

ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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To the Tillson Lake Community and Supporters:

I am writing you, regarding the short sighted announcement by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission ("the Commission") in a March 28th letter of its decision to begin the process of removing the Tillson Lake Dam. In that letter to "the potential neighbors" the Commission, in a few short paragraphs shattered the commitment it had previously made in its own master plan to protect Tillson Lake and set in motion a process that prematurely reached a conclusion.

I am proud and well aware of all the past efforts of this community to save Tillson Lake that resulted in the area appropriately being added to the Minnewaska State Park. The countless reasons to save this lake and the area surrounding that were articulated then are even more valid today. Tillson Lake represents a unique recreational and environmental resource that is both underutilized and of a completely different character than the ridge lands of Minnewaska. The public access afforded to a lake of this scale is not available elsewhere in the area and is a significant community asset.

Unfortunately, the work of the Commission to date has largely been in the background with little light shown on what was done and when. The community has been forced to respond to an announced decision rather than participate in shaping it. One of my administration's efforts is directed at reopening the decision process and making available both documents and agency staff to shift focus away from destroying the lake and instead toward the ways to best repair the Dam rather than removing it.

The March 28th letter indicates that a key factor in the decision to remove the dam was the lack of available funding. Yet, throughout our State there are numerous major infrastructure improvements being made utilizing multiple funding sources, including disaster recovery funds. These funds are being used to protect against future flood loss and build more resilient infrastructure. This funding is seemingly a natural fit for repair of the Tillson Lake dam. The Commission has worked diligently on making critical investments on the lands it owns on the ridge. Asking them to make a similar commitment to Tillson Lake is my priority.

The SEQRA process and the needed amendment to the Park Master Plan offer the opportunity to explore alternatives to removal of the Dam. I am committed to being a vocal part of that process.

In closing I want to thank and acknowledge you for your efforts both now and in the past. The Tillson Lake of today is a direct result of your amazing efforts. With your help and commitment, I am focused on ensuring that Tillson Lake will continue as a beautiful recreation and environmental resource for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Hein', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Hein
County Executive