Lake Taghkanic State Park | Columbia County
Towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic, NY



Lake Taghkanic State Park

Draft Master Plan

October 31, 2024

New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Draft Master Plan

for

Lake Taghkanic State Park

Towns of Gallatin & Taghkanic, Columbia County

Prepared by:
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BHS	Bureau of Historic Sites
CRIS	NYS Cultural Resource Information System
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DHP	Division for Historic Preservation
DOT	New York State Department of Transportation
EV	Electric Vehicle
LTSP	Lake Taghkanic State Park
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
NYNHP	New York Natural Heritage Program
NYS	New York State
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
OWH	Our Whole History (OPRHP Initiative)
RIN	Relative Index of Needs
SEQRA	State Environmental Quality Review Act
SGCN	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office

West Beach Parking Lot, 1957, Lake Taghkanic State Park.

INTRODUCTION

Lake Taghkanic State Park has been a destination for friends and families to gather outdoors for generations. The Park has 1,850 acres of open space in southern Columbia County and features a clear, 202-acre spring-fed lake as its centerpiece.

Established in 1929, Lake Taghkanic State Park (LTSP, the Park) is set in a rural area characterized by rolling topography, wooded hills, and pastoral scenery. It is classified as a "Scenic" park by the agency.

Over 1,000 acres of the Park are undeveloped, with natural woodlands, wetlands, and small waterways. Hiking trails, picnic areas, ballfields, and a campground provide multiple options for outdoor recreation, and the clear, freshwater lake has 3.7 miles of shoreline and a large sandy beach with excellent swimming, boating, and fishing. Much of LTSP's infrastructure, including its rustic cabins, iconic East bathhouse, outbuildings, and recreation hall, was built in the 1930s by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers.

What is a Master Plan?

OPRHP's master planning process identifies, documents, and analyzes the parks and sites that reflect the state's collective past and ensures that these important places will be protected and available for future generations. A master plan establishes long-range planning strategies and actions compatible with a facility's unique setting and features to be considered for implementation over the next ten to fifteen years. Developed by a multidisciplinary group, the plan documents existing elements, analyzes how well a park functions, and identifies contemporary user needs. The plan establishes a vision for the future park and a process for prioritizing capital improvements and operational enhancements. A master plan also provides a comprehensive record of a facility and its condition at a certain point in time, ultimately serving as part of the agency's institutional memory.

The Lake Taghkanic State Park Master Plan will provide a long-term vision for park development that will help the agency and Region meet the evolving needs of park users.

Campground access road

The Planning Process

To develop the LTSP Master Plan, a multidisciplinary group ("core team") was assembled, consisting of the Taconic Regional Director, LTSP Park Manager, regional biologist, capital staff, OPRHP historic preservation and environmental stewardship staff, trail planners, and other specialists as needed. The group began by identifying the Park's existing cultural, natural, recreational, and operational features, described in the *Existing Conditions* section. These elements are assessed in the context of relevant social, public health, and environmental factors. Topics related to regional history, demographics, economy, transportation, and other public recreation resources in the area also helped to inform the group's discussions.

Plan Development

Beginning in July 2023, the Core Team met regularly first to assess the Park's existing conditions and then to explore actions for upgrading and enhancing the Park. Developing actions is the cornerstone of the master planning process. Actions proposed in the Final Plan are the product of months of discussions by the planning group and active public engagement. This process allows the group to explore a range of new ideas for the facility from diverse perspectives. The Park was first considered from a holistic viewpoint, then a more fine-grained analysis helped the planning group understand how the Park currently functions.

Actions proposed in this document were developed by the Core Team and include proposed updates to the Park's existing buildings, circulation, and utility infrastructure, additions to recreational amenities, modifications to improve accessibility, as well as new approaches to education, interpretation, and programming. Once feasible actions were identified, the group considered the implications of these potential changes, and recommended those which would ultimately be the most beneficial to the facility. While selecting actions to be implemented the planning group always considers the "status quo," or no change alternative.

Water recreation is a key activity at the Park.

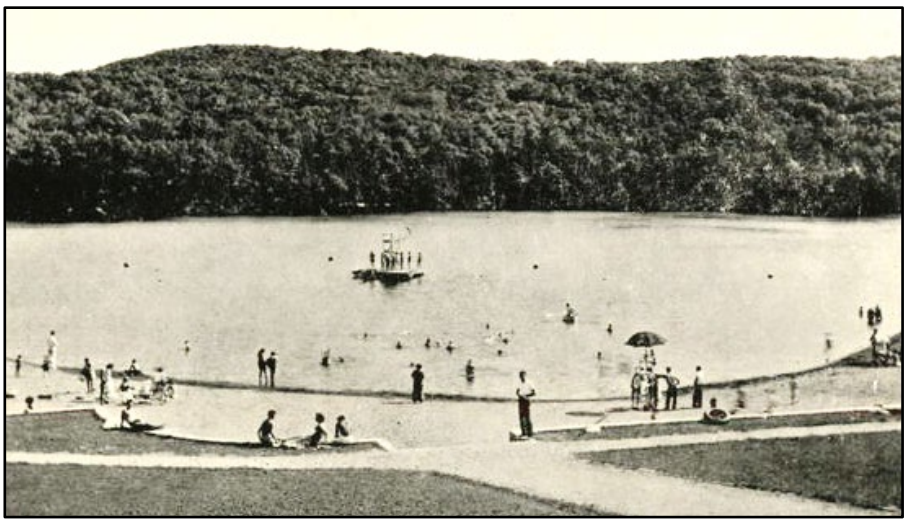
Actions that best meet OPRHP's mission and the vision for the facility were identified as action steps, subject to future implementation. Recommended actions were identified by the planning group as those that will best improve public recreation opportunities in the years to come. These actions are represented graphically on the Draft Master Plan Map included in the Appendices. A complete list of phased actions is included in the *Implementation Priorities Table*. The analysis of actions and rationale for the selection of recommended actions for this Plan is included in Appendix A.

Cumulatively, the actions recommended in the Plan represent the Park and region's long-term vision for the rehabilitation, interpretation, and enhancement of the Park, and for protecting and preserving its cultural, recreational, and natural resources.

Resilience and Climate Change

In the Commissioner's *NY Parks 100 Update on OPRHP Priorities and Strategies,* climate change was identified as the greatest challenge facing the NYS park system. It is widely reported that more frequent severe storms, heat waves, and diminished snowfall from a changing climate are affecting outdoor recreation and impacting tourism and visitation patterns.[1] In NYS, temperature increases since 1970 have surpassed national and global averages and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has projected that the state will see another 2°F to 3°F rise in temperature in the 2020s, and as much as a 6°F increase by mid-century. [2] An analysis of potential climate-related impacts on national parks indicates that visitation at almost all parks may change as severe heat waves become more frequent and last longer.[3]

OPRHP is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and helping to mitigate climate change by becoming more carbon neutral. A Master Plan can be a tool that enables facilities to be an active part of the Agency's resilience and sustainability efforts. Adopting sustainable practices in facility development, operations, and management statewide can help reduce the state's environmental impact on a large scale.



A sandy beach and floating raft at the East Beach in Park's earlier days. Swimming is no longer active at this location.

Image: https://www.cardcow.com/674012/ancram-new-york-diving-float-taghkanic-lake-state-park/)

Timeline of Early Acquisitions

(Excerpts from Taconic State Park Commission meeting minutes)

1929
Negotiations initiated with McRae Livingston for 427 acres valued at $25,000; [and] a $5,000 monetary gift from John Bross Lloyd.

1930-31
"Taking line" around the lake completed; McRae Livingston agrees to give 120 acres agreed upon but will not be paid for until he can "give good title…". With the 40-acre Livingston tract title still in dispute, Livingston proposes: "instead of selling the 40-acre parcel (originally agreed upon to give) for $300, to give 120 acres in the Pond Hill tract.

1932
John and J. Spencer Gillaspy "have agreed to sell 5 cottage lots on Pond Hill Tract and about 10 acres of parkway right-of-way near the Lake outlet for $4,500… $300 for 28 acres from Lewyd Van Hoesen; at $10/acre from Mary, Harry B., and Steven F. Avery Jr.

1933
State appropriates Steuerwald property: "Resolved… the Commissioners enter upon, take possession of, and appropriate 10.777 acres…for $107.77"

1935
Negotiations with "one of the Averys who owns land at the lake will not sell his land but will give us a right of way for a road; purchase a lot of land from George Steuerwald in Gallatin containing about a quarter acre" for $100

1941
$1,500 to Mrs. D. McRa Livingston for 130 acres of land to which the owner has been able to give clear title.

In Columbia County, the towns of Ancram, Taghkanic, Germantown, Gallatin, and Copake are all registered as Climate Smart Communities, a DEC-administered program that guides local governments to progress actions that help to mitigate climate change impacts.

Agency policy requires consideration of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure where feasible. Sustainable approaches are considered first when planning for state facilities. Actions in the Plan are developed to improve energy efficiency and minimize the facility's environmental impact. Reducing fossil fuel use, reducing, or eliminating the use of hazardous substances, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystems, and efficiently using resources are all of high importance.

Park Beginnings

Between 1928 and 1929 the Taconic State Park Commission (the "Commission") began to consider the suitability of what was then known as Lake Charlotte for public recreational purposes.[4] On Oct. 11, 1929, a front-page story in the *Columbia Republican* announced that the state was acquiring acreage to create a new park, noting that the acquisition was made possible by "the generous and public-spirited action" of two local landowners. McRae Livingston, a descendant of the prominent Livingston family, donated the lake itself, and some uplands; John Bross Lloyd provided a $5,000 monetary gift.

According to Commission meeting minutes, negotiations were initiated for the State to acquire the 427 acres around the lake owned by McRae Livingston (spelled "McRa" in early documents), then valued at $25,000. The land donation included the stipulation that the lake "shall forthwith and forever be known exclusively as Lake Taghkanic… and that name shall always be spelled as aforesaid under penalty of forfeiture."[5] ("Taghkanic" is transliterated from a term used by the Lenape people, meaning "forest").[6]

The State continued to acquire additional lands to create LTSP. According to Commission meeting minutes from 1930 to 1941, acquiring the property for just the west section of today's LTSP required over 100 negotiations with landowners who owned properties on and around the lake. Some properties were purchased directly from landowners, others were acquired using the process of "eminent domain" (at the time termed "appropriation"), a power vested to the State to acquire private property and convert it for public use.[7] OPRHP had an early history of using eminent domain to establish parks, beginning with the development of Niagara Falls in the 1880s.

Establishment of the Park

Lake Taghkanic State Park was established in 1929, developed in conjunction with design and construction of the new Eastern State Parkway (later renamed the Taconic State Parkway). Very little infrastructure was in place when LTSP first opened, and in 1933 a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was established at the Park to provide workers to construct the infrastructure needed for public recreational use. With the help of local skilled carpenters and masons, CCC workers built the East Beach and East Beach Bathhouse, the camping and cabin area, and a stone water tower. Today, this "parkway park" is considered historically significant for its landscape design and recreational architecture, particularly its rustic-style buildings and landscape elements.

By 1954, the Taconic State Parkway extended as far north as the Town of Taghkanic and had become a transportation spine that offered residents from throughout the metropolitan area access to the region. The Park benefited from the TSP's development, quickly becoming a popular destination for visitors from the more urban south, many of whom were embracing the country's increasingly car-centric culture. Some visitors settled permanently in the area, and residents still recount fond memories of summer days spent at the Park's beaches. The Parkway also brought development to the region. With access to the area dramatically improved, between 1960 and 1990, the population of the Town of Gallatin grew 267%.[8]

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Over the years LTSP has received development grants from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). As of 2022, the entire acreage of the Park was protected under the LWCF. Acceptance of this federal funding includes a requirement that these facilities remain in public outdoor recreational use in perpetuity. Any proposals for uses other than public outdoor recreation require prior approval of the National Park Service and must undergo a process known as "conversion" to lift the use restriction. It is not anticipated that conversion will be required for any of the actions proposed in the Master Plan. The most recent LWCF grant at the Park was in 2019. Past LWCF grants that have been awarded at the Park are:

- 36-01339 East Water Tower Rehab, 2019
- 36-01286 West Bathhouse and Beach Area Improvement, 2006
- 36-00991 Consolidated Grant Statewide System Rehabilitation, 1981
- 36-00960 80-81 Energy Conservation (Swimming facilities), 1981
- 36-00572 Lake Taghkanic Rehab (site work and cabin foundation replacement), 1977

The current LWCF boundary at LTSP is defined under grant 36-01339 East Water Tower Rehab which was finalized upon grant close-out in March of 2022. For more information on the LWCF, see: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/upload/LWCF-FA-Manual-Vol72_2023-10-01_508.pdf.

The Region

The Park's Upper Hudson Valley setting is renowned for its scenic views of the Hudson River and the Catskill and Taconic mountains. Represented in the works of Hudson River School painters, the region's expansive vistas, bucolic landscapes, and mountaintop lookouts continue to draw visitors seeking to experience the region's picturesque scenery and storied history firsthand.[9]

Early History

Carbon testing has revealed that people were living in the Hudson Valley by 7000 B.C.[10] These early inhabitants were hunters and gatherers who likely followed game migrations as far north as Albany or

Lake George in summer and then into Pennsylvania and other points south in winter. Their weapons were Stone Age in nature. Over time, the region became populated with small, semi-nomadic groups that built their camps along creeks, moving on as resources were depleted. With its tall trees and rock shelters, the Hudson River shoreline provided protection from both cold and heat, making the area appealing for longer habitation. Although hunting and gathering were still prevalent, a more settled lifestyle began to emerge.

Archaeological and linguistic evidence indicate the arrival of Algonquian-speaking people in the Hudson Valley area from the west thousands of years ago.[11] The people who settled here called themselves the Muh-he-con-neok, the People of the Waters That Are Never Still, also known as the Mohicans. Mohican groups living in the region began to cultivate their food, leading to larger, more permanent settlements.[12] By the time of Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609, many Mohican villages occupied the upper Hudson Valley's eastern banks and islands. However, within twenty years of Henry Hudson's ship making landfall, Mohican populations were already in decline.[13]

Flat lands and fertile soils along the Hudson River made what is now Columbia County an important agricultural area for increasing numbers of European settlers. Between 1647 and 1734 there are many recorded "land deals" between the Mohicans and the Dutch, and later the English, in Columbia County. As the settlers divided the land with boundary lines and fences, the Mohicans' former self-reliance and sustenance from their farms and communities were further diminished by increased dependency on the settlers for their provisions. Land agreements were often made in exchange for resources that had been lost from fragmentation of their former lands.[14]

In 1686, King George I of Great Britain awarded 160,000 acres along the Hudson River south of Albany to a member of the socially and politically powerful Livingston family.[15] Robert R. Livingston held the position of Clerk of the Board of Indian Commissioners and bought large tracts of land from Mohicans in the region.[16] In 1710, Livingston sold 6,000 acres of this property to Great Britain's Queen Anne for use as work camps to resettle Palatine Germans who were fleeing war in their homeland.[17] The refugees were brought as indentured laborers to live at the camps as they paid off their passage. In the Taconic region, a Palatine colony established in 1710 was first known as "East Camp," later renamed "Germantown."[18]

Abundant timber and waterpower resources also fueled the region's early industries. Iron ore, limestone, clay, sand, and gravel were important mineral resources that supported brickmaking and cement manufacturing. In 1875, the railroad arrived, bringing access to the wider New York market, and allowing commercial farming to grow. More farmers focused on the dairy industry, creating the large herds that have characterized farming in the region since the mid-1870s.

Outdoor Recreation in the Region

Columbia County has abundant open space with many opportunities for outdoor recreation. Taconic State Park's Copake Falls and Rudd Pond areas along the Taconic Mountain Range near the Massachusetts and Connecticut borders, offer hiking, swimming, camping, and other seasonal outdoor recreation. The 1,078-acre Doodletown Wildlife Management Area (DEC) is about five miles northeast of LTSP, and the New Forge State Forest has 612 acres for camping, trout fishing, hunting, and trapping, with 2.6 miles of trails allowing motorized access for people with mobility impairments, and a canoe launch on Taghkanic Creek. In the nearby Town of Ancram, the 114-acre Drowned Lands Swamp Public Conservation Area has 1.5 miles of trails offering views and a climb to a prominent knoll, known locally as Old Croken.

The Ancram Bicycle Loop, a route designated by Columbia County Tourism, passes adjacent to LTSP's western and southern borders. Also in the area is the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, a multi-use trail available for walking, running, cycling, wheelchair use, and cross-country skiing. An on-road section of the Empire State Trail is located about 12 miles west of LTSP and a segment of the Appalachian Trail is approximately 12 miles east of the Park, in Massachusetts.

Open Space

Conservation groups such as Scenic Hudson, the Open Space Institute, and the Columbia Land Conservancy are active in the region, working to conserve farmland, forests, and wildlife, and to protect ecologically significant habitats. The NYSDEC has over 1,100 acres of conservation easements with private property owners in Columbia County.[19]

The largest public conservation area in Columbia County is the 1700-acre Overmountain Public Conservation Area in the Town of Ancram. The site has 10 miles of trails with views of the Taconic Mountains and the Harlem and Hudson Valleys. South of LTSP, the 26-acre Gallatin Conservation Area, allows the public to access a quarter-mile section of the Roeliff Jansen Kill, with bird-watching and fly-fishing opportunities.

To guide open space acquisition, the DEC publishes the Open Space Conservation Plan (OSP) which designates regional priority projects, including those in the Hudson Valley region.[20]

Relation to Regional Plans

Lake Taghkanic State Park is included in both the Gallatin and Taghkanic Comprehensive Plans. Gallatin highlights Lake Taghkanic State Park in the vision statement for the June 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Recognizing the Park's importance as a valuable resource for the community, the town provides Empire Passes to its residents. Goal #8 of the Gallatin Comprehensive Plan calls for continued engagement between the community and the Park: "To further develop ample recreation opportunities for Gallatin's residents through local and state (Lake Taghkanic State Park) initiatives, public-private partnerships, The Columbia Land Conservancy, and the shared value of agreements with adjacent towns."[21]

A busy summer day at Lake Taghkanic State Park's West Beach in the 1970s.

Similarly, a survey conducted for the Town of Taghkanic's 2009 Master Plan noted the importance of Lake Taghkanic State Park for community residents. When asked to list their three favorite spots in the Town, LTSP was the second most popular location.[22]

In 2018, Columbia County completed a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), providing valuable information on the known rare species and Significant Natural Communities (SNC) within and around the Park.

Adjacent Land Use

The Columbia County region consists of rolling hills, and a rocky landscape, factors that have shaped its land use. Over the 20th century, a general decline in farming occurred in Columbia County, and the population has gone through significant changes, especially in recent years as farming communities have gradually evolved as many farms have been sold to build homes. However, while in recent years residential development has outpaced farming as the most significant land use, open space still generally dominates the region.

Lands adjacent to LTSP are largely zoned for agricultural use. Although some dairy and thoroughbred horse farms remain, there is a growing presence of low-density residential zoning and the area around the Park is now a combination of agricultural uses and professionals working in technology-related services and other businesses.[23] (For a map of Adjacent Land Use, see Appendices, Figure 3). Development pressures increased in the county most notably between 2020 and 2023, as work and lifestyle changes that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic sparked more intense interest in the Hudson Valley as a destination for second homes and those looking to relocate out of urban centers. The quantity of new residents in the region has slowed but shifts in land use and demographics continue. Residential demand in Columbia County may continue to grow, influenced by the ability to work remotely and as more urban residents stay to enjoy the region's appealing, rural quality of life.[24]

Economic Contribution

According to data from the NYS Office of the Comptroller, outdoor recreation is a significant source of revenue for New York State, in 2020 providing $21.1 billion in economic activity and supporting over 241,000 jobs.[25] Economic contribution to a community from outdoor recreation is partly determined by how many people from outside the immediate area visit the park and how much they spend in the community while they are visiting. Factors that determine the economic benefit of an individual recreation facility to its region also include money spent locally for park operations, staff salaries, and other services and materials required to maintain or improve the site, as well as bringing new money for programs and special events, entry fees, concessions, and shop items. These factors can provide a significant economic benefit for local economies.

Columbia County is a popular tourist destination for urban residents, outdoor enthusiasts, and others drawn by its rural, agrarian character. The County has an active tourism economy, with 9.9% of all labor income generated by visitors.[26] The overall region benefits, as visitors shop, eat out, pay for transportation, and stay at local inns and hotels.[27]

Along with direct economic benefits, parks and open space also provide important benefits to their communities by enhancing property values, managing stormwater, removing air pollution, and supporting healthier lifestyles.

Regional Designations

The towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic are within the Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) boundary and are both designated "Greenway Communities." This designation makes communities eligible to participate in the Greenway Land Use Planning Program and access grants.[28] HRVG also manages the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, one of 62 federally recognized National Heritage Areas in the United States.[29]

The nearby Town of Ancram has been recognized by the DEC and the NY Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) as having special importance for rare species of plants and animals and high-quality examples of ecological communities. Most of the eastern half of Ancram is within the "Harlem Valley Calcareous Wetlands Significant Biodiversity Area" with both lowland areas and adjacent hills that support rare and vulnerable species of plants and animals. The Town's northeastern corner is in the "Taconic Ridge Significant Biodiversity Area," recognized by the DEC for large areas of contiguous, high-quality hardwood forests that provide habitat for numerous plants and animals of conservation concern. The NYNHP has also designated parts of Ancram as "Important Areas" for rare species and natural communities. Because of its ecological diversity and role as a key linkage in regional connectivity, the area south of LTSP was noted as a high priority in the Nature Conservancy's analysis of lands likely to remain resilient in the face of climate change. The Park and its environs have been selected as a potential corridor for connecting the Catskill Mountains to the east to the Berkshires in the west as part of the Eastern Wildway.[30]

A 2020 property acquisition added approximately 130 acres to LTSP at the Park's southern border. This parcel contributes to one of only two west-to-east forested wildlife corridors to cross the Hudson Valley, connecting the Catskills and Appalachians with the Taconic and Green Mountains.

Regulatory Considerations

LTSP has one state-regulated wetland complex of approximately 36 acres located on the east end of the lake. New York State wetlands 12.4 acres or greater are protected under the Freshwater Wetlands Act, which regulates draining, dredging and development, dumping, or otherwise damaging freshwater wetlands.[31]

Demographic Trends

Population changes are an important factor affecting visitor use patterns at recreation facilities. According to data from the 2020 U.S. Census, NYS is becoming increasingly diverse, with growing Latino, Asian, and multiracial populations.[32] The state's population is also aging. In 2019, 16.4% of the state's population was 65 years or older; by 2035, one out of five (20%) NYS residents is expected to be 65 or older.[33] Changing demographic patterns of both the state overall and the Hudson River Valley will influence what visitors are looking for in types of activities, programs, and recreational open space, and these factors are considered when planning for LTSP in the future.

The Town of Gallatin is populated by both descendants of its earliest settlers and more recent full- and part-time residents. The 2020 U.S. Census indicated the median age in Columbia County as nearly 10 years older than New Yorkers overall (48 years old vs. 39 statewide).[34] However, area residents do not comprise the majority of LTSP's visitorship, many of whom live in urban or suburban areas to the south, and this data does not necessarily reflect the Park's primary user base.[35]

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access

OPRHP has an obligation to both steward the state's natural landscape while providing all communities equitable access to outdoor recreation. The agency is committed to advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in its outdoor recreation system to further benefit all communities it serves. These concepts are embedded into the Master Plan's goals and actions.

Although LTSP is in a rural area, a large portion of its visitors reside in urban and suburban counties to its south. The Park has a diverse visitorship that is demographically more representative of New York State overall. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 45% of NYS residents identify as a race other than white alone.[36] Additionally, of the over 20 million people living in NYS, 22.3% are born outside the United States and the CDC indicates that approximately 25% of people living in NYS have a disability. [37, 38] These and other types of diversity necessitate comprehensive and inclusive planning that allows for multiple approaches to recreation, programming, and interpretation.

Recreational Need

Demand for outdoor recreation in the state is determined every five years when OPRHP develops the *NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP). The SCORP collects data on recreation needs statewide, using the Relative Index of Need (RIN), a method for comparing the demand for a particular recreation activity (e.g., swimming, boating, picnicking, camping) within a service area to the actual supply of that activity.

The RIN is expressed on a numerical scale, with 10 being the highest level of need and 1 being the lowest. 5 is considered the statewide average. The RIN for each NYS county is determined using a statewide online survey. In the 2020-2025 SCORP, demand for ball court facilities in Columbia County was high (9), while demand for camping, snowmobiling, and hunting was consistent with the statewide average (5). For all other recreational activities analyzed in the SCORP, RIN was 4 or lower, indicating sufficient facilities exist to meet demand.

An accessible mat expands water access at the West Beach swimming area.

The RIN allows regions to determine need for recreation facilities in counties comprising the park's service area. LTSP's service area includes most of the NY/NJ/CT Tri-State Area, with most visitors coming from Dutchess, Greene, Albany, Ulster, Orange, and Westchester Counties. Visitors also come from Suffolk, Nassau, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, as well as from counties in neighboring states such as Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and Litchfield County, Connecticut.

Visitation

The majority of visitation to LTSP occurs in summer when schools are out and people from urban and suburban areas travel north to find fresh air and a cooler, greener setting. The COVID-19 pandemic affected park visitation patterns across the state, with record attendance between 2019 and 2023. Annual attendance at NYS parks, historic sites, campgrounds, and trails saw a record 84.1 million visits in 2023, with total visits statewide increased by nearly 4.7 million, a 6 percent increase compared to the previous record year in 2022. This marked the 11th consecutive year of increased park attendance and the highest annual increase on record.[39]

Between 2019-2020, Lake Taghkanic State Park's attendance was approximately 185,000 visits. In 2020-2021 more than 204,000 visited, 2022-2023 saw 203,079 visitors, and in 2023-2024, 177,593 visitors were documented at the Park. Visitation to the Hudson Valley region overall has also increased significantly in recent years, drawing both tourists and new residents from throughout the New York metropolitan region and beyond.

Public Survey

In the summer of 2023, a public survey was launched with eight questions about the visitor experience at LTSP. Out of 240 responses, more than 52% of LTSP visitors have been coming to the Park for "more than 20 years," indicating long-established connections. When asked if they wished to share anything else about the Park, many recounted their early memories, while others noted that their families have been visiting the Park for generations. The East and West Beaches, in particular, play an important role in the collective memory of the Park.

Based on survey results, swimming at Lake Taghkanic is just as popular today as it has been historically; 78% of survey respondents report they swim on a typical visit to the Park. Other popular activities include appreciating the scenery, sunbathing, picnicking, hiking, visiting the food concession, and kayaking or canoeing. Most survey participants visit the Park in the summer (227 responses), though many indicated they visit the Park in the fall (106 responses) and spring (86 responses) as well. Winter is the least visited season; only 44 respondents indicated visiting the Park.

When asked to rate staff courtesy/helpfulness; the cleanliness of restrooms; conditions of roads and parking; conditions of buildings; conditions of outdoor areas; usefulness of signs and maps in the Park; access to information about events, publications, maps of the Park; and safety and security, the majority of respondents rated these aspects of the Park as "Good". The second most common response was "Excellent" for these categories.

When prompted to rate "how welcome you feel in this Park", sixty-two percent (62%) of survey respondents chose "Excellent." When asked about the quality of recreational and educational programs and the quality of the camp store, the most frequent answer was "N/A". The quality of the food concession was rated "Good" by 39%, "N/A" by 25%, and "Fair" by 22% of respondents.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Physical Setting

Scenic Resources

Set within the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountain viewshed, Lake Taghkanic State Park is part of a region renowned for its rural charm and natural vistas. Columbia County's pastoral, largely undeveloped landscape contributes to its scenic charm across the seasons.

Geology

The physical characteristics of the Park's Hudson Valley setting are a result of geologic events that date back long before the last ice age. Columbia County's present-day landscape was greatly affected by physical and geological processes—both erosion from advancing glaciers and sediments deposited as the glaciers melted away. The region has been shaped by the presence of ancient seas and the movement of glaciers, which helped create the mountains, lakes, valleys, and rock formations in the region today.

Between 1,300 and 800 million years ago, this region was part of a shallow sea where sands, clays, and volcanic ash gradually accumulated. As early continents formed and separated, a rift in the northeast resulted in the formation of a continental shelf in what is today the Hudson Valley.[40] Around 490 and 443 million years ago a chain of volcanic islands formed off the continent, eventually colliding with the coast, resulting in a mountain-building event known as the Taconic Orogeny. That era saw the folding and faulting of marine shales, which today can be seen along the Hudson River north of the Hudson Highlands up as far as Albany.

The period spanning 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago saw the great Pleistocene ice age, during which the erosive processes of at least four major advances and retreats of glaciers shaped the area's picturesque scenery. As the climate warmed, less than 10,000 years ago, the ice retreated, and large post-glacial

Rocky outcrops characterize the northern shoreline of Lake Taghkanic

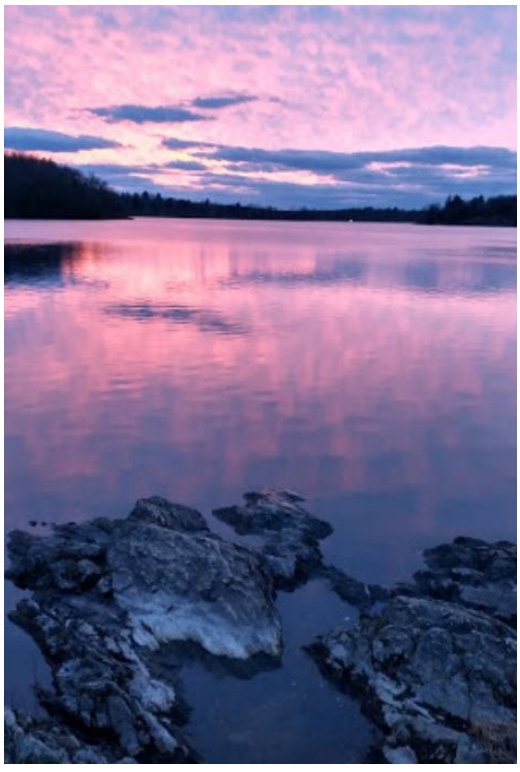
lakes formed along the Hudson. The region's many lakes and rivers are remnants of this action by the Hudson Valley glacier.

Soils

The hills at LTSP are covered with soils derived from deposited sands and clays or from native sedimentary rock. The predominant soils (over 50% of the site) are Nassau channery and Blasdell channery silt loams, generally found on the summits and backslopes of ridges and hills of glaciated uplands.[41] Shallow, well-drained soils in the Nassau series are derived from shale and slate. They range from nearly level to very steep and are mostly shallow soils that overlie shale bedrock. Other soil types found at the Park include Stockbridge silt loam, a very deep, well-drained soil found on glacial till plains, smooth hills, and low ridges. Poorly drained soils at the Park are at a minimum and include Limerick silt loam and Canandaigua silt loam, which lie very close to the water table (for a map of soil types at the Park, see Appendices, Figure 5).

Topography

The southern portion of Columbia County is characterized by rolling hills with wetlands and marshes, with smaller brooks and streams threaded throughout the landscape. The Park's terrain is typical of the region: hilly, with a maximum elevation of around 945 feet and a minimum of about 530 feet. Aerial images and 1938 topographic data show much of the area as open cropland. Much of the land in the vicinity has been used for agriculture, including some lands within the Park. South of Lake Taghkanic is Mattashuck Hill, the highest point in the immediate area. At 1104 feet elevation, was also known as Signal Rock because of its purported use for fires and smoke signals that could be seen for many miles.[42]



Lake views are a primary scenic resource for LTSP visitors.

Water

The Park's central feature is its 202-acre lake, which occupies about 11% of the property. Lake Taghkanic is the third largest lake in Columbia County and one of the two major water bodies in the Town of Gallatin (the other is Pond Lily Pond, just south of LTSP). [43] Lake Taghkanic is classified as "oligotrophic dimictic" a type of lake rich in oxygen and low in nutrients, with good water clarity.[44]

Lake Taghkanic is 1.5 miles long, with 3.7 miles of shoreline and an elevation of 650 feet above sea level.[45] Its mean depth is 19 feet with a deepest point of over 40 feet.[46] The shoreline is mostly forested except where Park facilities are sited on the western and northern shores. At the lake's far eastern end is a large swamp (see Appendices, Figure 7 – Water Resources).

The Park's lake, streams, wetlands, and woodlands also provide valuable wildlife habitats in a region increasingly subject to development pressures. These features are also part of a regional ecosystem, and actions implemented within the Park's boundaries can affect the shared watershed and network of larger natural communities.

Lake Taghkanic in summer

Watershed

Lake Taghkanic drains westward into the Doove Kill within the Roeliff Jansen Kill watershed. A portion of the Roeliff Jansen's headwaters begin in Massachusetts, in the Berkshires, joining other waterways in Columbia County to become one of the Hudson River's largest tributaries.[47] The Roeliff Jansen is also the traditional boundary between the Mahican and Wappinger tribes.[48] Water quality monitoring by DEC indicates that aquatic life in the Doove Kill and its tributaries may have minor impacts due to nutrient loadings from agricultural and other nonpoint pollution sources.[49]

A parcel added to the Park's southeastern edge in 2020 provides a substantial buffer within the watershed, which includes the headwaters of Lake Taghkanic and a bog altered in the past by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for agricultural purposes. The cleared area, which had been channelized, was modified by beaver dams and is now open water. The successional area surrounding this pond may offer the potential for ecological restoration.

Wetlands

LTSP contains a 36.1-acre NYS Regulated Freshwater Wetland complex, in the southeastern portion of the Park. State-regulated freshwater wetlands are classified into four categories, from I, wetlands that are most beneficial, to IV, those that are least beneficial.[50] The complex is designated as a type II wetland. Regulation changes effective January 1, 2025, will put additional acres of wetlands under DEC's jurisdiction. Several wetlands within the Park that are currently unregulated are likely to be regulated after that date. Smaller wetlands, mapped on the National Wetlands Inventory, are located throughout the Park (see Appendices, Figure 7 – Water Resources).

The NYNHP Database indicates the presence of Red Maple-Hardwood Swamp, Vernal Pool, Deep Emergent Marsh, Shallow Emergent Marsh, and Dwarf Shrub Bog wetland types within the Park. These wetland classifications vary in soil type, water depth, and plant composition. Some may flood seasonally, while others are permanently submerged. Each wetland community type provides a critical habitat that

contributes to the overall species diversity of the Park and the region. Any activities proposed that may impact wetlands and their buffer areas will require environmental review and, if necessary, appropriate permitting.

Flora
Oak, hickory, maple, cedar, and hemlock are commonly found throughout the Park with spruce and white birch on the northern slopes.

Fauna
Lake Taghkanic is home to a varied assemblage of fauna, generally including species characteristic of Columbia County. Deer, bears, coyotes, beavers, rabbits, squirrels, and raccoons can be found in the Park. Lake Taghkanic supports a range of aquatic species including freshwater mussels, American eel, panfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, pickerel, brown bullhead, blue gill, rock bass, and several other fish. Largemouth bass over 20 inches and chain pickerel over 25 inches have been reported.

Sources for additional records of known flora and fauna within the Park include the NYNHP field survey database, iNaturalist, eBird, and the New York Breeding Bird Atlas.

Special Concern Species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)
There is a 2011 record for New England Cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*) on the parcel acquired in 2020 (NYSDEC 2011). New England Cottontail (NEC) are listed as a Special Concern species in NYS and are a High Priority SGCN. Forest fragmentation and competition with the Eastern Cottontail have led to a decline in NEC populations.[51] Conservation strategies for NEC focus on identifying and modifying appropriate habitats.[52] In coordination with DEC, OPRHP will continue to monitor for NEC at the Park. If a viable population is detected, the agency will consider implementing habitat improvement strategies, where feasible.

A dragonfly species, Arrowhead Spiketail (*Cordulegaster obliqua*), was discovered in the Park during the 2024 Bioblitz. The Arrowhead Spiketail is an SGCN and has a state conservation status rank of S3 species, meaning it is "vulnerable to disappearing from New York due to rarity or other factors (but not currently imperiled)."[53]

A Marbled Salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*) was discovered during routine trail maintenance in July 2024. The Marbled Salamander, is listed as a Special Concern species in NYS, has a state conservation status rank of S3, and is an SGCN.[54]

In October 2024, a Four-toed Salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) was discovered in the Park. This salamander is considered a High Priority SGCN in New York. While not currently listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern, this species should be considered when evaluating target species for conservation planning.

Significant Natural Communities
"Significant" natural communities are either rare in New York State or are an outstanding example of a more common natural community. One natural community in the Park is considered significant from a statewide perspective: Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Forest (NYNHP 2020), encompassing 210 acres, approximately 11% of the Park. Damage from the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive pest that kills hemlock trees, has been documented and may reduce the size of this community in the Park. Efforts are

being made to preserve some of the Park's hemlocks by controlling the hemlock woolly adelgid through chemical treatments.

Ecological Communities

As part of an OPRHP biodiversity inventory updated in 2021, NYNHP staff characterized and mapped natural and cultural community types in LTSP (NYNHP 2021). These surveys identified 18 distinct ecological community types within the Park, predominantly forested with mixed oak and hemlock-hardwood forests (NYNHP 2021).

For more information on ecological communities visit the "Conservation Guides" section of the NYNHP home page at nynhp.org. See Appendices, Figure 9 – Ecological Communities for a map of ecological communities at LTSP.

Ecological Communities at Lake Taghkanic State Park

System	Subsystem	Community Type	Acres
Terrestrial	Forested Uplands	Appalachian Oak-Hickory Forest	567.8
Terrestrial	Forested Uplands	Appalachian Oak-Pine Forest	161.0
Terrestrial	Forested Uplands	Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Forest	210.2
Terrestrial	Forested Uplands	Successional Northern Hardwoods	274.1
Terrestrial	Barrens And Woodlands	Red Cedar Rocky Summit	1.9
Terrestrial	Open Mineral Soil Wetlands	Shrub Swamp	22.3
Terrestrial	Open Uplands	Successional Old Field	5.9
Terrestrial	Terrestrial Cultural	Conifer Plantation	66.3
Terrestrial	Terrestrial Cultural	Developed	83.1
Terrestrial	Terrestrial Cultural	Wooded Campground	37.9
Terrestrial	Terrestrial Cultural	Mowed Lawn	8.1
Terrestrial	Terrestrial Cultural	Mowed Lawn with Trees	5.4
Palustrine	Forested Mineral Soil Wetlands	Red Maple-Hardwood Swamp	63.4
Palustrine	Forested Mineral Soil Wetlands	Vernal Pool	0.2
Palustrine	Open Mineral Soil Wetlands	Deep Emergent Marsh	9.7
Palustrine	Open Mineral Soil Wetlands	Shallow Emergent Marsh	1.4
Palustrine	Open Peatlands	Dwarf Shrub Bog	24.8
Lacustrine	Natural Lakes and Ponds	Eutrophic Pond	1.2
Lacustrine	Natural Lakes and Ponds	Oligotrophic Dimictic Lake	172.9
Total Acres			**1717.8***

*Total Acres does not include the 2024 acquisition

Rare or Threatened Species

Lake Taghkanic has no known extant populations of rare plants (NYNHP 2023). A population of Southern Swamp Buttercup (*Ranunculus septentrionalis*) was reported near the lake in 1982, but 2020 and 2024 surveys failed to find it. Other rare plant species documented in the vicinity of the Park and recommended for future surveys are Pleated knotweed (*Polygonum tenue*) and a historical record for Schweinitz's sedge (*Carex schweinitzii*).

A rare animal, the Eastern Pond Mussel (*Ligumia nasuta*) has been recorded in Lake Taghkanic in the past. An S2 species "Imperiled in New York", the Eastern Pond Mussel was once abundant in the Hudson River estuary and across the state.[55] Although August 2024 surveys failed to locate the rare Pond Mussel at LTSP, suitable habitat is present within the lake and further surveys are warranted.

Threats to Natural Resources

Immediate threats to the Park's natural elements are invasive species, vegetation trampling, soil erosion, and sedimentation into the lake from recreational and operational usage. Impacted areas include trails, camping areas, and anywhere visitors access the water. Water quality in the lake is also at risk from the Park's septic systems, many of which were installed years ago and are in variable condition.

While some level of beaver activity is natural and beneficial to wetland maintenance, beaver dams can flood trails and impact vegetated buffers around the lake and ponds. Future management of beaver activity will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Climate Change

As the climate continues to change, warming temperatures and different weather patterns will impact the region's ecosystems. Higher lake temperatures may result in the spread of harmful invasive species or algal blooms, the northward movement of invasives, and the decline of native species.

An aphid-like insect, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, plant their eggs on the young twigs of hemlock trees.

New York's climate is changing faster than national and global averages and Hudson Valley communities can anticipate rising temperatures with more frequent, intense storms and flooding, heat waves, drought, and wildfires.[56] These all have the potential to affect the region's natural resources including:

- Potential impacts on the temperature of the Lake
- Plant and animal species' ranges spreading northwards as average temperatures rise
- Native species declining in conjunction with range expansion of more southernly invasives

Invasive Species

Invasive plants are increasingly impacting the Hudson Valley Region's native ecological communities. One of the greatest threats to natural resources at the LTSP is the spread of exotic species that can potentially outcompete native species or alter habitats. Some of the more problematic invasive plants in the Park are Black Swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*), Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*), Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica var. Japonica*), Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), and Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*).

Invasive Species Identified at LTSP (Report generated on iMap Invasives, Oct 17, 2023)	
Scientific Name	**Common Name**
Berberis thunbergii	Japanese Barberry
Reynoutria japonica var. japonica: Fallopia japonica var. japonica	Japanese Knotweed, Japanese Bamboo
Elaeagnus umbellata	Autumn Olive
Potamogeton crispus	Curly Pondweed
Ailanthus altissima	Tree-of-heaven, Ailanthus
Trapa natans	Water Chestnut
Vincetoxicum nigrum	Black Swallowwort
Veronica officinalis	Common Speedwell
Adelges tsugae	Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
Lythrum salicaria	Purple Loosestrife
Agrilus planipennis	Emerald Ash Borer
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard
Rosa multiflora	Multiflora Rose

Field surveys noted the presence of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (*Adelges tsugae)* in LTSP in 2020 (OPRHP 2020). Hemlock Wooly Adelgid (HWA) causes the die-off of hemlock trees which may impact the hemlock-hardwood forest in the Park and the lake's forested buffer. An assessment of the status of the HWA in the Park was done in early 2024 and a treatment plan was created and implemented. In May 2024, approximately 900 trees in three stands were treated for HWA using either basal bark application or trunk injection treatment methods (the treatment method was based on the tree's proximity to water).

The anadromous alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) was likely introduced to the lake – possibly by birds or through bait buckets (NYS OPRHP communications with NYS DEC). Alewife was not a known community member until recently and its presence may be affecting other species within the lake. Alewives compete for zooplankton, causing impacts on other native fish and water clarity. The NYS DEC stocked the lake with approximately 17,000 50-day-old walleye (*Sander vitreus*) between 2017 and 2021. Walleye are predatory fish and their diet includes alewives. The stocking was aimed at both introducing a recreational fishing opportunity for walleye and helping control the lake's alewife population. However, walleye have not been captured in subsequent electroshocking efforts.

Invasive insect species, such as the spotted lanternfly, are of particular concern and may impact the Park in the future. Early detection and active management of invasive species is important for protecting the Park's natural elements. Invasive species management strategies will generally prioritize impacted areas around high-quality habitats, such as wetlands, and those threatening key infrastructure, amenities, or views. Efforts to remove water chestnut from Lake Taghkanic began in 2020 and are ongoing. Black Swallowwort is also being actively treated. A treatment plan for knotweed is likely to be developed and implemented in the future.

OPRHP has a policy to minimize the use of pesticides wherever feasible (OPRHP Policy on Pesticide Reduction in State Parks and Historic Sites). However, in some instances, pesticides are the only viable method for controlling invasives and will be utilized where necessary and appropriate.

A 1907 photo shows inns, boarding houses, restaurants, and summer homes sited along the Lake's western shore prior to the creation of LTSP.

Cultural Resources at the Park

Indigenous communities are known to have lived in the Hudson Valley region for millennia. Archaeological evidence suggests that human occupation in the region stretches as far back as 12,000 years ago, when glacial processes were still shaping the geological features seen today.[57] These early people are believed to have lived as nomadic hunting groups. Some of the region's early occupants were the Mohicans, whose stories tell of ancient predecessors who traveled great distances from the northwest, crossing the Bering Straight, over "great waters" to settle along the Hudson River.[58]

The upper Hudson River Valley was also known by the Mohawk people, who traveled east from the Mohawk River Valley to hunt, trade—and sometimes wage war—with the Mohicans.[59] The Mohicans that settled in the area now known as Columbia County called the lake "Taghkanic," interpreted variously as, "water enough," and "full of timber."[60]

Lake Taghkanic State Park was established in 1929 on the ancestral lands of these groups.

Civilian Conservation Corps at Lake Taghkanic State Park

Established in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enlisted single men between the ages of 18 and 25 to work programs that ultimately improved public lands across the country. From 1933 to 1942 CCC members worked across New York State to construct roads, trails, cabins, dams, stone walls, and plant trees using mostly hand labor with a pick and shovel.[61] Forty different CCC camps were spread across the state, and many state parks benefited from work performed by the more than 200,000 CCC members.[62] Structures from the CCC era are of interest to history and architecture buffs and offer interpretive potential.

A CCC camp was established at the Park in 1933 to house the laborers who constructed much of the Park's early infrastructure. These historically significant elements, still found in the Park today, include a stone water tower, the East Bathhouse and swimming beach, and campground infrastructure, including rustic cabins, a Recreation Hall, and a Stone Shower House. Most of these elements remain in active use and are integral to the Park's operation.

Still in use at the Campground are 15 cabins, a stone shower house, and a Recreation Hall, in which the chimney and wood portion are from the CCC era. Accessible family restrooms have been added to the historic structure. The CCC-built East Beach Bathhouse and a stone water tower with an observation area, are extant but no longer in use. In 2019 the stone water tower was restored and replaced with a modern water tank.

Original blueprints in the Park's archives show the CCC camp as a cluster of rectangular buildings representing barracks for housing workers, a dining hall, and other outbuildings. All that remains of the original CCC camp today are a pair of stone columns at the former entrance and overgrown foundations, shallow wells, and debris in a wooded area.

The East Bathhouse is a significant part of the Park's early infrastructure. The imposing building was constructed by CCC workers to provide changing areas and public restrooms for beachgoers using the nearby East Beach swimming area. The Park's main office was also housed there until 2007, when extensive damage from a large water leak forced the Park to shutter the building. The structure was already in poor condition at the time, and the damage coincided with the state's "Great Recession," when then-Governor Paterson's administration saw growing budget shortfalls and was consolidating resources, which included closing parks and postponing repairs.[63] The East Beach and Bathhouse have remained closed since that time.

Another state-funded public works program, the National Youth Administration, was established at the Park in May 1939. This program trained young men between 18 and 25 years old in the "…duties and responsibilities of State Park maintenance, operations, and minor construction work."[64] Housed in the buildings constructed and formerly occupied by the Park's CCC camp, trainees worked an average of 70 hours per month, primarily in park maintenance and operations tasks. Classes included instruction in basic "botany, zoology, mathematics, science, arts and social and economic problems."[65]

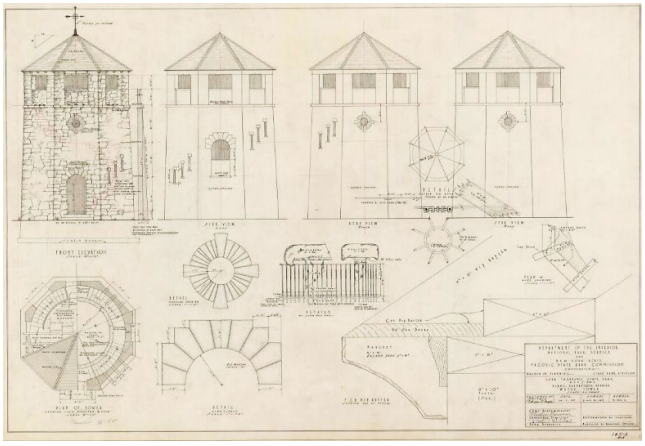
(Left) A hand sketch of the CCC Camp layout (Park archives). (Right) Two sone piers flank the entrance to the original CCC Camp. Few remnants of the camp remain.

Cultural Resource Protection and Preservation

Lake Taghkanic State Park has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places as a park-wide historic district. Features dating from the ca. 1929-1960s era are thus considered historic for their collective depiction of the Park's historic growth and development. As previously mentioned, of particular note are the Park's CCC-built elements, which date back to the mid-1930s. Properties determined eligible for the Registers receive some protection from the effects of proposed projects through a notice, review, and consultation process. No previously known archaeological resources or investigations at LTSP are listed on the NYS Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS).

Historic Cottages

A summer cottage once owned by a member of New York's prominent Livingston Family is located close to the Lake's northeast shoreline. Formerly used as a park manager's residence, a failing septic system has kept it unoccupied for more than 10 years, and it is now used for storage. The cottage is in overall good condition and plans are in place to renovate it for use as staff housing. Work will include addressing some interior code issues and relocating the septic system farther from the lake.



Top: Construction drawing for a stone water tower built by CCC workers. A historic lakefront residence at LTSP, originally owned by a member of the Livingston family.

The Park's lakefront cottages are mostly former private summer homes that the state acquired as it was consolidating property to create the Park. The cottages were relocated from their original sites to form a small cluster of waterfront rental accommodations at the Park. An assessment by the State Historic Preservation Office determined that several cottages are eligible for listing in the State or National Register of Historic Places. A number were identified as not eligible for listing in the State and/or National Register due to previous alterations, deteriorated condition, or a combination of the two. The cottages are available seasonally and always in high demand.

Cultural Landscape

Cultural landscapes are places that have been affected, influenced, or shaped by human involvement.[66] Over the centuries, waterbodies have shaped where human development occurs. Places with ample freshwater resources provide a steady supply of drinking water and a place where people can fish and hunt animals that come to drink water. At LTSP the lake has always been the focal point for development.

Reesa farmhouse and barn. 1872 construction date, with "J H Smith" seen faintly scratched in the wood.

Physical evidence of agricultural use by early European settlers who cleared and cultivated the land include the rubble stone walls still visible at the Park today. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, residences and summer homes were built closely along the lakeshore. When the Park was created, the State relocated some of these cottages to the west portion of the Park for use as rentals. The CCC-era development at the Park contributes another layer to the cultural landscape.

The Park's buildings and other infrastructure are generally oriented relative to the lake. The East Bathhouse sits on a knoll facing out across Lake Taghkanic, and the campground is nearby, allowing easy access to water views and former swimming beach. The West Beach Bathhouse and Park Office building was built facing out across the lake, and the Park's main road hugs its perimeter, offering glimpses of the far shoreline through the trees. The popular Lakeview Trail circles the shoreline.

Reesa Farmstead

A significant element of the Park's cultural landscape is the Smith-Ressa property, purchased by the State from the Marie Ressa family in late 1961 or 1962 (spellings for the family name differ – a nearby road sign is spelled "Reesa," used today). The Ressa property was purchased to expand the Park's trail system and protect the land from being developed. Once a part of the vast holdings of the Livingston Manor, this 160-acre parcel on the northeast side of the Park has a 19th-century farmhouse and barn, both vacant and in poor condition. The buildings were assessed and documented in a 2019 internal report by the Taconic Region's Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator.[67] The property was assessed again in 2024 by DHP staff as part of master plan development.

Stylistic and physical evidence suggests that the house and barn were likely built in the 1870s.[68] The house is a two-story, center hall structure built over a full basement with mortared rubble fieldstone walls. The porch trim and front door are typical of the Italianate style popular in the post-Civil War period. It is a vernacular farmhouse and not a high-style residence. The standing seam metal roof is somewhat intact.

Both front porch roofs, and a small 20th century addition on the south side, have collapsed, and the interior has incurred damage from the roots of nearby trees, vandalism, and animal activity.

The barn is an excellent example of mid-19th-century timber framing, retaining much of its original building fabric. The barn may have been built in 1872 (the date found painted on the interior east wall). The structure is laid out in typical English or three-bay barn fashion, with a wide center bay and threshing floor.[69] The barn's original portion was framed with hand-hewn heavy timbers and smaller sawn wood members, all with mortise and tenon joinery. There is a full basement whose wood-framed walls are exposed above grade on the east, south, and west elevations, and a rubble stone retaining wall along the north side. The basement contained a dairy and horse stalls.

Historic preservation staff assessed the Reesa house and barn again in 2023. Their report indicated substantial deterioration in the barn's structural framework, primarily from water penetration. Major beams and other elements have been compromised.

Property Acquisition

The latest addition to LTSP is a 152-acre, nineteenth-century farmstead acquired by OPRHP in 2024. The parcel abuts LTSP on its southeasterly border, with significant frontage along both sides of NY 82. An early American style house and classic red barn complex on the property are typical of the region and characteristic of the agrarian lifestyle that once dominated Columbia County. The site's rolling terrain features woodlands, meadows, a pond, and wetlands. The house will be used as a Park Manager's residence and the barns for storage. Open space on the remaining acreage will be evaluated for potential development of trails to connect with existing systems at the Park and in the region.

Additional neighboring properties that help to reach the vision and intended outcomes of the Master Plan will be considered for acquisition in the future as funding allows and improved as appropriate.

Recreational Resources

The focal point at Lake Taghkanic State Park is its large, spring-fed lake. Most development has occurred along its north and west borders. Its wide, sandy beach and clear fresh water attract large numbers of visitors, especially during the summer months, to sunbathe and cool off.

The Park's recreation infrastructure has been developed to support the most popular activities, which include swimming, camping, fishing, boating, hiking, sailing, dog walking, running, picnicking, basketball, volleyball, softball, and soccer. The Park features picnic areas, boat launch sites, boat rentals, playgrounds, sports fields, and a rental pavilion. Sailboats, private kayaks, canoes, and standup paddleboards are all popular. Ice skating and ice fishing are permitted when conditions are appropriate.

Lake Activities

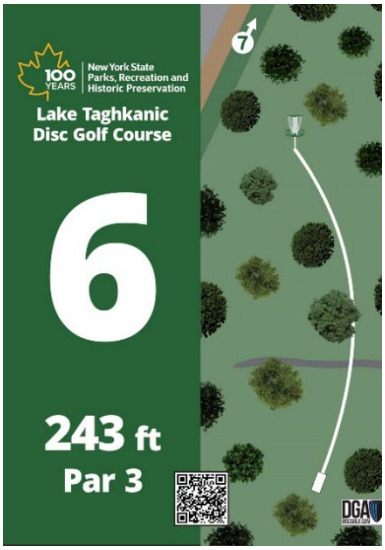
Swimming

The West Beach is open for swimming on weekends and holidays, from Memorial Day Weekend till the third week in June, then daily through Labor Day Weekend, when lifeguards are on duty. The East Beach is permanently closed for swimming. Visitors also use the West Beach area for volleyball, picnicking, socializing, sunbathing, and relaxing.

Boating
Boating is a popular activity at LTSP. There are two boat launches in the Park, one at the West Beach Parking Lot and the other near the maintenance area on the lake's east side. Visitors may bring their own boat or kayak to use on the lake. Gas-powered motors are not allowed; electric trolling motors are permitted. All boats must have a permit. Seasonal permits are available at the Park Office for $30, and weekly permits for $10. Seasonal boat storage (May-December) is available for an additional $15. Rowboats, kayaks, paddleboats, and canoes are available to rent from early May through mid-October. All boats are $10 per hour or $40 per day.

Fish Species in Lake Taghkanic (NYSDEC)

Large/Smallmouth Bass
Chain Pickerel
Black Crappie
Bluegill
Pumpkinseed
Rock Bass
Redbreast Sunfish
Yellow Perch
White Perch
Brown Bullhead
American Eel
Alewife
Golden Shiner
Creek Chub
Banded Killifish
Tessellated Darter



Fishing
Visitors are allowed to fish when the Park is open. Everyone age 16 or older must possess a valid NYS freshwater fishing license. Ice fishing is available in winter when conditions are appropriate. Special fishing regulations from DEC pertaining to walleye are applicable at the Park.

Concessions
The West Beach Concession serves traditional snack bar food/drink and is open during the swimming operating season.

Day Use Activities

The Park's grounds are open for day use recreation year-round. From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, the Park is open from 8 am to sunset and from Labor Day through Memorial Day from sunrise to sunset. A $10 daily vehicle use fee is charged seasonally when the beach is open for swimming.

Courts and Ball Fields
The Park has a ball field used for soccer, softball, football, and frisbee. There is also a basketball court.

Disc Golf
A 9-hole disc golf course was added to the Park in 2024, in the wooded area surrounding the C, D, and E lots.

Beach Activities
The volleyball net on the West Beach is popular with beachgoers. Spike ball, can jam, and ladder ball are also common beach activities.

Pavilion and Recreation Hall
A picnic pavilion, Picnic Area E, is available to rent from late April to late October and can accommodate up to 60 people. There are picnic tables, charcoal grills, and an accessible restroom. Pavilion reservations can be made up to 11 months in advance and must be made at least 3 days before arrival. Reservations can be made online at www.reserveamerica.com or by calling 1-800-456-2267. Rental applications are also available from the Park Office.

A play area on the lake's east shore

The Campground Recreation Hall (which doubles as a storm shelter during inclement weather) is also available for groups to use.

Picnicking
Eight designated picnic areas are located throughout the Park: two primary and six smaller areas. The picnic tables, located throughout the Park, by the beach, and near the playgrounds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Playgrounds
The Park has two playgrounds: one near the East Bathhouse and Campground and the other just south of the West Beach Swimming Area. Both have views of the lake. The West Beach playground has an educational theme and incorporates signage and graphics related to fish species found in the Park. Both were installed within the last 10 to 15 years and are in good condition.

Winter Activities
Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and ice skating are available, conditions permitting.

Other Activities
Visitors can partake in Geocaching (a type of global treasure hunt for hidden stashes of objects) at the Park, where there are several geocaches.

Hunting
Bow hunting only is permitted, and deer and turkey may be taken in designated areas during the season. A Park Hunting Permit is required which can be found on the NYS Parks webpage for hunting at Lake Taghkanic, https://parks.ny.gov/parks/laketaghkanic/details.aspx.

In general, the Park has been determined capable of supporting recreational hunting for deer and turkey. Hunting program modifications may be considered for population management or to meet changes in recreational demand. Future changes to hunting requirements, including permissible hunting methods, zones, species, seasons, and allowable take, will be determined by Park Management in coordination with OPRHP Stewardship staff. Guidelines to ensure public health and safety will be

developed and reviewed prior to implementation. Changes to hunting for deer management will align with DEC's Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in New York State, 2021–2030.

In 2013, New York State launched the "New York's Open for Fishing and Hunting" initiative, to promote the recreational, economic, and ecological benefits of hunting. OPRHP was directed, where practicable, to open new state parks (or new areas in state parks) to big game hunting for recreational opportunities. Consistent with this directive, recent acquisitions will be considered for future hunting program expansion.

Camping

Camping is a primary recreation activity at LTSP with many families coming to camp for multiple generations. The Park's campground is in a hilly, wooded area north of the lake. Available from mid-May to late October, the CCC cabins and tent sites are typically fully booked on weekends. The lakeside cottages are also very popular. While not required, reservations are highly recommended, especially for weekends and holidays, and should be made in advance to ensure accommodations are available. Reservations can be made up to nine months in advance through the New York State Camping Reservation Service (call 1-800-456-2267) or online through Reserve America (www.reserveamerica.com).

Campground

The Campground has 60 campsites, 32 of which are tent platform sites. Each campsite can accommodate up to six people. Nine campsites are available for small pop-up campers. The trailer lot can accommodate pop-up campers and smaller RVs up to 20 feet in length. Camping permits require that guests stay within the campground, cabin, and cottage areas outside of general use hours. Utilities at the Campground include water and electricity, with septic infrastructure to manage wastewater. Shower facilities, water fountains, and restrooms have been upgraded and are centrally located. The potable water system is not frost-protected so Campground facilities cannot be kept open year-round.

Rustic cabins can be rented at the Park's CCC-era Campground

A Camp Store, located adjacent to Parking Lot 1 (Campground Parking Lot), is open during the camping season only. The store sells firewood, charcoal, lighter fluid, ice, bait, candy, snacks, drinks, ice cream, toiletries, basic clothing, blankets, and camping supplies. The Camp Store is open to all visitors. See the Park Office for operating hours/dates.

Cabins

Fifteen rustic CCC cabins are sited in a wooded campground, north of the Park's tent camping area. Cabins range from one to four bedrooms, with kitchens, screened-in porches, picnic tables, and a communal fire ring with stone benches. Each unit has a small kitchen, running water (most only have cold water), a fireplace, and an indoor toilet. There is a centrally located shower house. Patrons must provide utensils, cookware, linens, and pillows. Some families have rented cabins at LTSP over multiple generations and hold a deep sense of nostalgia for them. They are usually fully booked, and securing reservations can be a challenge.

The Park's lakefront rental cottages are popular for family gatherings.

Cottages

The Park's fourteen lakeside rental cottages are clustered in a lawn area south of the West Beach. Most are from the late 19th century early summer communities that developed around the lake. The cottages represent the efforts of the Taconic State Park Commission to develop visitor amenities and expand the park's offerings during its historic development, and thus contribute to the park's history and Registers eligibility.

Although they appear somewhat uniform, their materials, design, and construction styles are variable as some cottages were built by skilled tradesmen and others by homeowners.

The cottages range from one to four bedrooms with drywall interiors. Each has an electric stove, microwave, refrigerator, screened-in porch, picnic table, fire ring, hot and cold water, and a restroom with a shower. Some have electric heat or a fireplace. For standard cottages, patrons must provide all utensils, cookware, linens, and pillows. Four full-service cottages provide these amenities plus eating and cooking utensils, pots and pans, glassware, furniture, electric heat, a coffeemaker, a toaster, a clock radio, carpeted or hardwood floors, a sofa, and bed linens. Pets are not permitted in the cabins or cottages.

Trails

Lake Taghkanic has approximately 12 miles of trails that visitors use for hiking, dog walking, mountain biking, hunting access, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and accessing different parts of the Park. Most trails accommodate multiple uses however conditions for some uses (mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross country skiing) vary by trail and by season. The Park Office provides trail maps, and the gravel parking lot by the NY 82 Entrance has a kiosk with a large map. Some trail intersections are marked with wood signs and directional arrows.

Providing more trail connections at LTSP and to the region was identified as a master plan goal. In addition to the Park's trails, the regional open space network has trails offering a range of experiences. Hiking trails in New Forge State Forest lead through woodlands to fishing spots and swimming holes. At Taconic State Park, the Copake Falls and Rudd Pond areas have extensive trail systems with terrain that varies from easy to challenging, many offering spectacular views. There are also other trail options across the NYS border in Massachusetts.

Fitness Trail (FN) (Blue Markers)

The Fitness Trail consists of multiple trail segments looped together in the southeast section of the park. The trails generally follow a mowed, grassy corridor. The full loop takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. An overlook along the highest point of the trail offers views of the lake, the surrounding Taconic Hills, and the Catskill Mountains to the west. During winter and wet weather, the trail is closed periodically, depending on conditions.

Lakeview Trail (LV) – (White Markers)
This trail loops around the entire lake, near the shore, offering a variety of flora and fauna and scenic viewpoints. Trail conditions vary by section, with some easier sections located along the picnic and cabin areas, and others traversing more rugged, rocky terrain on the southern edge of the lake. Seasonal closures and re-routes are common during the winter and wet weather. Travel time to complete the loop is approximately 2.5 to 3 hours.

Winter Trail (WR) – (Orange Diamond markers)
This trail is less developed than others in the park and is primarily used during the winter as a snowmobile detour around a narrow portion of the Lakeview Trail. The trail is a strenuous climb as it rises and descends over 300 feet. In winter, views of the lake and Berkshire Mountains are seen to the east.

Campground Loop (CL) – (Green markers)
The Campground Loop provides a connection from the camping area into the northern section of the property. It then loops back to join the main park road. Conditions vary along this trail and some segments are steep.

Reesa's Farm Trail (RS) – (Green markers)
This trail connects with the northern leg of the Campground Loop and extends to the former Reesa Farm, then turns south and connects to the main park road, near the western entry.

Trail Assessments
In the Spring of 2024, staff from the Taconic Region as well as the Albany office performed trail assessments on the trails at LTSP. These assessments evaluated the needs and conditions of trails and trail users at the park and captured general condition, areas of erosion or drainage issues, ease of travel, adequacy of signage and other issues in the trail tread and corridor. Staff considered how trails are used and made recommendations for optimizing the network. Sections in need of repair, re-routing, or closure were identified and documented (see Figure 11).

Trails at LTSP lead through wooded areas and to high points with views of the Catskills and lake. Some are used for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in winter.

Accessible Trail Design

Increasing accessibility for all persons is an OPRHP priority. The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establish standards for accessible trail segments and access routes. These standards include surface condition and material, directional and cross slopes, minimum widths, obstacle heights, and more. OPRHP staff trained in the Universal Trail Assessment Process performed a preliminary review of at the Lakeview Trail at LTSP between the E lot and West Beach to consider potential accessible trail improvements. The initial assessment determined the following:

- Many sections of the existing Lakeview Trail (between E lot and West Beach) meet ABA trail grades.
- Some segments are too steep in their current condition or have too great an out-slope or in-slope and will require grading to meet the standards.
- Surfacing along the trail varies; material would need to be added to create a consistently firm and stable surface on the trail.
- In steep sections, resting areas should be built into the trail that are at least five feet long and no more than 5% running grade.
- Some sections of the trail have bedrock which would require additional groundwork.

Considerations for improvements to this trail, informed by this assessment, are included in the *Development and Analysis of Recommended Actions* section of the plan (Appendix A).

Education, Outreach, and Programming

The Park regularly offers activities and events, many during the summer season when demand is highest. Some park patrons are day-use visitors from the Hudson River communities of Poughkeepsie, Catskill, and Hudson, as well as the northern NYC boroughs and New Jersey. Campers may come from even wider-ranging places, driving from Long Island and Massachusetts. Residents from areas local to the Park come regularly, mostly on weekdays, to walk their dogs, fish, canoe, or kayak. Locals who visit tend to be either retired people or high school/college-aged students who run in the Park.

The Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association hosts a monthly Star Party in the West Beach Parking Lot. Visitors bring telescopes and binoculars or use those provided by other amateur astronomers for stargazing.

In 2024, NYS Parks celebrated its 100-year anniversary. As part of the festivities, the agency offers a challenge for visitors to complete as many as possible from a list of 100 state park-related activities.

The most popular event at LTSP has always been its annual July 4th fireworks display, which for decades filled the large West Beach Parking Lot beyond capacity. Because of operational issues, the Park no longer offers fireworks on July 4th.

Campers have also enjoyed movies in the Park and a Learn to Swim program (which buses children to the Park) has been very popular. The Park has offered nature programming, such as Raptors & Reptiles, which has had a strong response. Campers are a key target group for future programs and activities at the Park. Camping groups are diverse, and generally comprised of family units with children. LTSP

occasionally offers various nature-related programs. Nature-related activities are in demand, especially by families staying at the campground. The Park formerly had a small nature center in what is currently the camp store, but it has been closed for more than 15 years due to staff retirement. The Taconic Region has two environmental education centers: the Taconic Outdoor Education Center (TOEC) in Cold Spring, NY, and a nature center in Fahnestock State Park, both located south of LTSP.

Tours

School and adult tours are offered. Canoe tours and guided hikes have been offered in the past.

Special Events

Lake Taghkanic SP hosts special events every year. Past programs and events geared toward the community have included "Get Outdoors and Get Together Day", offering accessible activities with adaptive equipment, games, a raptors and reptile presentation, canoe tours, and a fishing clinic. Other events have included car shows, live concerts, Iron Man races, bass/fishing tournaments, First Day Hikes, "Make Art in the Park" Day, I Love My Park Day, and the annual model boat/airplane, "Float-Fly" event.

Park staff would like to provide more content of interest to both community members and existing visitors. Suggestions for new programs for children and youth might include nighttime hikes with fun games, winter walks on snow and ice, nature walks for underserved youth in the region, learn-to-fish days, or firefly walks. Other events might include plant identification walks, school group visits, and family-friendly movies in the Park.

For adults, potential events include guided walks on late fall weekends, history walks, and nostalgia-related events that celebrate Park's history.

Nature-themed programs at LTSP are always well-attended.

Programs geared toward seniors can be a big draw to parks, ideally offering a variety of fun activities such as walking for fitness, yoga, sound therapy, tai chi, forest fitness with stretches and strengthening exercises, nature/outdoor workshops (e.g., plant identification, forest bathing, etc.), and recreation programs such as boating instruction, kayaking, canoeing, nighttime woodland hikes, and winter appreciation walks. A strong Audubon presence in the Hudson Valley can also attract local groups for birding programs.

Expanded sports and recreational programs might include short (1-hour) competitions, volleyball tournaments, mountain bike races, or a fishing derby.

Participants gather for a group photo at the June, 2024 "Bioblitz" at LTSP. Over forty volunteers spent a full day at the Park surveying species and identifying approximately 500 species of plants, animals, fungi, and protists.

Interpretation

Existing interpretive content at LTSP includes panels in the campground with information on the CCC elements, four panels in the Park Office lobby that provide an introduction to the Park, and information about the region's wildlife and fish. The lobby also has a monitor for screening videos or other content (currently out of commission). The West Beach Playground has educational content and graphic elements about fish species found in the lake.

Park staff discussed a desire to interpret the full spectrum of the area's history from the perspective of the agency's "Our Whole History" initiative. The Park's site and the region offer a wealth of opportunities to document and convey under-told stories of those who formerly lived here, including the Indigenous communities, the wealthy Livingston Family, and the rich oral histories of people who had homes on the lake, many of whom were impacted by the Park's creation. Conveying this type of material helps to preserve these stories and has the potential to bring the Park to life for its visitors.

Outreach and Partnerships

Outreach
Information about the Park is mainly publicized using social media; for larger or statewide events the agency may publish a press release. The Park is phasing out the use of printed brochures and handouts as staff report they are less effective. Flyers are used only occasionally to get the word out to the community, posted at the Town Clerk's office, local gas stations, or diners. Park staff expressed the need to improve and expand outreach strategies and methods to reach a broader range of today's visitors.

Partnerships
Park staff work with the Boy Scouts on public service projects and are currently with a scout troop to help manage litter. The Scouts have completed various Eagle Scout projects at the Park throughout the years, including a kiosk at the small parking lot by the NY 82 Entrance.

A long-term partnership with the Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association has brought groups to the Park after dark for two decades—rain or shine. LTSP has also engaged with New York Triathlon; two triathlon races have been held at the Park. The Park works with area schools (Taconic Hills School and the City of Hudson school district) for lifeguard recruitment and has worked with the Taconic Outdoor Education Center at Fahnestock State Park. Former collaborations have been with a snowmobiling club and the Columbia County Mountain Biking Alliance.

Operations, Infrastructure, and Facilities

OPRHP is responsible for preserving the integrity of its recreational and historic facilities. In recent years, the added challenges of extreme weather and other climate change impacts have increasingly affected the agency's parks and sites. Power outages are more frequent, and damage to trees, buildings, and park infrastructure must be anticipated and planned for. Underlying these operational issues is the need to develop lower-impact facilities, a key agency goal. Each OPRHP facility must do its part to help meet state milestones for reducing carbon emissions.

The Park's buildings, landscape, and infrastructure are maintained by Park staff and regional maintenance crews. Maintenance tasks encompass a broad scope of day-to-day activities reasonably understood to be basic maintenance. These include mowing, pruning, weeding/raking and hazardous tree monitoring and removal, trail upkeep, trash removal, cleaning sand and debris from culverts, and snow plowing. Staff are also responsible for the upkeep of infrastructure, which includes painting and minor repairs to Park buildings and fences, as well as maintenance and service of all Park equipment. These activities are necessary to provide patrons with a safe and enjoyable visit and prevents or delays more costly replacements or repairs of infrastructure.

Much of the Park's functional infrastructure—its buildings, parking areas, walkways, utilities, and other working components of the facility—are aging and in variable condition. Some Park buildings have been updated or replaced. Several of the public restroom buildings have been updated or replaced. Originally constructed in 1960-61, the West Beach Bathhouse and Park Office was redone in 2007 and re-roofed in 2008. The roof was not structurally altered in any way when it was re-roofed.

Older buildings in active use at LTSP include a range of maintenance structures and various sheds and outbuildings, and the Park's historically significant buildings. These wood frame structures require an added level of care. They are constructed with specialized materials that can be a challenge for staff to appropriately repair and maintain. The region formerly had a technical crew skilled in historic restoration to help address these issues, but that support staff is no longer available.

Many smaller structures are found throughout the Park, including pump houses, a water treatment plant, garages, and structures for equipment storage (for a complete list of Park buildings, see Appendix C). A Quonset hut on the Park's northwest side is used for storage. The structure is of unknown age (likely from the 40s or 50s; it is visible in aerial mapping in 1958).

Lake Taghkanic State Park has two maintenance areas. The primary maintenance area is the East Maintenance Shop, located near the northeast lakefront on both sides of the Park's main road. This area has multiple buildings for equipment storage and general maintenance work, paved parking areas, and a staff break room. A historic cottage, formerly used as Park Manager's house is sited near the lake shore immediately adjacent to this area. A portion of this maintenance area is on the north side of Park Road,

includes a fueling station and pole barn for large equipment storage. The maintenance facility is in generally poor condition. Some buildings have cracked foundations, inadequate HVAC, and the aging wastewater system needs replacement. The facility is visible to visitors entering the Park from NY 82, as they pass by on the way to the campground, picnic facilities, and West Beach area.

A secondary maintenance area, the Parkway Garage, is located on LTSP's west side along a restricted access road that enters the Park from the Taconic State Parkway. This area houses a woodshop, pole barn, two garage buildings, and is used for storing beach equipment. A modular, wood-framed residential structure modified for Park Police use is also in this area. OPRHP's Taconic Region has Park Police Stations at its north and south ends (North Zone at LTSP; South Zone at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park), as well as an administrative presence at the Taconic Regional Headquarters in Staatsburg. As LTSP is an overnight camping venue, the North Zone station operates between 8:00 am and midnight.

All OPRHP facilities are required to maintain an approved plan that documents, addresses, and sustains the reduction of mowing, and Lake Taghkanic has a reduced mowing schedule in place. Allowing previously mowed areas to develop into managed grasslands improves habitat for wildlife and pollinators, as well as reducing carbon emissions from fuel consumption. Fewer hours spent mowing also significantly lowers the labor hours needed to maintain lawns and allows maintenance staff to focus on other priority needs.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Infrastructure

The lack of public transportation to LTSP necessitates that most visitors arrive by car. The Park's roads are laid out in a Robert Moses-era design that defines its primary focus on vehicular circulation. Approximately three miles of paved roadway are in generally good condition.

Vehicular
Lake Taghkanic State Park has around three miles of paved road and one mile of gravel-surfaced road. The roadway system is used by both vehicles and bicyclists, who must share the road. The posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour. The primary internal road (Park Road) runs mostly east-west, curving around the lake's north and west sides, with spurs to the Park's campground, and picnic areas. The road provides direct access to the West Beach and Bathhouse/Park Office, swimming beach, playground, and cottages. Park Road becomes gravel after it passes the Cottages.

Pedestrian Facilities
The Park's pedestrian facilities include asphalt or concrete paths, gravel roads, and natural surface foot trails. Pathways, sidewalks, and trails vary in material and condition throughout the Park. A paved, accessible path parallels the West Beach swimming area. People often walk their dogs along the Park's main road.

Park Entrances
The Park is bordered by two busy roads – the Taconic State Parkway (TSP) to the west and State Route 82 to the east. The primary entrance, on the west side, is accessed from the northbound lane of the Taconic State Parkway (TSP). Cars heading southbound on the TSP must make a (legal) U-turn to access this entrance. A secondary entrance on the Park's east side is from NY 82. This entrance is used by the public but is informally designated for use by delivery trucks, RVs, and camper vans (which are not permitted on the TSP). An entry kiosk for this access point is located about a half-mile into the Park. Both entrances have minimal infrastructure – two contact booths on the west side and one on the east.

The contact booths are older and lack utilities. During peak summer season, and especially during large events, traffic at the entrances can move slowly, and backups sometimes extend onto the Parkway. A separate service road enters the Park south of the main entrance from the TSP, primarily for use by staff and authorized vehicles.

A vehicle counting device at the main entrance helps document the number of vehicles/visitors.

Parking

With two large parking areas and multiple smaller lots available throughout the Park, staff report that parking capacity is generally sufficient. Adjacent to the West Beach, the main parking area can accommodate approximately 1000 vehicles and is sized appropriately for large summer crowds. The lot covers around 7.5 acres. Its asphalt pavement is deteriorated and uneven with few pavement markings and no defined pedestrian routes. A second parking area in the Park's east section is located adjacent to the campground and across from the East Bathhouse. This 1.5-acre asphalt lot can accommodate around 150 vehicles.

Other parking options are available at the most popular areas of the Park. Parking adjacent to the picnic areas and the Park Office are primarily to provide accessible parking, staff parking, or visitor drop-offs. During the peak summer season, overflow parking in Picnic Lots A and B is often necessary.

Accessibility

Properties that are open to the public are expected to follow standards established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While there are exceptions, to the greatest extent possible, public buildings, recreational amenities, and walks must be accessible. Park staff at LTSP are working to improve accessibility for all visitor activities. An ADA-compliant beach mat at the West Beach is used during the active swimming season to improve access to the water's edge. Made of synthetic mesh, these mats provide a firmer surface for those who need it to cross sand, such as people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Accessibility for the Park's trails is discussed in the Trails section of this document.

Photovoltaic panels installed on the West Beach Bathhouse roof help offset energy costs at the facility.

Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction

The Park has taken steps to make its operations more energy efficient, using LED lighting and roof-mounted solar panels at the West Beach Office. Eventually, the agency and Park will transition all facilities from fossil fuels to electric equipment, including Electric Vehicles (EVs).

East end water tower

Utilities

Potable Water

The Park does not receive municipal water. A potable water treatment plant, brought online in 2003, has one intake location that takes water from the lake and processes it for distribution. The system consists of an ultrafiltration treatment facility, two water storage tanks, a booster pump station, and a distribution piping network consisting primarily of HDPE and PVC piping.

There are two pressure zones for water supply: the West Day Use and Cottage Area, which are served by an in-ground 55,000-gallon water storage tank, and the East Area, served by an above-ground 32,000-gallon water tank with associated water distribution piping, and booster pump station.

The Park's potable water system mostly functions seasonally. Cabins, cottages, and some restrooms are closed in winter and have no water or heat. Facilities using wells are open year-round. Only those restrooms that use wells are functional year-round. The five active wells at the Park service the West Bathhouse, the Recreation Hall, the East Maintenance area, the Parkway Garage/Park Police, and one residence (TA-26).

Wastewater

The Park's wastewater is managed with septic systems. Septic waste is discharged in accordance with NYS Environmental Conservation Law. There are 13 total outfalls permitted at the Park; five of those outfalls have been decommissioned or are planned to be decommissioned. A septic pump station building in the west section captures water from the West Bathhouse and cottages. The cottages' septic is connected to the pump station. All other septic systems are managed with septic fields.

The West Beach wastewater collection system services two areas within the Park; the West Cottage Area and the West Beach Area. The West Cottage Area conveys wastewater from the cottages, the two-bedroom staff house, and the laundry facility via three grinder pump stations to the West Beach Pump Station. The West Beach Area serves the West Beach Bathhouse and Park Office, conveying wastewater via a gravity sewer main to the West Beach Pump Station.

At the Parkway Maintenance area, the North Zone Police Building is serviced by a 1,000-gallon septic tank and two 1,000-gallon holding tanks in series. The Carpenter Building is serviced by a septic tank with baffle which is pumped out regularly. The Quonset hut septic system is no longer in use.

Electric

The facility is serviced for electric by National Grid. There is one utility feed entering the Park from the TSP across from the West Beach parking lot, which feeds the majority of the Park's buildings. Power

View east across the lake

outages are common and, when they occur, impact the ability of Park operations staff and Park police to complete their work.

Solar

A PV system installation on the rooftop of the West Bathhouse building was completed at LTSP in 2017. The building houses Park offices, public bathrooms, changing rooms, and a concession stand. The total PV System is 36 kW in size with four arrays, each one on a different section of the roof. In 2023 it generated approximately 35 MWh of energy. The system is wired along the side of the building and connected to the main electrical panel, inside the back of the building.

Internet

Internet connectivity is generally poor at LTSP. In 2022, portions of the existing internet infrastructure were replaced, including new cable installed from an existing utility pole to the Park office building.

Former Landfill Site

The Park has an inactive solid waste landfill that was used for Park-generated waste when LTSP opened in the 1930s. The Park stopped using the landfill in the early 1980s. Located at the north end of a gravel road, the landfill covers approximately 1.3 acres. A closure plan was prepared in 2018 but the facility has not been officially closed.

Emergency Plans and Services

Lake Taghkanic has an All-Hazard Emergency Action Plan (AHEAP) in place which establishes procedures for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for severe weather, building evacuation, and

medical emergencies. The AHEAP describes staff roles and responsibilities, protocols, and responses to emergencies. A copy is on file at the Taghkanic Fire Department.

Medical Emergencies
If there is a medical emergency, a call is placed to 9-1-1 or local emergency number. While waiting for EMS, contact Park Police, Park office and/or park manager, and, if applicable, alert contact stations of incoming emergency vehicles.

Fire
The Taghkanic Fire Department will respond to and assume command of any reports of fire at the Park maintenance and administration staff, along with Park Police, will ensure the building and/or area of the fire is evacuated and assist in directing the Fire Department to the location of the fire.

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters
Severe weather events include thunderstorms, tornados, floods, hurricanes, and blizzards. Emergencies that occur during a severe weather event should be reported to 9-1-1 and Park Police.

Loss of power is a potential impact of severe weather and occurs periodically at Lake Taghkanic. If the entire facility is impacted, the Park Manager is notified, who in turn notifies the Regional Emergency Management and Administrative staff and reports the outage to the electric provider (National Grid).

Evacuation
All OPRHP facilities have written evacuation procedures for each occupied building. In an emergency, the evacuation of part of or an entire facility may be necessary. In an evacuation, Park staff must immediately notify Park Police and Regional Administration. If assistance is needed from the local Fire Department, EMS and/or local police, Park staff will contact 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
Emergency shelter areas within the Park:

1. Park Office
2. Campground Recreation Hall

Evacuation routes:

1. Leave the main parking lot, turn right. At the Y in the road, turn left to return to the Taconic State Parkway.
2. Leave the main parking lot, turn right. At the Y in the road, turn right to return to NY 82.

Animal Encounters
Any direct physical contact with an unknown animal, especially if it results in a bite or scratch, may have serious health consequences. Wild animals, alive or dead, can spread disease and pose potential physical health hazards. In the event of direct physical contact:

1. If necessary, provide first aid care and seek medical treatment immediately by calling 9-1-1.
2. If the encounter includes a wild animal, contact Park Police and animal control.
3. If the encounter includes any species known to carry rabies (typically bats, skunks, raccoons, and foxes), the local health department may need to be notified.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The environmental review for Master Plans at state facilities is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). A Full Environmental Assessment Form has been completed for this plan (including Parts 1, 2 and 3). The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, as Lead Agency, has determined that the Lake Taghkanic State Park Master Plan and the projects implemented under the plan will result in no significant adverse impacts on the environment. Primarily, proposed actions have been located in existing disturbed areas that minimize clearing and grading in natural areas, minimizes additional stormwater impacts to natural areas, and moves potential impacts (e.g. maintenance facilities, wastewater disposal) away from sensitive areas. Where projects have been located in natural areas (e.g. trails, dock, boat launch), footprints of disturbance have been minimized and projects have been located to avoid sensitive areas and rare, threatened and endangered species / significant ecological communities. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been prepared. Documents completed for the environmental review of the Master Plan will be included in Appendix D of the Final version of the Plan.

The east end of Lake Taghkanic is undergoing the natural process of succession, as it gradually fills in with sediment and vegetation, becomes shallower, and changes to marsh.

IMPLEMENTATION

Park staff are continually implementing improvements at Lake Taghkanic State Park. Ongoing repair and maintenance work at the facility are important and not overlooked in the analysis of Plan actions. Proposed projects are intended to support and improve current work while identifying unmet needs and providing new support for staff and updated infrastructure that will benefit the Park's overall function, its recreational, cultural, and natural resources, and—ultimately—the visitors who come to the Park.

This Master Plan establishes OPRHP's vision and specific actions for capital improvements and operational enhancements at over the next ten to fifteen years. Recommended actions are for future projects that will responsibly steward the Park. The planning group always considers the option of keeping the "status quo" or making no change to the existing facilities, programs, and practices. Unless otherwise indicated, recommended actions include the continuation of existing protections, operations, and facility management practices. For a full analysis of the action development and selection process, see Appendix A.

Once adopted, the Master Plan will be reviewed annually to support capital planning, to select projects for inclusion in the Site's budget, and to assess implementation progress.

Some actions proposed in the plan are already underway or soon to begin. These are indicated as "Ongoing".

A snowmobiling trail sign from the days of the Taconic State Park Commission, a relic of the Park's earlier days.

Looking Forward

In adopting the Master Plan, OPRHP is making a commitment to implement these changes and improvements at Lake Taghkanic State Park over the next 10 to 15 years, subject to available funding. These proposed actions will improve both the experience for the Park's visitors and the ability of staff to accomplish goals outlined in the Plan. The Park will function better, visitors will have up-to-date recreational opportunities, and staff conditions will improve.

The Master Plan will be reviewed annually to select projects to be added to the Park's budget for implementation and to assess the progress of plan implementation. Any operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the adoption of the Master Plan will go forward as planned.

Original CCC-built cabins are still in active use at the Park's campground.

ENDNOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all images are from the OPRHP Photo Library or in the public domain.

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