

**INFORMATION PACKET for the  
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING  
Minnewaska State Park Preserve  
Master Plan Amendment  
Lake Minnewaska Area  
August 12, 2015 - 6:00 pm  
SUNY New Paltz  
Lecture Center Room 102**



Jim Hall  
Executive Director

## **Meeting Agenda**

1. Introductions and Welcoming Remarks – Jim Hall
2. Overview of the amendment – Eric Humphrey
3. Taking of Comments – Diana Carter
4. Next Steps and Closing – Jim Hall

## **Introduction**

Minnewaska State Park Preserve distinguished by its unique natural character, scenic vistas and is noted for its historical carriage roads, resort era history and recreational resources. The park offers a multitude of traditional recreational opportunities such as hiking, bicycling, swimming, picnicking, boating, walking, bird watching, rock climbing, bouldering, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. The park also offers a variety of educational and interpretive programs for groups and park patrons throughout the year.

The purpose of this public information meeting is to actively invite public participation and involvement in the planning process for an amendment to the master plan. Public participation will help staff in identifying issues, concerns and alternatives.

This information packet and the public information meeting are intended to provide the public with a concise overview of Minnewaska State Park Preserve and the issues associated with the proposed amendment for the Lake Minnewaska Area.

## **Overview of Park**

The existence of Minnewaska State Park Preserve (Park) stands as testimony to the desire of New York State and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) to preserve a tract of land of extraordinary qualities. It is a reflection of the dual mission of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to be a responsible steward of these resources and to make accessible the recreational and interpretive resources of the State. It recognizes the potential accessibility of the Park to millions of people living in the urbanized metropolitan areas, as well as the natural attributes that require dedicated and careful stewardship and protection if it is to retain its integrity. Minnewaska State Park Preserve is currently comprised of 23,000 + acres of principally forested land and lakes located along the Shawangunk Mountain Range (the Shawangunks) in the towns of Rochester, Wawarsing, Shawangunk and Gardiner in Ulster County, New York. The Shawangunks are noted for their spectacular rock formations, soaring precipices, panoramic views, windswept ledges, pine barrens, fast flowing mountain streams, mountain lakes, and scenic waterfalls. The Park contains five lakes: Lake Minnewaska, Lake Awosting, Lake Haseco (also known as Mud Pond), Tillson Lake and Lake Maratanza. The remnants of 19th and early 20th century carriage roads wind for miles through these forested lands, and connect the various portions of the Park. The quality of the lakes, the steep, stark cliffs and natural ridge lines singly, and in combination, form one of the most scenic and biologically unique resources in New York State.

Since the late 1800s, the lands that constitute Minnewaska State Park Preserve has evolved from a substantial resort function in a semi-wilderness setting to their current status as a limited day use facility, under state jurisdiction, with an intact infrastructure of carriage roads and trails extending from the core of the former resort at Lake Minnewaska to its most remote extremes. State involvement in Minnewaska

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State Park Preserve dates to 1969, and through a combination of acquisitions, deed restrictions, and easements and, most recently, through the purchase of over 8,000 acres, has grown to encompass over 23,000 acres of forests, cliffs and watercourses.

### **Environmental Setting**

Minnewaska State Park is located on a beautiful site on the Shawangunk Ridge. It is an area of diverse natural and cultural qualities, capable of providing a wide range of recreational activities. Its history - particularly development of the 19th century resort complex around Lake Minnewaska in contrast with the larger, undeveloped parkland to the west -- essentially defines present usage. The Lake Minnewaska area generally sees the highest level of activity, largely due to its convenient access and proximity to Route 44/55, while smaller numbers of visitors travel to the Lake Awosting area, 3 miles to the west. The easy accessibility of Lake Minnewaska and the extensive carriage road system that links it to the rest of the Park, dates back to the earlier use of the property as a resort complex.

### **Scenic Resources**

The landscape associated with the Park and the Shawangunk Ridge provides a wide variety of features of significant visual and scenic value:

- Scenic viewpoints;
- Lakes, ponds and seasonal water bodies, streams and waterfalls;
- Wilderness areas;
- Rock ledges, escarpments and extremely steep slopes;
- Vegetation communities.

An important characteristic of these resources is the wide variation in the forms of these resources which can be seen from within the confines of the Park. These include a variety of water features, a wide range of forest, woodland and other vegetation communities, and many different rock formations. Many of these features are rare, if not unique, to the region and constitute a spectacular visual resource.

### **Amendment Overview**

The amendment to the master plan improves the conceptual design of the Lake Minnewaska Area. The proposed project shifts the previously proposed visitor center location from a former residential structure on the edge of Lake Minnewaska to a new, sustainably designed structure located approximately 200 feet from the edge of the lake using previously disturbed land. The former residential structure will be removed from the park, restoring the natural aesthetics of the area.

Testing for the septic system proposed in the master plan for the Lake Minnewaska Area indicated unsuitable conditions. A new location was required to provide wastewater treatment for the area which resulted in substantially less impact to the area. The proposed new location of the visitor center also reduces the length of wastewater line by 1,200 feet which would require a 4 foot deep trench into bedrock and significant ground disturbance.

The new visitor center location provides convenient access to parking, using several previously disturbed areas. The proposed parking areas will meet the parking levels adopted in the Master Plan while limiting disturbance by minimizing the quantity of cut and fill required, improve vegetative screening of cars and will improve stormwater conveyance and treatment required for stormwater permitting.

The areas that have been evaluated with respect to impacts include: transportation/access, land disturbance, recreation, water resources, biological resources/ecology, scenic/aesthetic resources park operations and public health.

### **Public Input**

Your information and suggestions are important in the planning process. The information gathered at tonight's meeting provides us with a valuable component within the process. It will be reviewed and considered by staff before determining the suitability of the master plan amendment for the Lake Minnewaska Area.

### **Next Steps**

A meeting will be held with planning and design staff to discuss the comments. As needed, changes may be made to the design as a result of comment and a final plan for the area developed.

### **Timeline**

Public Information Meetings	August 12, 2015
Close of Comment Period	August 26, 2015
Final Plans	Fall 2015/2016
Construction	2016/2017

### **Additional information can be obtained from:**

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Phone (845)-255-0752

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### **Written comments may be sent to:**

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Planning Bureau  
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