

Lake Taghkanic State Park |

Columbia County
Towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic, NY



Lake Taghkanic State Park Master Plan

June 9, 2025



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Master Plan for Lake Taghkanic State Park

Towns of Gallatin & Taghkanic, Columbia County

Prepared by:
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
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Contents

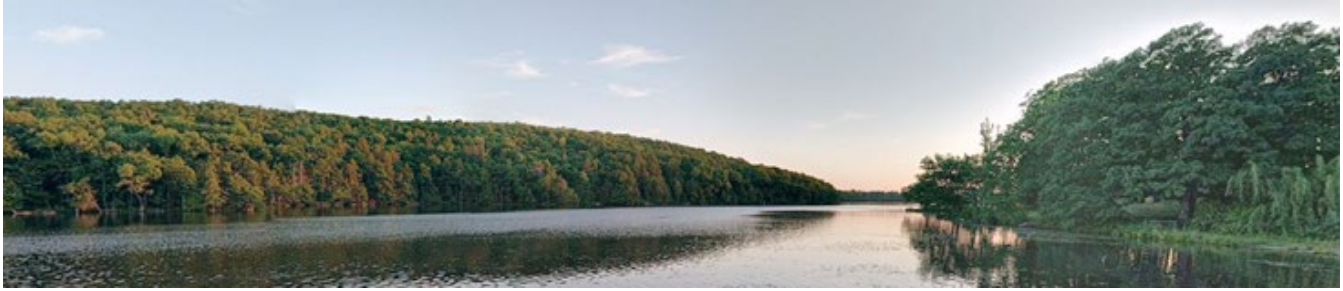
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Contents.....	iv
Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	v
Introduction	1
Park Background.....	1
Park Beginnings.....	2
The Region.....	4
Demographic Trends.....	7
The Park.....	7
Economic Contribution.....	7
Land and Water Conservation Fund	7
Regulatory Considerations.....	8
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility	8
Recreational Need	8
Visitation.....	8
What is a Master Plan?.....	10
Need for a Master Plan.....	10
Guiding Principles for Planning.....	13
Master Plan Intended Outcomes.....	13
Recommended Actions	15
Actions for Natural Resources	15
Actions for Cultural Resources	16
Actions for Recreational Resources.....	17
Actions for Education, Programming, and Interpretation.....	20
Actions for Infrastructure and Operations	21
Environmental Review	26
Implementation	27
Conclusion.....	32
References	33

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CRIS	NYS Cultural Resource Information System
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
DHP	Division for Historic Preservation
DOT	New York State Department of Transportation
EV	Electric Vehicle
HRVG	Hudson River Valley Greenway
LTSP	Lake Taghkanic State Park
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NRI	Natural Resources Inventory
NYNHP	New York Natural Heritage Program
NYS	New York State
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
OSP	Open Space Conservation Plan
OWH	Our Whole History (OPRHP Initiative)
RIN	Relative Index of Need
RTE	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered species
SC	Species Concern species
SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SEQRA	State Environmental Quality Review Act
SGCN	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SNC	Significant Natural Communities
TSP	Taconic State Parkway



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



Sunset view across Lake Taghkanic.

Introduction

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is proposing to adopt and implement a Master Plan for Lake Taghkanic State Park (LTSP). The Master Plan (“the Plan”) provides a framework for implementing improvements that will create a 21st century recreational destination for this facility, which will reach its 100th anniversary in 2029.

The Plan prioritizes the creation of a more accessible park with new recreational opportunities and expanded activities that will increase the Park’s relevance for existing and new visitors and foster a greater connection with its community.

Park Background

For generations Lake Taghkanic State Park has been a destination for friends and families to gather and recreate outdoors. Established in 1929, Lake Taghkanic State Park (LTSP, the Park) offers 1,850 acres of open space in southern Columbia County with natural woodlands, wetlands, and small waterways, and a clear, 202-acre spring-fed lake as its centerpiece. The Park’s hiking trails, picnic areas, ballfields, and a campground provide multiple options for outdoor recreation, and the 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, are historically important, constructed in the 1930s by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers.

Location and Access

Lake Taghkanic State Park is in the Taconic Region of OPRHP’s administrative system. The Park straddles the line separating the Towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic. The closest city is Hudson, NY (Columbia County seat), approximately 12 miles to the northwest. The Village of Rhinebeck is about 15 miles to the southwest. Both are historic Hudson River settlements and popular regional destinations for shopping, dining, sightseeing, outdoor recreation, and cultural tourism. The Park’s mailing address is 1528 State Route 82, Ancram, NY 12502. A map showing LTSP’s property boundary is available in the Appendices, Figure 1.

Access to LTSP is from one of two entrances. The primary public access point is a dedicated entrance on the Taconic State Parkway (TSP, the Parkway), on the Park’s west boundary. An entrance on State Route 82 (NY 82) on the Park’s east border is used by larger vehicles, which are not permitted on the TSP. No public transportation is available directly to the Park. Public bus lines do not service the Park and the closest rail line is the Amtrak train station in the City of Hudson. Bicycle access to LTSP is possible and a regional system of state bike routes includes the Route 9H corridor in Columbia County (state bicycle routes are travel lanes where motorists and bicyclists must “share the road”).

Early History

Some archaeological evidence suggests human habitation in this area from as early as 12,000 years ago, when glacial landscapes were actively carving and depositing the geological features seen today.¹ These early inhabitants were nomadic hunting groups, and 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. Archaeological evidence shows a long, continuous use of migratory fish resources along the Hudson River. By 2700 BP (Before Present), 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.² 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.³ By the time of Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609, many Mohican villages occupied the upper Hudson Valley's eastern banks and islands. Within twenty years of Henry Hudson's ship making landfall, however, Mohican populations were already in decline.⁴

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.⁵

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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸ The refugees were brought as indentured laborers to live at the camps as they paid off their passage. The colony was first known as "East Camp," later renamed "Germantown."⁹

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.

Park Beginnings

Between 1928 and 1929 the Taconic State Park Commission ("Commission") began to consider the suitability of what was then known as Lake Charlotte for public recreational purposes.¹⁰ 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, and John Bross Lloyd provided a monetary gift of \$5,000.

Timeline of Early Acquisitions

(Excerpts below from meeting minutes of the Taconic State Park Commission illustrate the complex process of land acquisition for LTSP)

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 Gillaspay "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.

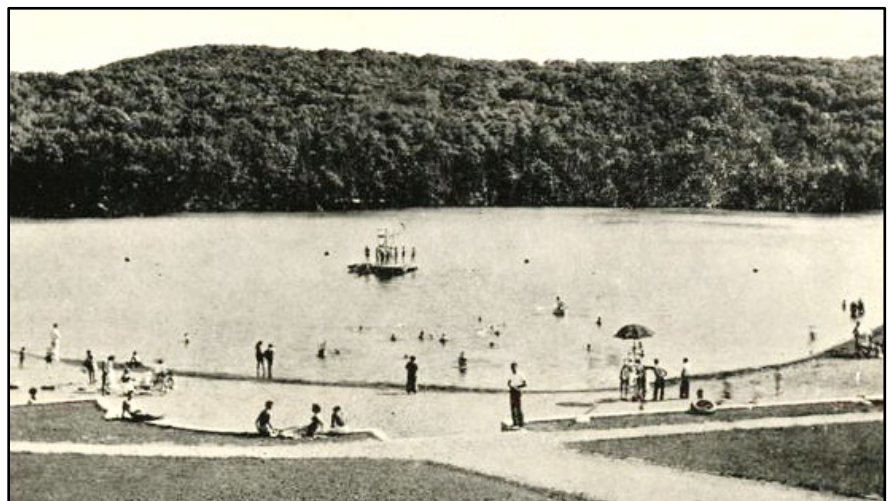
According to Commission meeting minutes, negotiations were initiated for the State to acquire the 427 acres around the lake owned by McRae Livingston (spelled "McRa" in early documents), then valued at \$25,000. The land donation included the stipulation that the lake "shall forthwith and forever be known exclusively as Lake Taghkanic... and that name shall always be spelled as aforesaid under penalty of forfeiture."¹¹ "Taghkanic" has variable spellings in the region and is transliterated from a term used by the Lenape people, meaning "forest").¹²

The State continued to acquire additional lands to create LTSP. According to Commission meeting minutes between 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.¹³ 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

Very little infrastructure was in place when LTSP first opened, and in 1933 a CCC camp was established at the Park with 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.

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



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

LTSP was developed in conjunction with design and construction of the new Eastern State Parkway (later renamed the Taconic State Parkway). By 1954, the Parkway extended as far north as the Town of Taghkanic and had become a transportation spine that provided residents from throughout the New York 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 local 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%.¹⁴

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 area's expansive vistas, bucolic landscapes, and mountaintop lookouts continue to draw visitors seeking to experience the area's picturesque scenery firsthand.¹⁵

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 NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) also has over 1,100 acres of conservation easements with private property owners in Columbia County.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.



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

Adjacent Land Use

Columbia County's rolling hills and a rocky landscape have shaped its land use. Over the 20th century, a general decline in farming occurred in the region, 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. While residential development has outpaced farming as the most significant land use, open space still generally dominates the region.

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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ (For a map of Adjacent Land Use, see Appendices, Figure 3).

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 is about five miles northeast of LTSP, and the adjacent 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.

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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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.



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

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. 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 lowlands 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.²² 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.

Relation to Regional Plans

Lake Taghkanic State Park is included in both the Gallatin and Taghkanic Comprehensive Plans. Gallatin’s June [2023 Comprehensive Plan](#) highlights Lake Taghkanic State Park in the Plan’s vision statement. 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.”²³

A survey conducted for the Town of Taghkanic’s 2009 Master Plan demonstrated 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.²⁴

Demographic Trends

Changing demographic patterns 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. According to data from the 2020 U.S. Census, NYS is becoming increasingly diverse, with growing Latino, Asian, and multiracial populations.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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).²⁷ The nearby Town of Gallatin is typical of the region, populated by both descendants of its earliest settlers and more recent full- and part-time residents. Area residents do not comprise the majority of LTSP’s visitorship, however; many of whom live in urban or suburban areas to the south, and local data does not necessarily reflect the Park’s primary user base.²⁸

The Park

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.²⁹ 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.³⁰ The overall region benefits, as visitors shop, eat at restaurants, pay for transportation, and stay at local inns and hotels.³¹ 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.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

LTSP has received multiple 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.

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.³²

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

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.

A large portion of visitors to LTSP reside in urban and suburban counties to its south. Consequently, although the Park is situated in a rural area, it 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.³³ 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.^{34, 35} These and other types of diversity necessitate a comprehensive approach to planning that will ensure representative offerings in recreation, programming, and interpretation.

Recreational Need

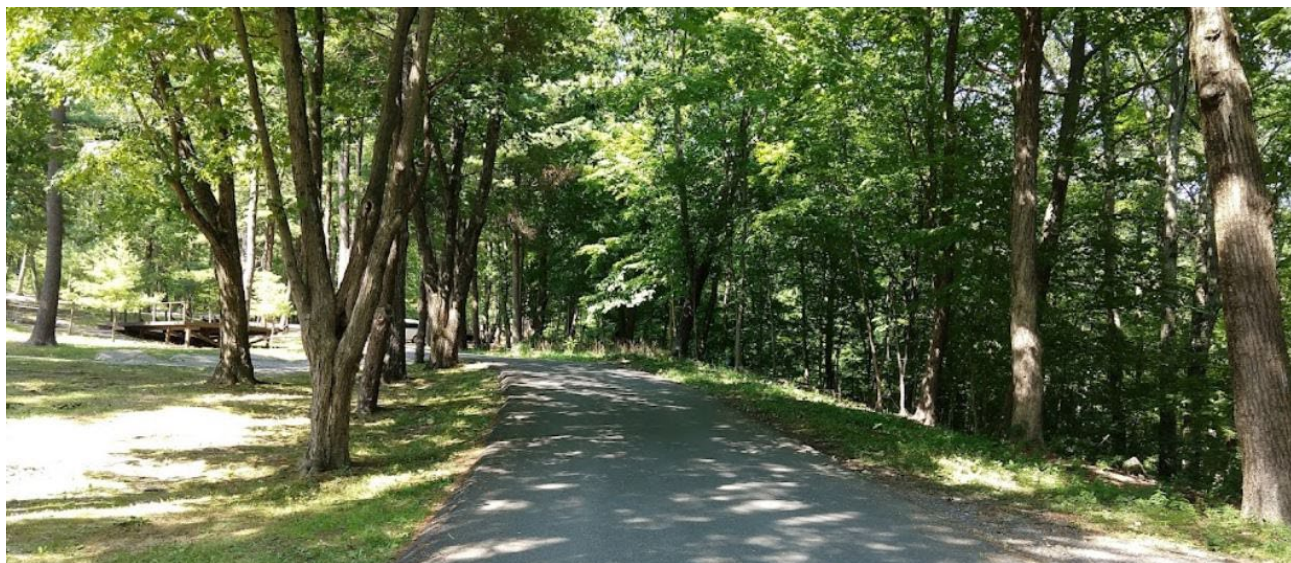
Demand for outdoor recreation in the state is determined every five years when OPRHP develops the *NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. The SCORP collects data on recreation needs statewide, using the Relative Index of Need (RIN), a method for comparing the demand for a particular 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.

The RIN allows the region 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



Campground access road

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.³⁶

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 area and beyond.

Public Use 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. Survey results indicate the lowest visitation in winter (44 responses).

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 the 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.

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.³⁷ In NYS, temperature increases since 1970 have surpassed national and global averages and the NYS 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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. 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.

What is a Master Plan?

OPRHP’s parks and sites are living entities that reflect the state’s collective past. The master planning process documents these facilities and makes recommendations for improvements that ensure 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, that are to be implemented over the next ten to fifteen years. Developed by a multidisciplinary group, the plan provides an inventory of existing elements, analyzes the facility’s functionality, and proposes feasible improvements in the context of agency policies, priorities, and contemporary user needs. The plan establishes a vision for the future park and a process for prioritizing capital and operational improvements. A master plan is also a comprehensive record of a facility and its condition at a particular point in time, ultimately serving as part of the agency’s institutional memory.

Need for a Master Plan

Lake Taghkanic State Park has never had a master plan. New elements have been added to the park or adapted as needed over time. In 2029 the Park will turn 100 years old, and, over the past century, outdoor public recreation has been subject to many changes. Today’s challenges include aging and outdated infrastructure, issues of accessibility and equity and demographic shifts that are creating demand for new types of recreation, activities, and programs. The growing impacts of climate change are, increasingly, affecting the Park, adding new pressures to those responsible for operations and maintenance, as well as concerns about public health and safety. Considerations such as these call for a fresh look and new approaches.

Master plans provide a record of where a park is now, a vision of what it should be in the future, and specific actions needed to get it there. A thoughtfully designed plan identifies current conditions, needs, as well as barriers to park access. It seeks to create vital, inclusive places that foster well-being and community engagement. The plan sets a vision for the future park, with specific recommendations for actions that will help accomplish that vision.

The Planning Process

The Lake Taghkanic State Park Master Plan was developed to provide a long-term vision for park development and to make improvements that will ensure the future Park will meet the evolving needs of park users. To develop the Master Plan, a multidisciplinary group was assembled (a “core team”) 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.

Plan Development

Beginning in July 2023, the core team met regularly first to assess the Park’s existing conditions in the context of relevant social, public health, and environmental factors and then to explore possible actions for improvements. The group began by identifying the Park’s existing cultural, natural, recreational, and operational features, described in the *Existing Conditions Inventory* (Appendix A).

The study of the Park’s existing conditions was organized within the following broad categories:

Natural Resources – Flora, fauna, natural habitats, rare and endangered species

Cultural Resources – Archeological, architectural, and historical/cultural resources

Recreational Resources – Natural areas, built facilities, and recreation programs and activities

Education, Interpretation, and Outreach – Public programs, interpretation, and other educational content and outreach strategies

Operations, Infrastructure, and Facilities – Park infrastructure, including buildings, roads, and utilities, and management practices that support the operation and maintenance of the Park

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. Topics related to regional history, demographics, economy, transportation, and other public recreation resources in the area also helped to inform development of actions recommended in the Plan.

Actions proposed in the Final Plan are the product of months of discussions by the core team and input from active public engagement. Proposed actions include 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. This process allows the group to explore a range of new ideas for the facility from diverse perspectives. While selecting actions to be implemented the planning group always considers the “status quo,” or no change alternative.

Outreach and Public Input

Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in the development of a master plan is integral to OPRHP’s planning process. Community support for changes to a facility that are proposed in the Plan will enable the Park to offer



Water recreation is a key activity at the Park.

experiences, educational content, and recreational opportunities relevant to a broad audience in the future. The LTSP Plan is intended to shape the Park in ways that will best accommodate visitors in the years to come. It is therefore essential that the proposed actions are informed by feedback from the Park's diverse visitorship.

To ensure that park users, local interest groups, and other stakeholders were involved in creating the Master Plan, public meetings and visitor surveys were used to help inform planning. Hearing from those who use the facility and live or work in the area helps planners understand the Park's key issues and identify its needs and any barriers to access. Feedback received from public outreach early in the planning process also helped to establish goals and develop a vision statement for the Park.

Early in the planning process a public survey was conducted to ask visitors about their experiences at LTSP. The survey was circulated on social media and in the Park on posters with a QR code from August to December 2023. The survey gathered information about visitation times, recreation amenities used, preferences for activity types, and ideas for future recreation offerings.

A significant portion of LTSP's visitors live outside the Park's immediate area and, to maximize outreach, in October and November 2023 both virtual and in-person meetings were held. The intent of these workshop-style meetings was to allow residents, elected officials, regular Park visitors, and other interested parties the opportunity to talk about their experiences at LTSP. Comments and stories from the participants helped paint a picture of how people use the Park and provided information essential to developing a meaningful and relevant Master Plan.

The full Draft Plan made publicly available on the OPRHP website for review and comment on Oct. 31, 2024, and comments were accepted through December 5, 2024. Both virtual and in-person meetings were held during this period to allow stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on actions proposed in the Plan. Comments were also accepted by mail and email. The Final Master Plan includes an appendix that addresses all substantive public comments received during the review period, along with the Agency's responses.

Actions that best meet OPRHP’s mission and the vision for the facility were selected 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 Master Plan Map included in the Appendices. A complete list of phased actions is included in the *Action Implementation Priorities Table*. The analysis of actions and rationale for the selection of recommended actions for this Plan is included in Appendix B.

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

Guiding Principles for Planning

Agency Mission and Policies

Master plans developed for OPRHP facilities are guided by the agency’s mission statement: “To provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources.” OPRHP also has agency-wide policies to address management issues commonly faced by its facilities. These cover topics such as accessibility, bird conservation, management of trees and wildlife, and more. OPRHP policy documents can be viewed at: <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx>.



Public meetings were held early in the master plan development process.

Lake Taghkanic State Park Vision Statement

An early step in the planning process is to develop a statement that describes LTSP in the future. The vision statement developed for this plan was used as a guide to develop recommended actions to be implemented at the Park over the next 10 to 15 years.

Lake Taghkanic State Park will be a safe and enjoyable, accessible, and welcoming facility that engages visitors year-round in a resilient natural setting. The Park will offer modern amenities and recreation facilities, with new opportunities to explore the Park’s rich history. The reinvigorated park will engage its community with new partnerships that will enhance interpretation, recreation, and Park operations.

Master Plan Intended Outcomes

Based on an analysis of existing facility features, public input, and in the context of realizing the Agency’s mission and Plan’s vision statement, the following outcomes were developed to describe future conditions at LTSP that will result from Master Plan implementation:

- LTSP offers accessible, relevant, and inclusive programs, recreational amenities, and activities that reflect current trends and preferences. The Park is a welcoming destination that engages its community and existing and new visitors.
- The Park's historic Civilian Conservation Corps elements are appropriately preserved and revitalized for public use and enjoyment now and in the years to come.
- The Park has safe, accessible pedestrian facilities that encourage visitors to get out of their cars and walk or bike.
- The Park provides a safe and efficient work environment with updated maintenance facilities.
- Circulation infrastructure at the Park allows for smooth traffic flow and provides a welcoming entrance experience.
- The Park is resilient and sustainable, incorporating green infrastructure and solar energy.



PV system on the West Bathhouse roof.

Recommended Actions

Below are projects and initiatives for the Park that have been identified as those that will best address the facility's needs and realize the Plan's vision over the next 10 to 15 years. Both capital projects and those to be implemented using other mechanisms are included.

A wide array of potential actions to undertake at the Park were evaluated for their positive and negative impacts. (For the full development and analysis of recommended actions, see Appendix B.) Those found to be beneficial, reasonable, and that will best accommodate the facility's short- and long-term goals, were recommended for implementation. Recommended actions are described below.

Actions for Natural Resources

Stewardship

Expand on the existing knowledge and protection of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) species, species of Special Concern (SC), and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Park.

Records indicate that the Park once supported several rare flora and fauna species not found during recent surveys. Continued surveying efforts will help determine the presence and extent of rare species and SGCN within the Park. Expanding knowledge and protection of these species, through habitat improvements and collaboration with local conservation organizations and other interest groups, will preserve natural resources at the Park for generations to come.

Develop and implement an Environmental Stewardship Plan for LTSP.

An Environmental Stewardship Plan guides stewardship management actions at a facility. With limited resources and staff time, a Stewardship Plan for LTSP will help to prioritize stewardship actions to ensure the ecological health and biodiversity of the Park.

Invasive Species

Expand invasive species management efforts; develop and implement programs to promote public engagement and participation in invasive species management.

Invasive species can alter habitats and potentially outcompete native species. Increasing the availability of information on potential invasive species and their impacts through signage will help to engage the public in the "Early Detection, Rapid Response" invasive species management strategy.

As the Park's central recreation feature, limiting the spread of aquatic invasives to the lake is a high priority and requires public participation. Patron education on aquatic invasives may include information about how boats and bait buckets can carry invasive plant and animal species, and how to minimize the spread of invasive species using best management practices.

Water Quality

Maintain the water quality of Lake Taghkanic by protecting the watershed's integrity and headwaters.

Swimming, boating, and fishing are some of the most popular recreational activities at the Park. Maintaining the lake's water quality is essential to continued enjoyment of these activities. Where feasible, incorporating green infrastructure, right-sizing culverts, and stabilizing riparian zones will prevent runoff from entering the lake.

Actions for Cultural Resources

Civilian Conservation Corps Elements

Renovate and retrofit the East Bathhouse as a community center with flexible interior spaces for programs, meetings, and other public uses and public outdoor space (e.g., patio, seating, fire pit).

The historic CCC-built East Bathhouse is highly vulnerable to loss. The Park's most significant 1930s-era feature, and a keystone of the Park's early infrastructure, today the Bathhouse is vacant and deteriorated. It is highly visible to visitors from the campground and to those driving or walking around the Park. The building offers a wonderful example of CCC architecture, exhibiting a skillful use of local materials, with a design that is both functional and welcoming. Addressing its condition and re-using this important feature as a community amenity is essential to the Park's integrity.

Dedicate a portion of the CCC-built East Bathhouse for education and interpretation.

The East Bathhouse is centrally located in the Park, on a rise, with dramatic views across the lake. It is a natural draw for visitors and is ideally scaled and located to serve as a gathering space. The central portion is well-designed to function as an educational hub for the Park with interpretative exhibits, educational programs, and a meeting place for on-site activities.

Improve the CCC campground by addressing needed cabin repairs, improving drainage sitewide, and adding new outdoor amenities (e.g., stone patios, picnic tables, or seating) at some cabin sites.

Now more than 80 years old, the Park's historic CCC cabins are an integral part of its recreation infrastructure. The cabins need significant work beyond the scope of ongoing maintenance activities to ensure they continue to be both functional for visitor use and effective representatives of the CCC's work for years to come. As part of the CCC story in the state overall, they are an important part of the Park's interpretive program. The cabins need to be cared for appropriately so they will continue to be available for future generations of visitors to enjoy.

Renovate the CCC Recreation Hall.

While only a portion of the Recreation Hall building retains original CCC elements, it is an important historic structure and amenity at the Park. The building provides campers with an accessible, family-friendly restroom and indoor public space. It is a natural gathering space at the Campground and a convenient size for meetings. The building also serves as a safe zone for visitors during storms and hazardous weather.

Rental Cottages

Upgrade utilities at the Park's rental cottages, repair deteriorated materials, and address code and accessibility issues where possible.

When creating the Park, the State purchased existing cottages around the lake that had been constructed by private homeowners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some cottages were relocated to create a "family colony"-style community at their present location. Many have been rented by the same families over multiple generations. Most have outdated fixtures and aging utilities, and some do not meet current building code. While the Park is working to update the cottages, because of their older and varied construction, it may not be feasible for all cottages to be retrofitted for universal accessibility.

Address circulation and site drainage issues around the Cottages; repair eroded and compacted areas and improve visitor access to the lakefront.

The Cottage area has chronic drainage issues. The clay soils don't allow stormwater to infiltrate, and runoff has caused erosion. Visitors drive on lawns and walking paths to access them, which has led to soil compaction and

areas of patchy lawn. Walkways and access paths to most Cottages are not universally accessible, and many entrances are reached only by steps.

Replace three rental Cottages with ADA accessible units.

Lakeside rentals are in high demand, and the loss of three cottages at the Park (from fire and structural issues) has resulted in fewer units available for visitors to enjoy and a loss of revenue for the Park. New cottages will be ADA and code compliant and will be designed to integrate into the overall aesthetic of the Cottage community.

Demolish and remove the barn and house at the Park's Reesa Farm section.

Acquired by NYS in 1962, the Reesa Property has a circa 1870s barn and farmhouse. Trail connections have been developed on the property, but the buildings have remained vacant and unused. A field assessment by DHP staff identified substantial structural deterioration to the barn and found the former residence in very poor condition. The property is accessible by car only from outside the Park and its location on its northern periphery makes active facility use impracticable. With no clear purpose for the buildings, their level of deterioration makes rehabilitation for Park use financially untenable.

Actions for Recreational Resources

Bicycling

Enhance biking amenities to facilitate non-vehicular transportation within the Park.

The distance between the Campground and West Beach is approximately one mile, yet most patrons choose to drive. Installing biking amenities along the route will improve the feasibility of cycling between these two destinations, which will help to reduce the total number of vehicle trips taken within the Park.

Explore options for providing bike/scooter rentals for use within the Park.

Bicycle and/or scooter rentals would further enhance active transportation opportunities within the Park and would likely help to further decrease the total number of vehicle trips within the Park.

Courts and Ballfields

Install a pickleball court at Parking Lot B.

Pickleball has become increasingly popular in recent decades and there is demand for court activities in Columbia County. Adding pickleball to the Park will provide an additional recreational activity for campers and attract new visitors to the Park. Pickleball courts will address the Master Plan objective of providing recreational amenities and activities that reflect current trends and preferences.

Update the Basketball Court to meet current safety standards.

The Park's basketball court is a popular recreational amenity. Updating the basketball court will ensure the continuation of this recreational activity and visitor health and safety.

Improve the drainage, raise, and resurface the ballfield.

Drainage of the ballfield has been a persistent issue due to its low-lying location. Improvements have been made over the years, but issues remain, particularly after heavy rain when the field can take up to a week to completely dry out. Raising and resurfacing the field will make for more desirable field conditions and allow for regular maintenance.

Lake Activities

Install a boat storage structure by the East Boat Launch.

Boats are stored somewhat haphazardly along the lake shore by the East Boat Launch, disrupting the otherwise scenic views in this area. Adding a boat storage structure will increase the functionality and aesthetic appeal of the boat launch area.

Relocate the East Boat Launch for more direct access to the lake.

Relocating the East Boat Launch will allow patrons more direct access to the lake and prevent the need for a large turn when backing down to the launch.

Install an ADA-compliant kayak launch at the East Boat Launch.

The lack of accessible docks and launches limits boating opportunities. Installing an ADA-compliant kayak launch will increase the park's overall accessibility and expand access to the lake for those with mobility challenges.

Improve the Park's boat rental facilities by installing an ADA-compliant dock and upgrading connectivity for credit card use at the rental shed.

Boats are pulled on and off the lakeshore multiple times a day during the rental season, causing wear and tear. Storing the boats on the dock will improve the visitor experience and reduce damage to the boats themselves and to the shoreline. A dock structure will provide an additional opportunity for an ADA-accessible launch. The ability to use credit cards at the boat rental shed will improve the user experience.

Install an ADA-compliant fishing pier at the West Beach.

The lack of accessible fishing areas limits opportunities for anglers. Installing an accessible dock will improve access to the lake for fishing and may also be used as an observation area for birds and aquatic life.

Trails

Repair or re-route low, wet, unsustainable, and eroded sections of the Park's existing trail system – repair culverts and bridges.

Repairs to the trails will improve the user experience, making the trail safer and easier to maintain. Issues with drainage, compaction, erosion, and wayfinding signage will be addressed.

Develop and implement a park-wide Trail Wayfinding Signage and Marking Plan.

A Trail Wayfinding Signage and Marking Plan will provide the Park with a comprehensive approach to trail marking and signage.

Improve the snowmobiling experience by clearly indicating, both on the map and through signage on the trails, where snowmobiles are permitted.

Clearly marking where snowmobiles are permitted on the Park's trails will make snowmobiling in the Park safer and more enjoyable for winter recreationists.

Expand the existing parking lot at the trail kiosk by the East Entrance (NY 82).

As additions are made to trail offerings on the northern end of the Park, expanding the gravel parking lot will ensure sufficient space to accommodate potential increases in demand.

Rehabilitate and improve the Lakeview Trail (LV) on the south side of the lake and designate the Lakeview Extension Trail (LVE) as the new Lakeview Trail for hiking.

Rerouting and repairing the popular Lakeview Trail will provide a more enjoyable user experience while making the trail safer and easier to maintain.

Eliminate wet trail segments of the Fitness Trail (FN), designate the section of the Lakeview Trail between the two intersections with the LVE as part of the FN, rename the trail as the Fitness Loop, and improve signage. Repairs to the trails will improve the user experience. Eliminating redundant sections of the Fitness Trail will reduce confusion and improve wayfinding.

Develop a true Campground Loop Trail by adding an east-west cross trail connection from the left branch of the Campground Loop back to the Campground Loop trailhead; adjust the location of the Campground Loop trailhead for better access and less intrusion into campsites.

Upgrading the trail tread and relocating the entrance to the Campground Loop will improve the visitor experience, both for hiking and for campers in sites adjacent to the existing trailhead. Currently, visitors must walk back on the Park's main road to complete the loop. Adding the Campground Loop connection will enhance the trail experience, provide more route options, and improve safety.

Assess potential route options for creating an east-west trail connection between the Reesa's Farm Trail and the Campground Loop and implement if a viable route is determined.

Creating an East-West trail connection may improve the user experience and reduce or eliminate the need for hikers in the Park's northern section to walk back on the road.

Evaluate route options for a trail connecting from the Campground Loop east to the gravel parking lot by the East Entrance (NY 82) and implement if a viable route option is determined.

Creating a cohesive trail network with more connections will improve the hiking experience at LTSP. During the hunting season, this trail will provide an additional access route to the hunting area at the northern end of the Park.

Develop a linear trail in the southeast portion of the Park from County Route 8 to the Fitness Trail, with a spur leading to the Wildlife Viewing Area.

Adding a linear trail to the property acquired in 2020 provides access to a unique area of the Park and more route options for hikers. The Wildlife Viewing Area provides an enjoyable destination and an opportunity to view aquatic species and migratory birds.

Investigate options for connecting existing trails to the newly acquired property on old NY 82 and implement if appropriate.

Exploring potential trails on the 2024 property acquisition may expand public access and provide more trail route options. Trails into this area may not be feasible or desirable due to the presence of a large wetland.

Investigate the possibility of connecting the LTSP trail network to New Forge State Forest and implement, as appropriate.

Connecting LTSP with the nearby New Forge State Forest would offer LTSP visitors a complementary experience, with fishing opportunities, trails, and a scenic waterfall, in a more "undeveloped" setting. While a physical linkage may not be immediately feasible, providing a connection to the Forest through information at LTSP could be provided in the near term.

Actions for Education, Programming, and Interpretation

Education and Programs

Develop new programs that will engage both existing and new visitors and attract area residents to the Park year-round.

There is considerable demand for expanded educational content and recreational programs at LTSP, and staff would like to offer more activities, including developing more offerings in off-peak seasons. With many untapped subjects relevant to the Park and region, new programs would provide visitors with a richer, more meaningful experience at LTSP throughout the year.

Develop and implement nature programming for visitors of all ages.

There is high demand for nature programs at the Park, especially for overnight campers, who are often family groups with a range of ages. There is always interest in educational programs related to the environment and the Park's natural elements.

Develop educational programs and content that will expand access for visitors, including multilingual content.

The Park's visitorship is very diverse, and staff noted a need for multilingual content as well as programs and activities for visitors with a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Create seasonal, "floating" staff positions to develop and implement educational content at multiple parks across the Taconic Region.

LTSP staff have many creative ideas for new programs and activities, but a dedicated staff member is essential for these ideas to be effectively developed and implemented. While a full-time educational staff member is not required, part-time staff who float between parks will enable LTSP to offer new and more varied programming.

Develop an accessible interpretive route that incorporates a conceptual "timeline" that illustrates the site's progression from prehistory to the present.

To help meet the goal of expanding accessibility in all aspects of the Park's offerings, proposed educational material and recreational programs will be supported by new and retrofitted infrastructure. A themed walk will be developed on a segment of the Lakeside Trail, where a proposed multi-use path is planned. This feature will help to encourage walking and biking between different parts of the Park and offer accessible educational content that will engage a wide range of visitors.

Create short, entertaining informational videos to inform and educate visitors about the Park's amenities and expectations for behavior.

Park staff expressed a need for more targeted approaches to expand outreach and better inform visitors about existing and new amenities. Well-designed, short videos can instruct visitors about safe and acceptable behavior and may reduce staff time needed to address issues and make repairs.

Educate visitors about the historic value of the cabins and other CCC buildings to raise awareness of their significance.

Heavy seasonal use and year-round exposure to the elements puts a lot of wear and tear on the CCC cabins, and their aging materials are vulnerable to damage. Staff have posted signs in the cabins explaining their historic significance and vulnerability and plan to develop short educational videos to help get the message out to a wider audience.

Explore possibilities for partnerships to support the development of new programs and activities.

Park staff have developed many productive partnerships over the years and will continue to build on these efforts. Collaborating with different types of organizations whose interests align with the Park's and Agency goals brings in fresh ideas and perspectives. It can spur creative thinking and help expand the mindset of both visitors and staff. Planning new programs and activities with a partner may also remove some pressure on staff to develop and implement new content.

Interpretation

Expand the Park's interpretative content and incorporate multi-modal methodologies (e.g., audio, visual, programming, tactile/interactive elements).

Recognizing that people learn and recreate in different ways, developing educational content and programs using a wider variety of methodologies will be an important component of new content. This approach to developing expanded interpretation at the Park is integral to achieving intended Master Plan outcomes of creating a more relevant, accessible, and welcoming facility.

Develop a nature-interpretive walk along a segment of the Lakeview Trail with interactive/tactile content appropriate for a greater range of abilities.

There is an audience for many types of interpretive content at LTSP. Offering interactive and multi-modal nature content will help visitors learn about the Park's natural elements as well as see first-hand the environmental issues that are affecting them. A nature-themed walk will also encourage people to explore the Park's trails and get out of their cars and into lower-use areas.

Develop a Comprehensive Signage Plan that assesses the Park function and needs, with recommendations for all signage types, including wayfinding, informational, and interpretive signs.

The Park has updated some signage in recent years. With the new amenities, infrastructure, and more comprehensive interpretive programming proposed in the Master Plan, it is important to ensure that a cohesive approach to signage is in place, consistent with ORPHP's signage guidelines.

Actions for Infrastructure and Operations

Camping Infrastructure

Redevelop a portion of the Campground Parking Lot for tent campsites and relocate some existing tent platforms into the new area to decrease density.

The tent site layout at the Park's campground reflects an older pattern of camping preference for clustered family groupings. Visitor comments indicate that tent sites are too close together and do not offer enough privacy. An adjacent parking lot is oversized for current demand and well-located close to campground facilities. The redevelopment will include trees and plantings and ADA-accessible sites will be incorporated into the new area. In addition to improving the visitor experience, environmental benefits include a reduction of impervious area that support Master Plan and agency stewardship and sustainability goals.

Improve the campground's vehicular circulation, creating a more defined entrance that provides an improved "gateway" experience for campers.

Visitors enter the campground through a large parking lot, where information about the facility is not available. Creating a dedicated entrance for all camping access and including an information kiosk with maps and information will provide a better sense of arrival. An existing gravel road that may have been the original CCC entrance to the campground will be redeveloped to provide a clear access point for campers to enter.

Redevelop Parking Lot 1 for RV camping.

There is strong demand for RV camping in the Park's region. Transforming a previously disturbed area into an RV campground will be a popular and potentially transformational addition to LTSP. Lot 1 is well-located near the lakefront, a Camp Store, and utility connections. Currently used to stockpile materials, this underutilized and unsightly area will become a greener and productive visitor amenity that supports Master Plan goals to provide updated recreational opportunities. This action works hand-in-hand with redevelopment plans for the East Bathhouse and other proposed Master Plan actions intended to revitalize this former activity hub in the Park.

Develop new tent campsites in the area west of the East Bathhouse.

Demand for camping at LTSP is high, and camping near water is especially popular. Adding campsites in this area will allow the Park to offer accessible tent sites, supporting Master Plan goals to develop a more accessible and inclusive facility. The area is located near an updated playground, the East Bathhouse, and the camp store, and parking is available at the nearby campground lot. This action is well-integrated with other redevelopment proposed in the East Beach/Bathhouse area.

Improve the accessibility of selected cabins in the campground.

The Park's campground is set in a wooded area with steep slopes and stone outcroppings typical of the geography of the region. This scenic quality adds to its appeal, but also creates access challenges. Additionally, the interior layouts of the historic cabins often do not allow for ADA adaptations. The cabins will be assessed and, where feasible, will be retrofit for improved accessibility. As historically significant structures, any modifications will be reviewed by DHP. To accomplish the Master Plan vision of being welcoming and inclusive, it is important that the Park provides equitable opportunities for all users.

Operations and Maintenance

Relocate the East Maintenance Area to an adjacent location (at the existing fueling station/pole barn) with updated facilities.

The East Maintenance Area is in a visually prominent location near the Park's main road where the buildings and equipment are visible to visitors. The buildings are in poor condition and the facility is sited close to the lakeshore, Waterfront land is the highest value resource at a public park and should be used for recreation. The facility visually impacts the adjacent historic Livingston cottage and a public boat launch. Relocating and updating the maintenance area to an existing site north of the road will reduce visibility of the operations, improve working conditions, and allow the current site to be restored as a natural setting for recreational use. EV chargers and electric equipment storage will be considered for the new facility.

Improve and update the West (Parkway) Maintenance Area at its current location.

The Parkway Maintenance Area (Parkway Garage) houses a carpentry shop, a Park Police building, and is used to store beach equipment. The option of consolidating the facility's two maintenance areas was considered, but as the Park is large it was determined that keeping the Parkway facility in its existing location best supported staff activities and efficiency.

Park Police Building

Replace the Park Police Building with a new facility in a different location.

Representatives from the Taconic Region Park Police were consulted about the condition and functionality of the existing Park Police Building. They indicated that the internal layout of the building is not effective for some police operations. The building is not energy-efficient and does not meet ADA standards or current building codes. While it is important to maintain a Park Police presence at LTSP, the existing building is also located outside the Park's public areas. A more centrally located and visible facility closer to areas of high activity in the Park is preferable. A location for a new Park Police building has not yet been determined.

Remodel and update the existing Park Police Building.

The existing Park Police building is in moderately good condition and until a new facility can be built it can be adapted to be more energy-efficient and the internal layout modified to improve its function. Once a new building is in place the building will be repurposed for Park use.

Vehicular Infrastructure

Rehabilitate the West Beach Parking Area with green infrastructure including permeable pavement, tree islands, pedestrian walks, EV chargers, and bicycle racks.

Redeveloping the main visitor lot with green infrastructure offers the greatest opportunity for upgrading the Park and increasing resilience and promoting more sustainable transportation. The large West Beach Parking area is the Park's highest-use lot, in a highly visible location near the Park Office and West Bathhouse and overlooking the swimming beach. The lot has no trees, and its deteriorated pavement is unsightly and detracts from this scenic location. Its undefined layout without painted lines results in poor circulation and potentially unsafe conditions. Implementing this action is key to improving visitor safety and comfort at the Park as well as protecting the lake's water quality.

Relocate contact booths at the West (Parkway) Entrance further into Park and add electric/phone service, security components, and a battery-operated payment system.

On high-use days, cars entering from the west can back up onto the Taconic State Parkway, causing a potentially hazardous condition. The entrance booths do not have electricity or phone service and there is no climate control. Upgrading the booths and moving them farther into the Park will improve both circulation and staff working conditions, and result in an improved visitor experience.

Relocate the Park's East Entrance booth and provide electric/phone service and a battery-operated payment system.

The entrance booth on the Park's east side is located on the passenger side, which requires staff to walk in the active roadway. This potentially unsafe condition also causes slow-downs on high-use days. The booth has no phone service or climate control. Possible locations for the updated booth have been identified. The new booth location will include a turn-around area for improved circulation.

Non-Vehicular Infrastructure

Create a shared-use trail on the section of the Lakeview Trail between the West Beach and the Campground.

The distance between the Park's two main recreation amenities, the Campground and the West Beach, is approximately one mile. Most people drive to the beach and those who walk or bike often use the road, which can result in safety issues. Separating uses with level, paved routes is integral to improving accessibility and comfort for all abilities. Developing an accessible shared-use route between these two popular destinations will encourage foot traffic, strollers, and cyclists at the Park to be more inclined to leave their cars behind. Reducing car use improves safety and decreases user conflicts, as well as having environmental benefits.

Improve pedestrian facilities in paved areas by painting lined routes and crosswalks.

The Park's roadways and parking areas are mostly not lined to indicate use, lacking painted parking stalls and pedestrian crosswalks. This action addresses potential visitor safety issues while improving circulation and increasing pedestrian comfort.

Utilities and Water Infrastructure

Improve connectivity in the Park by installing fiber-optic cable for broadband connectivity at key points.

Lake Taghkanic State Park Master Plan – Recommended Actions

The East Maintenance Area, campground, and contact booth do not have landline telephones, internet, and cell connectivity. Without these services, staff communications can be difficult and there are safety concerns that might arise during emergencies. Visitor preferences indicate that there is high demand for internet connectivity at parks. Going forward, visitor demand for coverage will grow, and it is important to plan now for future needs.

Relocate electric lines currently on poles in recreation areas underground.

Moving electric utilities underground has multiple benefits. In addition to reducing visual impacts, electric lines and poles in recreation areas can present operational and safety challenges. With projected increases in severe weather, moving lines underground will increase the Park's resilience to climate change impacts.

Increase the Park's quantity production of potable water.

The Park's water treatment system uses surface (lake) water to produce potable water of excellent quality. The treatment system is aging, however, and as components deteriorate there will be increased failures. As improvements in the Master Plan are implemented, demand for potable water will also likely increase. The Park needs to be prepared for future conditions by planning and implementing changes that will ensure a sufficient potable water supply in future years.

Modernize the Park's wastewater system.

Most of the Park's septic systems are at the end of their operational life, and some have begun to require replacement. The campground's septic systems are undersized and require frequent maintenance. Others were installed close to the lake when the Park was first developed and need to be relocated. New septic systems will also be needed to support redevelopment proposed in the east part of the Park. As the Lake is the Park's primary recreational resource, as well as its drinking water supply, any potential water quality impacts from septic fields must be anticipated and proactively addressed.



The Park's water treatment facility uses water from the lake to provide potable water.



LTSP's West Bathhouse in winter

Complete the formal process for closing the landfill site.

The Park's landfill site has been unused since the early 1980s but has not been formally closed. Cost has been the primary factor in not completing the DEC process for closure of solid waste landfills. Implementing this action is in keeping with the agency's mission to be good stewards of the land.

Investigate opportunities for developing a free-standing solar project at the Park.

The region is interested in developing additional solar projects and would like to consider options at LTSP. This action supports agency directives to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and generate more renewable energy at its facilities. Several locations in the Park have been considered as potential sites but require further analysis.

Install small-scale solar installations on existing rooftops (cottages, bathrooms, maintenance buildings).

The solar installation on the West Beach Bathhouse roof has been a success story at the Park and generates a good quantity of electric power. Rooftop solar requires little maintenance and has only minor visual impacts. Specific sites have not been selected, but there are a range of potential opportunities for adding solar to existing structures at the site.

Incorporate solar elements as part of the redevelopment of the West Beach Parking Lot.

The large West Beach parking lot will be a model for green redevelopment. Solar installations in public settings offer the potential for public education while allowing the agency to offset its energy use. With anticipated increases in temperature extremes and more frequent intense storms, elements such as solar carports will provide a safer, more comfortable visitor experience.

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 are included in Appendix G.



Aquatic plants at the East Beach

Implementation

The Master Plan proposes phased implementation of prioritized actions that will stabilize, rehabilitate, and repurpose underutilized buildings, improve overall Park access, enhance the natural environment, and create new or expanded recreational opportunities that anticipate future visitor needs.

Detailed cost estimates have not been developed, but improvements in the Plan are likely to cumulatively cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. The pace and sequencing of recommended actions will be determined by the availability of funding (a function of OPRHP's annual capital and operations budgets), the availability of staff, and the need to balance investments throughout OPRHP facilities statewide.

Once adopted, the Master Plan will be reviewed annually to select projects for inclusion in the Park's budget and to assess the overall progress in plan implementation. Operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the Plan's adoption will go forward as scheduled.












Ongoing repair and maintenance work at the facility are important and not overlooked in the analysis of Plan actions. Park staff are continually implementing improvements at LTSP, and projects in the Plan are intended to support staff and expand upon current work while addressing unmet needs and updated infrastructure that will benefit the Park's overall function.

The Action Implementation Priorities Table on the following pages indicates all actions recommended for implementation. Proposed elements shown are subject to reorganization based on need and available funding. 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.

LAKE TAGHKANIC STATE PARK
ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES TABLE



IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY LEVEL	PROPOSED ACTION	CAPITAL PROJECT
Natural Resources		
Ongoing	Expand on the existing knowledge and protection of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) species, species of Special Concern (SC), and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Park.	
Ongoing	Expand invasive species management efforts; develop and implement programs to promote public engagement and participation in invasive species management.	
Priority Level 2	Develop and implement an Environmental Stewardship Plan for LTSP.	
Priority Level 2	Maintain the water quality of Lake Taghkanic by protecting the watershed's integrity and headwaters.	
Cultural Resources		
Priority Level 1	Renovate and retrofit the East Bathhouse as a community center with flexible interior spaces for programs, meetings, and other public uses and public outdoor space (e.g., patio, seating, fire pit).	
Priority Level 1	Dedicate a portion of the CCC-built East Bathhouse for education and interpretation.	
Priority Level 1	Upgrade utilities at the Park's rental cottages, repair deteriorated materials, and address code and accessibility issues where possible.	
Priority Level 2	Improve the CCC campground by addressing needed cabin repairs, improving drainage sitewide, and adding new outdoor amenities (e.g., stone patios, picnic tables, or seating) at some cabin sites.	
Priority Level 2	Replace three rental Cottages with ADA accessible units.	
Priority Level 3	Renovate the CCC Recreation Hall.	
Priority Level 3	Address circulation and site drainage issues around the Cottages; repair eroded and compacted areas and improve visitor access to the lakefront.	
Priority Level 3	Demolish and remove the barn and house at the Park's Reesa Farm section.	
Recreational Resources		
Priority Level 1	Install a Pickleball Court at Parking Lot B.	
Priority Level 1	Improve the Park's boat rental facilities by adding an ADA-compliant dock and upgrading connectivity for credit card use at the rental shed.	
Priority Level 2	Install a boat storage structure by the East Boat Launch.	
Priority Level 2	Relocate the East Boat Launch for more direct access to the lake.	

LAKE TAGHKANIC STATE PARK
ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES TABLE









Priority Level 2	Install an ADA-compliant kayak launch at the East Boat Launch.	
Priority Level 2	Install an ADA-compliant fishing pier at the West Beach.	
Priority Level 2	Enhance biking amenities to facilitate non-vehicular transportation within the Park.	
Priority Level 3	Update the Basketball Court to meet current safety standards.	
Priority Level 3	Improve the drainage, raise, and resurface the ballfield.	
Priority Level 3	Explore options for providing bike/scooter rentals for use within the Park.	
Trails		
Ongoing	Repair or reroute low, wet, unsustainable, and eroded sections of the Park's existing trail system – repair culverts and bridges.	
Ongoing	Develop a linear trail in the southeast portion of the Park from County Route 8 to the Fitness Trail, with a spur leading to the Wildlife Viewing Area.	
Ongoing	Develop a true Campground Loop Trail by adding an east-west cross trail connection from the left branch of the Campground Loop back to the Campground Loop trailhead; adjust the location of the Campground Loop trailhead for better access and less intrusion into campsites.	
Priority Level 1	Develop and implement a park-wide Trail Wayfinding Signage and Marking Plan.	
Priority Level 1	Rehabilitate and improve the Lakeview Trail (LV) on the south side of the lake and designate the Lakeview Extension Trail (LVE) as the new Lakeview Trail for hiking.	
Priority Level 1	Eliminate wet trail segments of the Fitness Trail (FN), designate the section of the Lakeview Trail between the two intersections with the LVE as part of the FN, rename the trail as the Fitness Loop, and improve signage.	
Priority Level 3	Improve the snowmobiling experience by clearly indicating, both on the map and through signage on the trails, where snowmobiles are permitted.	
Priority Level 3	Expand the existing parking lot at the trail kiosk by the East Entrance (NY 82).	
Priority Level 3	Assess potential route options for creating an east-west trail connection between the Reesa's Farm Trail and the Campground Loop and implement if a viable route is determined.	
Priority Level 3	Evaluate route options for a trail connecting from the Campground Loop east to the gravel parking lot by the East Entrance (NY 82) and implement if a viable route option is determined.	
Priority Level 3	Investigate options for connecting existing trails to the newly acquired property on old NY 82 and implement if appropriate.	
Priority Level 3	Investigate the possibility of connecting the LTSP trail network to New Forge State Forest and implement, as appropriate.	

LAKE TAGHKANIC STATE PARK
ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES TABLE














Education, Programming & Outreach

Ongoing	Educate visitors about the historic value of the cabins and other CCC buildings to raise awareness of their significance.	
Priority Level 1	Develop new programs that will engage both existing and new visitors and attract area residents to the Park year-round.	
Priority Level 1	Develop a Comprehensive Signage Plan that assesses the Park function and needs, with recommendations for all signage types, including wayfinding, informational, and interpretive signs.	
Priority Level 1	Develop and implement nature programming for visitors of all ages.	
Priority Level 1	Develop educational programs and content that will expand access for visitors, including multilingual content.	
Priority Level 1	Create seasonal “floating” staff positions to develop and implement education/interpretation content at multiple parks across the Taconic Region.	
Priority Level 1	Explore possibilities for partnerships to support the development of new programs and activities.	
Priority level 2	Develop a nature-interpretive walk along a segment of the Lakeview Trail with interactive/tactile content appropriate for a greater range of abilities.	
Priority level 2	Develop an accessible interpretive route that incorporates a conceptual “timeline” that illustrates the site’s progression from prehistory to the present.	
Priority level 2	Create short, entertaining informational videos to inform and educate visitors about the Park’s amenities and expectations for behavior.	
Priority level 2	Expand the Park’s interpretative content and incorporate multi-modal methodologies (e.g., audio, visual, programming, tactile/interactive elements).	

Operations, Infrastructure and Facilities

Priority Level 1	Rehabilitate the West Beach Parking Area with green infrastructure including permeable pavement, tree islands, pedestrian walks, EV chargers, and bicycle racks.	
Priority level 1	Complete the formal process for closing the landfill site.	
Priority level 2	Relocate the East Maintenance Area to an adjacent location with updated facilities.	
Priority level 2	Relocate contact booths at the West (Parkway) Entrance further into Park and add electric/phone service, security components, and a battery-operated payment system.	
Priority level 2	Relocate the contact booth at the East (NY 82) Entrance and provide electric/phone service and a battery-operated payment system.	
Priority level 2	Replace the existing Park Police Building with a new facility in a different location (to be determined).	
Priority level 2	Improve and update the West (Parkway) Maintenance Area in its current location.	
Priority level 2	Remodel and update the existing Park Police Building.	

LAKE TAGHKANIC STATE PARK
ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES TABLE

Utilities		
Ongoing	Increase the Park's quantity production of potable water.	
Priority level 1	Install small-scale solar installations on existing rooftops (cottages, bathrooms, maintenance buildings).	
Priority level 1	Incorporate solar elements as part of the redevelopment of the West Beach Parking Lot.	
Priority level 1	Move electric lines that are currently on poles underground in recreation areas.	
Priority level 1	Improve connectivity in the Park by installing fiber-optic cable for broadband connectivity at key points.	
Priority level 1	Modernize the Park's wastewater system.	
Priority level 3	Investigate opportunities for developing a free-standing solar project at the Park.	
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities		
Priority level 1	Create a shared-use trail on the section of the Lakeview Trail between the West Beach and the Campground.	
Priority level 1	Improve pedestrian facilities in paved areas by painting lined routes in parking areas, and adding crosswalks and ADA parking spaces.	
Camping		
Priority level 1	Improve the accessibility of selected cabins in the campground.	
Priority level 2	Redevelop Parking Lot 1 for RV camping.	
Priority Level 3	Redevelop a portion of the Campground Parking Lot for tent campsites and relocate some existing tent platforms into the new area to decrease density.	
Priority Level 3	Develop new tent campsites in the area west of the East Bathhouse.	
Priority Level 3	Improve the campground's vehicular circulation, creating a more defined entrance that provides an improved "gateway" experience for campers.	

Conclusion

Lake Taghkanic State Park constitutes an important public open space in the Taconic Region. Actions recommended here have been developed to reflect the preferences and experiences of Park users and other stakeholders and shaped by staff knowledgeable of issues related to the natural environment, treatment of historic elements, education, and infrastructure, among other expertise. As these actions are implemented, the improvements will help address changes that are anticipated to impact the Park over the next 10 to 15 years.

A NYS park is part of a dynamic system, subject to impacts from many outside—and sometimes unforeseen—forces. The Lake Taghkanic Master Plan should be considered a living document to be consulted and updated over time to accurately inform decision-making at the Park.

For a full understanding of the actions described in the Plan, see the appendices for more detail on the Park's existing conditions and development of the Plan's recommended actions.



A snowy sunset across frozen Lake Taghkanic

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