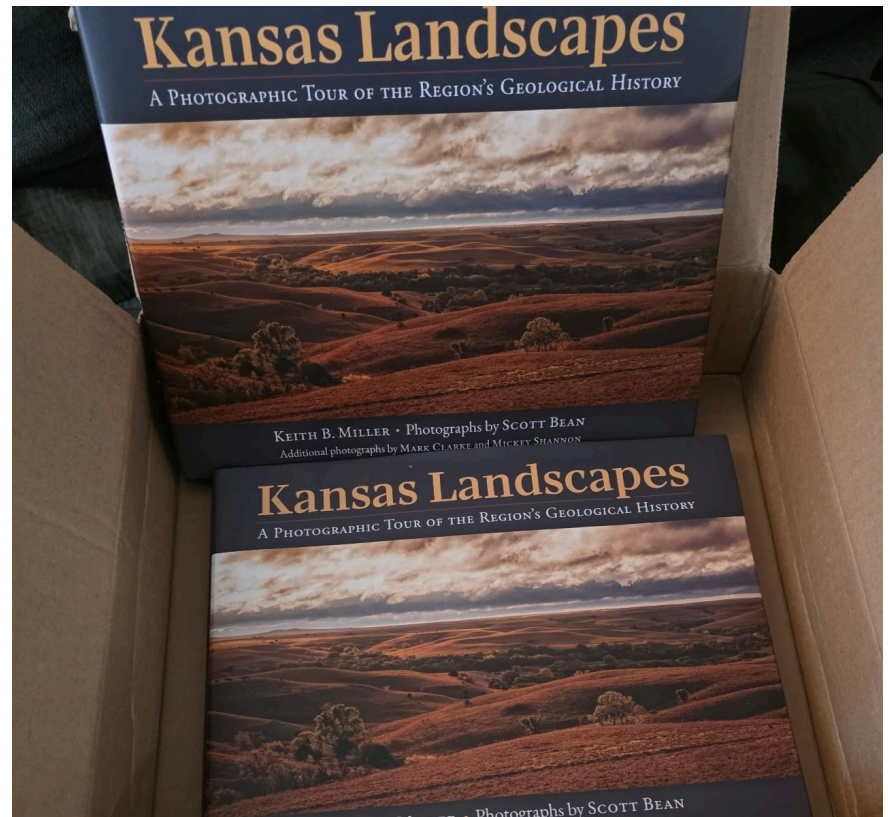
This is your chance to get outside, discover the beauty of Kansas, and make unforgettable memories. Whether you're visiting a Nature Center, exploring a State Park, camping under the stars, or planting native wildflowers, every adventure counts.

Do it! You'll receive a gift from us!

What we'll need from you:

- A photo/scan of your KDWP completed challenge certificate
- A selfie (or a few!) at your favorite Kansas destination(s)
- A short write-up about your favorite experience

**Submission link to receive the gift will be provided on future Waypoints and other communications.*



Gift options | Adventure Bucket List: Kansas Edition & Book "Kansas Landscapes" by Keith B. Miller & Scott Bean

Get Started

Ready to begin? Visit [the official challenge page](#) for activity ideas, rules, and registration.

Let's make this a year to remember—get out, explore, and enjoy everything Kansas has to offer. We can't wait to see where this challenge takes you!

REGISTER NOW FOR THE KDWP CHALLENGE





Kanza Network April Walk & Talk at Lake Lenexa | Photo Eliese Holt

Join a Sierra Club Committee

Fill out our Survey.

Yvonne Cather, Sierra Club Kansas Chapter Chair

The Kansas Sierra Club is growing — and so is the opportunity to make a real impact.

From protecting air and water to advancing clean energy, organizing outings, shaping public policy, and building community, our work is powered by volunteers. If you've been looking for a meaningful way to plug in, this is it.

We're actively building capacity across our Chapter committees and teams — and **we'd love for you to join us.**

COMPLETE THE SURVEY HERE



Legislative Committee meeting over Zoom | Screenshot by Zack Pistora

Why Join a Committee?

- Connect with fellow Kansans who care deeply about our environment
- Help shape Sierra Club priorities across the state
- Gain insight into issues affecting your local community
- Develop leadership skills and relationships

- Make measurable change happen

All committee meetings are held on Zoom, so you can participate from anywhere in Kansas — whether you prefer to listen in or take an active role.

[Take the survey now.](#)

More Events Coming Up!

Friday, May 8

6:30 P.M. (Wichita)

[Southwind General Meeting - Exploring the Gardens](#)

At this meeting, the presenter will talk about all the nitty gritty of planning a garden and maintaining it. As always, we will start with a Zero Waste potluck at 6:30 pm. Bring your favorite dish to share and enjoy conversation with your fellow Sierrans.

Saturday, May 9

1:00 P.M. (Kansas City)

[Parkville Nature Sanctuary Hike](#)

Join the Sierra Club Kanza Network and friends for a trail hike at the beautiful Parkville Nature Sanctuary! We plan to hike both the White Tail trail (1.5 miles) and the Old Kate trail (0.9 miles) that leads to a beautiful waterfall area. Each trail loops to the beginning, so doing both trails with us is optional.

Saturday, May 16

1:00–2:30 P.M. (Lawrence)

[Potential Environmental Impacts of Advanced Nuclear Reactors](#)

Dr. Amir Bahadori, Professor of Nuclear Engineering will give a presentation and lead a discussion about the impact of advanced nuclear power on the environment.

Thursday, May 28

6:30 P.M. (Kansas City)

[Community Solar Discussion](#)

Come learn about the benefits of community solar and how the Kansas Chapter is building a campaign to legalize and popularize it in our State.



what is a **WAYPOINT?**

Waypoint: *noun.* A stopping place on a journey; an endpoint of the leg of a course, especially one whose coordinates have been generated by a computer.

Submit Waypoints **Content**

Waypoints is the monthly newsletter of the Sierra Club Kansas Chapter.

Articles are edited for style and content and may be rejected at the discretion of the editors.

Editors: Eliese Holt and Mimi Moffat.