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KEVIN A. CAHILL
Assemblymember 103rd District

CHAIR
Assembly Insurance Committee

May 23, 2018

James Hall, Executive Director
Palisades Interstate Park Commission
Administrative Building
Bear Mountain, New York 10911

Dear Executive Director Hall:

I write regarding the Palisades Interstate Park Commission's (PIPC) current plans to remove the dam located at Tillson Lake and the subsequent lowering of the water level. Tillson Lake has been present in our community since 1930 and has provided recreation and leisure to the surrounding area since its creation. The Lake's scenic views of the Shawangunk Ridge have provided the ideal setting for fishing and boating for half a century.

When the State acquired the Lake, along with the rest of the Awosting reserve in 2006, then-Governor Pataki described the purchase as ensuring the area "will be preserved for future generations". Minnewaska State Park's Master Plan was then updated to include the need for design and implementation of dam improvements. While there is no record of remediation efforts taking place, the 2016 Master Plan amendments did not mention any issues or concerns with the dam. Instead the only citing was that Tillson Lake had a "large number of weeds".

Despite public plans failing to identify a critical issue with Tillson Lake dam, residents were informed on March 28, 2018 of PIPC's plans to remove the dam and lower the water level. The letter informed residents that this was necessary because the structure no longer met the safety requirements established for a Class C dam. The letter added that since repairs should cost seven to nine million dollars, the decision had been made to breach the dam.

Since the publication of your letter, a significant number of neighbors and local residents, as well as elected officials have approached my office with concerns including the loss of recreational opportunities in the community, impact on local properties with water rights, questions over the cost estimate, environmental impact and expenses associated with cleanup following dewatering.

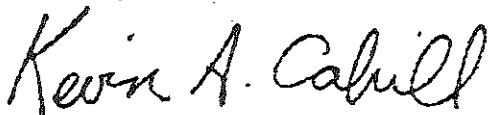
It should come to no surprise that many of the constituents of the 103rd Assembly District and the Gardiner community are apprehensive and nervous about the Lake's future. Much of what has taken place so far leaves neighbors questioning how long the dewatering plan has been in place. Many have voiced that they believe the dam's removal is a fait accompli. Accordingly, I

respectfully ask that PIPC and the Parks Department provide a detailed and complete report regarding Tillson Lake and dam and your plans for it. I also request that you hold a community meeting to address what has happened up to this point and what the public should expect, regarding a fair, transparent review process moving forward.

Along with having a discussion, I and representatives of the Gardiner community are also interested in viewing key documents. They include materials related to the cost estimate for repairing or removing the dam, as well as the Charter that designated PIPC the owner of the Lake. I respectfully ask the PIPC to make these documents available to the public so they can have a full grasp of the magnitude of these repairs and the costs associated. In addition, it would be helpful if PIPC could provide an explanation regarding what the obligations and remediation steps are required on the PIPC to satisfy the structural integrity standards for a "Class C" dam and the timetables associated with meeting those requirements.

Sustainable management of Tillson Lake is critical for the surrounding community and we thank PIPC, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for their dedicated work to protect natural spaces in our communities. With the concerns raised by this project there must be an opportunity now for a cooperative experience between the PIPC, local residents and the State. I close by asking that the transparent discussion with the community take place as soon as possible. I stand ready to assist in facilitating this in any appropriate manner. Thank you for your consideration of the points addressed in this letter.

Sincerely,



Kevin A. Cahill

cc:

Rose Harvey, Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233

Basil Seggos, Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233

John Bonacic, Senator
201 Dolson Avenue, Suite F
Middletown, New York 10940

Marybeth Majestic, Town of Gardiner Supervisor

PO Box 1
Gardiner, New York 12525

Morey Gottesman, President
Friends of Tillson Lake, Inc.
PO Box 228
Gardiner, New York 12525

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