

Subject: Mirror Lake and Water Plant Funding Secured
September 27, 2023

For nearly 35 years, there have been several efforts to secure funding to dredge Mirror Lake. With the state appropriating 5 million dollars in the new budget, the restoration of the lake will become a reality in the coming months and years.

I want to thank our legislative delegation, Representative Karl Gillespie and Senator Kevin Corbin, for getting those funds in the recently passed state budget. They are a tremendous legislative team that garners support for Western North Carolina. I want to give a shoutout to Senator Corbin for his tremendous last-minute efforts to ensure the funds were in the budget.

This project will have a lasting impact on preserving the watershed not only for Highlands but for this entire area of Macon County and beyond. It will also restore this scenic venue for our residents and visitors who enjoy our beautiful mountain venues.

The region has seen a decline in rainfall in recent weeks, which may portend drought conditions. Having a healthy tributary lake to our water source at Lake Sequoyah will be an important component in addressing future drought conditions. Increasing holding capacity through deepening Mirror Lake will serve the town's water system well. Given rising temperatures, shallow water impoundments like the current Mirror Lake promote warm water and subsequent algae growth, complicating clean water production at our water plant.

This project could not have been possible without the citizen involvement of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association. They kicked off the effort by raising half a million dollars, but more importantly, they developed a viable plan for dredging and restoring the lake. I want to thank Patrick Gleeson, the president of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association, for his bold leadership in making this project possible.

This significant state support not only provides the opportunity to dredge the lake but, just as importantly, puts into place a system where the lake can be maintained and serviced for years to come. The dredging of the lake is just the initial step in preserving this important community asset.

Representative Gillespie and Senator Corbin also secured five million dollars to replace the 1965 pre-water clarifier tank at the Highlands Water Plant and for related upgrades. The aging tank is still in service, but as Commissioner Marc Hehn has stressed, the tank has been on borrowed time. The board realized it had to be replaced, so several months ago, funds were allocated to begin the engineering and design for a new tank. Those plans are close to completion.

These funds that our legislative delegation secured were sorely needed. Senator Corbin and Representative Gillespie also got the town over 3 million dollars last year to replace the water lines and water tank in the Dog Mountain area.

The great news is that we have the state funds for these critical projects. The state money translates into more local tax money being directed to other projects on our long list of community improvements.

Please join Representative Gillespie, Senator Corbin, and me at the community coffee tomorrow, Friday, September 29, at 11 a.m. at the Hudson Library. Let's thank our representatives for their support. Also, they will update everyone on other aspects of the new state budget that will advance Western North Carolina.