

# Help Save Tillson Lake!



## *Friends of Tillson Lake*

Friends of Tillson Lake is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization formed in response to Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) plans to remove the dam, and get rid of Tillson Lake forever.

Our mission is to save Tillson Lake for the benefit and enjoyment of residents and visitors, protect its ecosystem, and preserve it for future generations.

**Tillson Lake was built in 1930 for recreational use** - swimming, boating, and fishing. Over the years, nature has taken its course: the lake and its environs have developed into a rich, vibrant and diverse biological community supporting both water and land-based plants and animals. The rich aquatic-terrestrial habitat, along with its recreational use, would be lost to the area should the lake be drained and become a stream in a field.

**There have been threats to both the lake, and lake-access in the past.** In 1983, it was drained by its previous owner in retaliation to community opposition to his proposed development of a trailer park. More recently, a golf course around Tillson Lake was put forward as part of a proposal to the Awosting Reserve gated community project on Shawangunk ridge. The project fell through and the State acquired Tillson Lake and made it part of Minnewaska State Park Preserve in 2006. The State's acquisition of Tillson Lake was widely celebrated because it meant continued public access and better stewardship and protection – **our taxes working for us!**

**Unfortunately, that long anticipated honeymoon was a mirage.** Soon after the acquisition, Minnewaska's Master Plan listed repairs to Tillson Lake dam as a high priority but no repairs to the dam have been undertaken to date. Failure to undertake necessary repairs to the dam has certainly contributed to its further deterioration. Now we find out that PIPC's first major capital investment in Tillson Lake will be spent for its demolition – a complete abrogation of its duty of stewardship and protection.

**Tillson Lake is a critical part of Minnewaska State Park Preserve** - the only one of its lakes designated for fishing, and one of two lakes where boating and kayaking are allowed. It is the most accessible area within the Preserve for people with disabilities. The boat launch is a short distance from the parking lot, allowing people who may have difficulty walking to experience kayaking, boating and fishing. Tillson Lake is one of the largest in Southern Ulster and an important venue for recreational activities in the

region. People from Ulster county and visitors from as far as New York City have been using this lake to picnic, fish, kayak, birdwatch, or spend a relaxing time with family and friends.

**Tillson Lake has existed for almost 100 years** - It has developed its own ecosystem and established an important corridor for wildlife including birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians and plants. Largemouth bass, spotted bass, catfish, crappie and brown trout are all found in the lake along with several species of turtle, frogs, ducks, herons, bald eagles, ospreys and other birds of prey. Tillson Lake is a treasured recreational resource and restorative refuge. It is a critical wildlife and wetland habitat that helps control pollution and protects the watershed. Removing the lake will destroy this well-established ecosystem and all the environmental benefits it provides.

**Almost 100 people attended our initial meeting** at the Gardiner Town Hall to share their outrage at PIPC's plan to drain Tillson Lake and express support to save it.

## **WHAT FRIENDS OF TILLSON LAKE HAVE DONE SO FAR:**

- Set up a web page, created a Facebook group with over 600 members and growing
- Put up lawn signs
- Received extensive media coverage
- Organized campaigns to call and write to elected officials and Park executives to petition them to fix the dam and save Tillson Lake
- Attended PIPC's meetings to announce our opposition to their plan
- Hired ecologists, wetland specialists, legal counsel and other professionals to make our case for saving the lake as strong as possible.

## **WE ARE CLEARLY BEING HEARD.**

- The Town of Gardiner passed a resolution asking PIPC to stop its plan to drain Tillson Lake.
- Some of our elected officials wrote PIPC in support of our efforts and open discussions for funding possibilities.

## **BUT WE NEED TO DO MORE!**

**PIPC and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) have taken the initial steps to obtain approval to drain Tillson Lake. The risk of losing the Lake is quickly becoming a reality and we cannot let that happen.**

**Join Friends of Tillson Lake in opposing the plan** to permanently drain Tillson Lake. We must raise the decibel level of public clamor. Help us call upon Governor Cuomo and other elected officials to step up to their stewardship responsibilities and provide funding to fix the dam and save Tillson Lake.

**We need your assistance and tax-deductible donations now** to cover fees of ecologists, wetland specialists and other professionals that we hired to document the significance of the Tillson Lake as a wetland and wildlife habitat; and attorneys to take legal measures to stop the threat in its tracks.

**Visit [www.savetillsonlake.org](http://www.savetillsonlake.org)** to sign-up for more information and learn about the many other ways to contribute. We need volunteers to help in advocacy, outreach, organizing events and fundraising. **Email us at [info@savetillsonlake.org](mailto:info@savetillsonlake.org).**

Thank you in advance for your support and generosity.

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