

HEADWATERS

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

2005 NEWSLETTER - 2004 ANNUAL REPORT - Issue 43

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New York State Tug Hill Commission

Dulles State Office Building
317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601-3782

(315) 785-2380/2570

(315) 785-2574 (fax)

Toll-free in region:
1-888-785-2380

e-mail: tughill@tughill.org
(staff addresses page 2)

website: www.tughill.org

Sustaining the Mission

This past year has seen much change in personnel at the Tug Hill Commission; however, the basic tenets of the Commission remain the same. While change is inevitable, the Tug Hill Commissioners have reaffirmed commitment to the Commission's basic mission through the 2005-2009 Tug Hill Commission Strategic Plan. The following highlights the themes of the plan, which can be read in its entirety on our website.

First, the Commissioners reiterate the highest priority is to serve the needs of the region's most valuable resource – its people and their communities. We recognize that local leaders have regularly rated our "basic" programs highest. Services for land use planning, aid in securing funds for key community investments, skill development workshops and the Local Government Conference are most important to communities and to us.

To maximize services and benefits to the region we also rely heavily on partnerships, most importantly with our communities and Councils of Governments (COGs). In addition, the Commission continues to partner with public agencies and the private sector to leverage resources (human and financial), expertise and skills to meet community needs.

For years communities have placed high priority on planning for and obtaining resources to improve and

expand infrastructure. Predominantly this has been traditional infrastructure such as sewer, water and transportation. In the new Strategic Plan we broaden our consideration of the region's infrastructure to the concept of "green infrastructure," meaning our rivers, streams, forests and farm lands. These natural features define the region, and we need to plan for, manage, and sustain their use as we do our built infrastructure.

We will continue to make considerable investments in technology applications to improve the efficiency and quality of work produced by the staff, and to enhance our capability to get maps and other crucial information to local leaders faster and cheaper. (See page 6 for information on our new web-based Starter Kit.)

The Strategic Plan is intended to be dynamic and will be revised as Commissioners and staff respond to local leaders and the needs of the region. The Commission will continue to seek input through our Local Leaders Surveys,

meetings with community and civic leaders, and consultations with the COGs as we implement the priorities and course of action set forth in this plan.

The number of projects and activity level in serving the region is as



Graduates of the 2004-05 Local Leaders Institute receive recognition at March 2005 Commission meeting.

high today as in the past. I would be glad to meet with your community to answer questions or hear suggestions on our strategic plan and continuing programs. Meanwhile, know that we are here to serve Tug Hill communities with greater effectiveness and more responsiveness than ever before.

John K. Bartow Jr.
Executive Director



Meet the Tug Hill Commission Staff

Commission staff provide support to Tug Hill councils of governments in community and economic development, land use planning, natural resource management, geographic information systems (GIS) and related fields.

John Bartow
executive director
john@tughill.org

Paulette Collins
secretary
collins@tughill.org

Mickey Dietrich
GIS
mickey@tughill.org

Carla Fowler
community development
carla@tughill.org

Linda Gibbs
natural resources
gibbs@tughill.org

Matthew Johnson
planning/GIS
matt@tughill.org

Katie Malinowski
natural resources/GIS
katie@tughill.org

Emily Murray
community development
emily@tughill.org

Felicia Passino
systems support aide
felicia@tughill.org

Kevin Smith
infrastructure and natural
resources director
kev@tughill.org

Philip Street
planning director
phil@tughill.org

Sandy Taylor
secretary
taylor@tughill.org

Jean Waterbury
planning/technical assistance
jean@tughill.org

David Zembiec
community development
director
davez@tughill.org

“Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region”

Black River Focus of Activity

“Blueway” Designation Paves Way For Regional Approach To Promotion

This past June Governor Pataki announced a \$27,000 Environmental Protection Fund grant for the Black River Blueway Trail Project. The Town of Martinsburg submitted the application on behalf of all 36 municipalities along the 114-mile river from its Adirondack headwaters above Forestport, along Tug Hill’s eastern edge, to Lake Ontario.

A “Blueway Trail” is a boat and/or paddling route along a waterway that combines recreation and environmental awareness while linking communities and land-based attractions such as recreational trails, historic sites, and parks. Fishing, canoeing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, and boating are popular recreational activities along the river. Wastewater projects along the corridor

have significantly improved water quality in recent years and many communities have focused revitalization efforts on the river. These efforts include riverfront parks, riverside trails, and events including casual paddles, fun competitions, and national-level kayaking.

The grant will fund a blueway trail development plan and knit individual projects along the river into a strategy for developing the full potential of the river as a regional economic asset. Plan elements will address promotion strategies for targeted markets; physical improvements to enhance river access and its appeal as a destination; and signage (directional and interpretive).

The project should be underway by late 2005, beginning with selection of a consultant to complete the plan under the direction of a regional steering committee. Once completed, funds can be requested in future grant rounds to implement the plan, possibly including development of new boat launches, signage, and/or

promotional brochures. The completed plan could also be used as documentation to support communities seeking funding for local projects along the Black River.

Navigation Study To Proceed With Senator Wright’s Support

The US Army Corps of Engineers is conducting a navigation study on the 40-mile stretch of the Black River from Lyons Falls to Carthage/West Carthage. This section of quiet flatwater is popular for canoeing, but contains potential hazards such as old

pillings and remains of old jetties and dams from the river’s early history as part of the Black River Canal. Navigation on some lower stretches of the river is also impeded by sedimentation. Champion requested assistance on behalf of the River Area Council of Governments and the Lewis County municipalities that share that stretch of river. Those communities had been discussing ways to jointly promote the recreational potential of this shared resource, and debris removal was identified as a high priority for improving safety and enjoyment of the river.

Continued on page 8



Army Corps staff install navigation aids on the Black River.

Maple Ridge Wind Farm Under Construction

Things have been busy in Martinsburg, Harrisburg, and Lowville since construction began in April on the 195-turbine wind farm formerly called Flat Rock, now officially the Maple Ridge Wind Farm. The first phase of the \$380 million project will install 120 turbines over 15,000 acres this year, with the remainder installed in 2006. The turbines are 1.65-megawatt Vestas machines, with tower heights of approximately 260 feet and turbine blades reaching almost 400 feet above the ground. Additionally, a 10-mile transmission line is being constructed from the site through the Town of Watson.

According to an article in the Watertown Daily Times (6/22/05), portions of the wind farm could begin producing electricity in early to mid-November, with all 120 turbines operational by December. The wind farm is a joint project of Zilkha Renewable Energy and PPM Atlantic Renewable Energy.

Turbine components are being delivered via ships originating in Vietnam to the Port of Oswego. The first of several shipments arrived mid-June, with transport of components to the construction site starting late July, when tower bases and lower tower sections have been installed. Large cranes are necessary to move the upper sections of the towers and the turbines, and it is optimum to only move each component once.



One of the first wind turbines installed at the Maple Ridge Wind Farm.

PILOT deals to be amended

Five taxing entities (towns of Martinsburg, Harrisburg, and Lowville, Lewis County, and the Lowville Academy and Central School District) are working on an amendment to their payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreements for the Maple Ridge Wind Farm project, in an effort to make revenues more consistent and equitably distributed. The 15-year PILOT agreement has been a topic for discussion many times as the scope, schedule, and requirements by the state Office for Real Property Services have changed. As it stands now, Maple Ridge will pay up to \$46,000 per tower and \$92,500 for the transmission line per year. Annual payments and distribution are to be determined by multiplying that year's full-value tax rates by turbine and transmission line

values set by each town assessor.

The three towns are now entering a planning phase to determine how the anticipated revenues created by the wind farm will be handled.

Greystone Manor purchased by Historical Society

Maple Ridge Wind Farm provided \$75,000 from its mitigation fund towards the recent purchase of Greystone Manor by the Lewis County Historical Society. The early 1800's era mansion was originally the home of General Walter Martin, the town of Martinsburg's namesake. A committee has been formed to plan for the renovation of the building into a historic-house type museum similar to Constable Hall, including town residents and a representative from PPM Atlantic Renewable Energy.

About Headwaters

Headwaters is the newsletter annual report of the New York State Tug Hill Commission.

The Tug Hill Commission is a state funded, regional agency overseen by a board of nine unpaid commissioners - two each from Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego counties, and one at-large.

Commissioners are appointed for five year terms: three each by the Governor, State Senate and State Assembly. The Commission has an administrative link to New York State's Department of State.

Chairman

Arnold E. Talgo
Oneida County

Vice Chairman

Kenneth W. Vigus
Oneida County

Secretary

Anne C. Schuler
Oneida County

Members

Leona M. Cheresnoski
Jefferson County
Timothy V. LeVan
Lewis County
Roger W. Maciejko
Lewis County
J. David Stone
Jefferson County
Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.
Oswego County
Vacancy
Oswego County

Executive Director
John K. Bartow, Jr.

SAVE THE DATE:

Tug Hill Local Government Conference

Thursday, March 30, 2006

COGs Circuit Rider Contacts

Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC)

Jane Jones
CTHC circuit rider
315-599-7724
tomjanej@northnet.org
www.tughillcouncil.com

Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG)

Maria Fibiger
NOCCOG circuit rider
315-245-2402
mariaf-
NOCCOG@twcny.rr.com
www.nocog.org

North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG)

Paul Baxter
NorCOG circuit rider
315-668-8945
PMBaxter@twcny.rr.com
www.norcog.org

River Area Council of Governments (RACOG)

Kathy Amyot
RACOG circuit rider
315-785-2390
kathy@tughill.org
www.racog.org

Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG)

Paul Baxter
SRLGSC circuit rider
315-668-8945
PMBaxter@twcny.rr.com
www.salmonrivers.org

RACOG News

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) is spearheading efforts to expand and develop open waterfront and wetland areas, located along a segment of the Black River, into recreational parks in the villages of Carthage and West Carthage as part of their “downtown revitalization initiative.” To enhance opportunities for sustainable commercial and residential growth, the ongoing development of a pedestrian trail system linking waterfront and downtown areas to existing trails serves as a key element to attracting visitors traversing the Olympic Scenic Byway and Blueway Trail.

RACOG is maximizing limited resources by developing community and regional partnerships that incorporate shared interests and resources. Serving as lead agent, the town of Champion submitted a joint Quality Communities funding request earlier this year to design waterfront plans in West Carthage, Great Bend, Felts Mills and the village of Black River that will guide next step development. In conjunction, the village of West Carthage received \$25,000 from Senator Wright to purchase key waterfront property and leverage additional funding for property acquisition through the Environmental Protection Fund.

To advance local, regional, and state efforts to develop an inter-connected pedestrian trail system to attract visitors and enhance the quality of life for residents, the Carthage Area Hospital joined with RACOG to promote a more walkable

community to address health and fitness issues. Students enrolled in the “Intro to GIS” class at the Carthage Central High School provided assistance through hands-on-field training in the collection & processing of data used for the development of a pedestrian trail map.

RACOG communities are also implementing recommendations outlined in a feasibility study funded by the NYS DOT through a Quality Communities initiative to complete the transportation element of the Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Plan. That report emphasizes strategies to enhance pedestrian walkways, parking, and signage.

The Tug Hill Commission and Jefferson County Planning provide ongoing technical assistance and support to RACOG.

Changes at NOCCOG

“If anything is certain, it is that change is certain. The world we are planning for today will not exist in this form tomorrow.”

*- Philip (Bayer) Crosby,
American writer, author*

We all see changes in things that surround us... some big, some small... some slow, some quick. Regardless of size or speed, all change can influence or impact. The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) continues to work in cooperation with its 19 member communities providing technical assistance and support, in an effort to facilitate smooth and seamless transitions.

NOCCOG itself is undergoing some significant transformations as it moves

ahead with its mission to help towns and villages work on common problems and opportunities, while linking them to the Tug Hill Commission and its resources. Maria Fibiger of North Bay, Town of Vienna, is now NOCCOG’s full-time circuit rider, replacing Steve Hunter, who retired after 17+ years of quality and noteworthy service. Maria brings a variety of expertise having an accomplished career as a program director for community development and public housing organizations, a municipal paralegal/grant coordinator, an associate director for a NYS agency addressing rural health issues & initiatives, and as a private sector consultant specializing in funding research and program development for various organizations and agencies. The Tug Hill Commission and NOCCOG wish Steve the best in his future endeavors.

The towns and villages whose unique characteristics are woven together to make up the wonderful tapestry of the Northern Oneida County region are presently, and will in the future, undergo changes. This year, many are recipients of NYS Archives grants for record keeping and are creating electronic indexes of vital statistics, as well as reorganizing important historical records. Communities including the Town of Boonville, Village of Boonville, Village of Sylvan Beach, and Town of Vienna are all in the process of either preparing, reviewing, and/or updating Comprehensive Plans in order to be better prepared for changes that will inevitably affect their residents and habitats.

Of course, there is an ever-changing influence that

affects all of the member communities in the NOCCOG region... our remarkable four seasons, of course.

NorCOG Increases Intermunicipal Cooperation

North Shore Council of Governments member towns and villages have started a series of regular meetings with the Central Square Central Schools system, looking for possible opportunities for cooperation for increased efficiency or cost savings.

With the departure of the local official acting as the town's webmaster, the town of Constantia changed its web hosting from Digital Towpath to the North Shore Council of Governments.

The North Shore Council of Governments elected new officers for 2005. Central Square mayor Michael Dixon was elected chairman and Cleveland mayor Kevin Gribbon was elected vice chairman. NorCOG thanks Lora Sterling and George Nowack who previously served in those two positions.

The Village of Cleveland completed the first phase of their LWRP (Local Waterfront Revitalization Program) project, and passed a public referendum to build a new village hall after their old village hall became unserviceable.

The town of West Monroe entered into a pilot project with the Tug Hill Commission on using GPS for mapping of town infrastructure. NYSDEC also began cleanup of the

Pinnacle Tire Yard in West Monroe, which contains millions of waste tires.

Salmon Rivers Elects New Officers

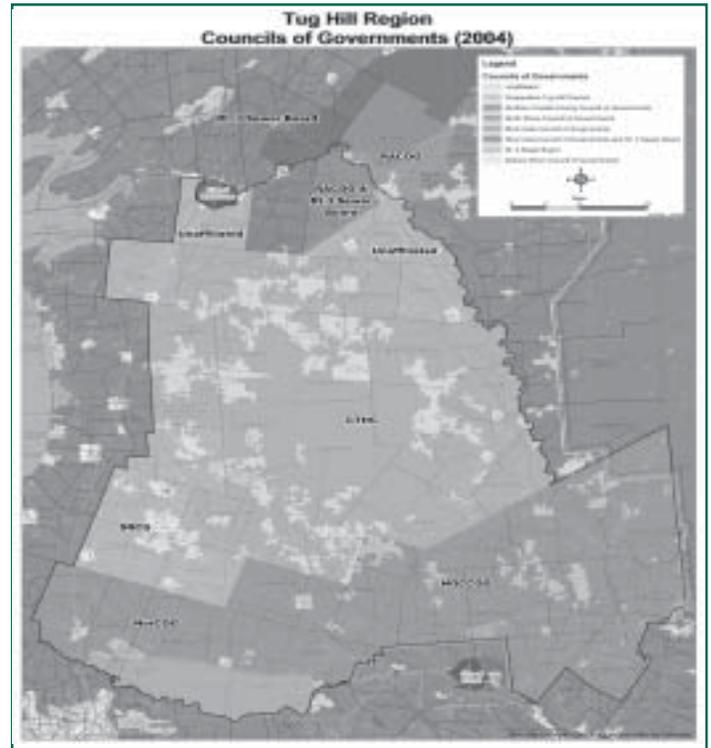
The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments elected new officers for 2005. Leon Heagle, mayor of Parish, was elected chairman, and Lawrence Rayder, councilman, town of Amboy was elected vice chairman.

The town of Orwell, in conjunction with the Altmar-Parish-Williamstown school system and Oswego County, settled a longstanding question regarding the valuation of hydro facilities in town.

The Salmon River Watershed Natural Resources Assessment is also still underway. The New York Natural Heritage Program has been busy this summer doing field inventories. Look for updates this fall.

CTHC Resource Inventory Nears Completion

Resource inventory work begun in 2004 should be complete and ready for presentation to the council at its September meeting. Intern Sarah Haugen has been finishing this work during her stint at the Commission. The council hopes the inventory will assist member towns in land use and planning work and support protection of special or critical environmental areas. It will also provide town officials and the general public with better information about the assets of the region and why they need protection.



In an effort to provide member towns with a strong and structured Council of Government, the council's executive committee will be updating by-laws and possibly the Intermunicipal Agreement that governs the relationship between member communities. The council hopes to have a draft available for review at the September meeting.

The executive committee has approved a one-time 'community development' grant for member communities. The community must pass a resolution authorizing a community project and send the resolution and a letter of application to CTHC circuit rider, Jane Jones. Proposals will then be reviewed to determine eligibility for the \$2,000 grant. If approved, funds would be dispersed upon project completion. To date, the board has approved nine requests. All applications were due by August 18.

In addition to the council's ongoing technical

assistance work with member communities, Resource Inventory and Blueway Trail work, we have been asked to administer the ATV economic impact study now being conducted for the Tug Hill Region — see page 6.

The CTHC Annual Meeting will be held on September 29th at a place to be announced. The order of business will include the by-law revisions and an update on the CTHC Resource Inventory work. All town representatives are encouraged to attend.

The Council also welcomes three new CTHC supervisors and many other new local officials in the region. CTHC now has 16 member towns and is always looking for interested folks to sit on the executive board or become their town's CTHC representative. If interested, please contact Jane Jones or any board member.

ATV Economic Impact Study Underway

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council contracted with Camoin Associates out of Saratoga Springs in June to undertake an economic impact study of ATV recreation in the region. The need for such a study was identified by the Issues Group, a broad cross-section of organizations and individuals, including local governments, business persons, user groups, environmental groups, and local citizens. The Issues Group developed out of a series of forums in Lewis County in September 2003, and has been working for several months to identify action items to solve problems associated with the growing ATV industry in the region. The study is meant to quantify both costs and benefits of ATV recreation to the Tug Hill economy in an objective and comprehensive manner. Funding for the economic impact study was provided in part by Senator James Wright and Senator Raymond Meier.

Mail surveys were sent in early July to businesses

across the four-county region, as well as ATV club members, designed to quantify the economic benefit of ATV recreation. In addition, trail intercept surveys have been held at specific locations during July and August. Draft results for all survey components will be available in September.

Focus group meetings have also been held, the first for a detailed discussion of concerns related to ATV recreation on Tug Hill. Issues included maintenance costs, environmental impacts, trespass on private and public land, enforcement costs and challenges. A second focus group was held in August to discuss identified concerns and brainstorm solutions.

A draft report should be available in December, with a final report due out in February. All meetings of the Issues Group are open to the public, and are announced in press releases distributed to various media outlets throughout the region. Additionally, the Commission is periodically updating its website with information related to the Tug Hill ATV Issues Group, at www.tughill.org/ATVIssues.htm. If you have any questions, please contact Katie Malinowski.

Web-Based Tug Hill Starter Kit

The Commission will soon have a web-based mapping application available for the region's 62 towns and villages. The design is similar to the CD Starter Kit that many Tug Hill communities are currently using. By making it available on the web, municipalities will have access to the latest data (for example, roads, zoning, parcel boundaries) for the entire region, enhancing their decision-making capacity. The web-based Starter Kit will be located at www.thram.org, which stands for Tug Hill Regional Atlas Mapper.

Senator Wright provided assistance to purchase software and hardware to get the project off the ground, and the Commission hired GIS intern Hieu Ho to assist in development.

Future projects may include a maintenance application for infrastructure, where the Commission could serve as the data repository for GPS-collected data on items such as sewer infrastructure and highway sign inventories. The Commission will be looking for input from Tug Hill communities on what would be useful for them and how current applications can be made more user-friendly. Local officials interested in serving on a workgroup to address these issues should contact Mickey Dietrich.

“Tug Hill Region” Exit Signs On I-81

Two new signs recognizing the Tug Hill region have been erected along Interstate 81, one

located in the northbound lane just south of Exit 32, and the other in the southbound lane just north of Exit 42. The process to install the signs began with a request from the Tug Hill Business Association with follow-up assistance from the Commission.

Draft Strategic Plan for Great Lakes

In December 2004, President Bush directed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to lead a regional collaboration for the Great Lakes. Key members from federal, state, and local governments, tribes and stakeholders have partnered to develop a strategic plan to restore and protect the lakes.

The Collaboration's draft strategic plan was released this July. Commission staff participated on four subject teams over the past six months, including habitat conservation, non-point pollution sources, indicators and information, and sustainability. The reports of these teams form the basis for the draft action plan. Recommendations focus both on long-term restoration of the Great Lakes and on steps that must be taken over the next five years to most effectively achieve results.

Following a 60-day public comment period the collaboration will consider the draft recommendations and public comments as they develop a final strategy, due to be released in Chicago in December 2005. For more information go to www.epa.gov/grtlakes/collaboration.



Northern Forest Revitalization

In the Northern Forest region of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, a transitioning economy, job loss, and out-migration continue to create an uncertain future, despite large land conservation successes. Individuals, communities, agencies and organizations have begun to come together to develop a Regional Strategy for the Northern Forest to support economic and community revitalization linked to continued stewardship of the land. Small, rural communities have begun to cross state lines to work together in identifying common problems, creating solutions, and stimulating political interest in taking effective regional action.

As a partner, the Commission has participated in exchanging ideas and inspiring change through ongoing dialogues,

conferences, meetings, and legislative visits over the past few years. Building on the Northeast State Foresters' Association's 10th anniversary review of the Northern Forest Land Council's 1994 regional recommendations last December, momentum is building at the state and federal levels in support of the effort. For more information, visit the Northern Forest Centers' web site at www.northernforest.org.

Eight Graduate Local Leaders Institute 2004-05

Chairman Arnie Talgo recognized eight graduates from the 2004-05 Tug Hill Local Leaders Institute in March. Participants included Art Baderman, Rodman town councilman; Janet Bartow, Adams Center resident; Richard Colesante, Constantia town councilman; Veronica Murphy, Western town councilman; Gerry Smith,

Pinckney town councilman; Ken Stabb, Boonville village planning board chair and executive director of the Boonville Municipal Commission; Gary Stinson, Rodman town councilman; and Tammy Tanner, Harrisburg town councilman.

The Institute is based on the belief that better understanding of regional issues and trends will help elected and non-elected leaders be more effective in their communities. Its goal is to enhance leadership skills by improving participants' abilities to think strategically; build partnerships; and better balance economic and environmental issues.

The Institute begins in September with an all-day tour of the region, followed by four evening sessions between October and March. Session topics included an overview of regional trends, intermunicipal cooperation, the region's environment, economic trends and opportunities, and a wrap-up

session on group dynamics and leadership styles.

For more information on participating in the 2005-2006 Local Leaders Institute, please call the Commission office or visit our website.

Major Planning in Lowville

2005 was a busy year for the town and village of Lowville. The communities wrapped up work on their first joint comprehensive plan, intended to provide a blueprint for future development activities undertaken by the municipalities and as a guide for private development. The plan stresses that activities undertaken in the village affect the town and vice versa.

The working sessions spawned several other

Continued on page 8

Commission Programs and Funding

Tug Hill Commission's budget for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2005 was about \$1 million. Most of this funding came from the Commission's annual state appropriation. A small amount came from grants, and revenues such as registration for our Local Government Conference.

Commission expenditures equal its funding, again about \$1 million this past year. Eighty-two percent of Commission expenditures are for staff salaries. The balance

covers operational costs such as postage, office equipment, car expenses, etc. The Commission employed 18, including four full-time circuit rider positions for Tug Hill Councils of Governments (COGs). COGs use their revenues from member communities to help fund part-time circuit riders and other costs.

Commission funding has remained almost unchanged, except for cost of living adjustments, over most of the past decade.

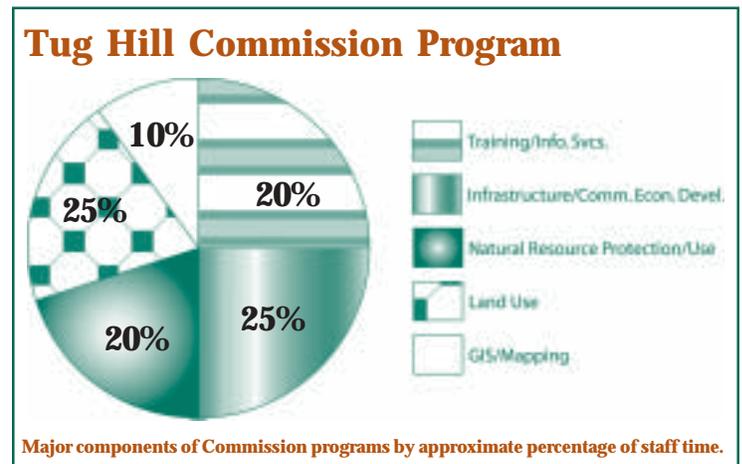
One way to gauge the value of the Commission's budget is to look at what it brings back to the region. The Commission usually helps Tug Hill local governments and organizations raise four to

ten times the Commission's annual budget in a given year.

Another way to gauge value is by what gets done in Tug Hill communities. Annually the Commission works with some 20 local communi-

ties on revisions to land use codes, and works on some 70 other projects from watershed protection to Main Street revitalization and business

Continued on page 8



Black River continued from page 2

The Army Corps approved the \$100,000 study in February. Senator James Wright was able to secure the cash match (\$25,000) in time for the project to proceed this summer, with the in-kind portion met through the steering committee's work and mapping services from the Commission. The report and its recommendations should be available by late 2005, but removal of navigation impediments will take several years.

Scozzafava Supports Event Promotion

A \$10,000 grant through Assemblywoman Diedre Scozzafava supported promotion of a series of paddling events on the Black River this summer. The funding made possible the revival of Lewis County's annual RiverFest after a two-year hiatus due to insurance costs, and the introduction of a new canoe rodeo event

(called a "canoedeo") on the riverfront shared by Carthage and West Carthage. The Adirondack SummerFest (Port Leyden) also received support for its two-day event that included canoe and kayak races.

Some funds will also promote the above as an event series during summer 2006. Additional events include the Black River Classic feeder canal race (part of the Woodsmen's Field Days in Boonville), and high-level freestyle kayaking events in Watertown. Additionally, Watertown hosted the North American Freestyle Kayaking Championships August 26-28 and is bidding for the 2006 World Cup Freestyle Competition.

Lowville continued from page 7

projects. The village, with support from the town, undertook an "Infill Development Plan" for downtown. The study was

funded by a New York State Council on the Arts grant. Buffalo based consultant peter j. smith & company was hired to complete a retail demand analysis and a downtown streetscape and circulation improvement conceptual plan. The consultant is also helping the community deal with changes that will result from a new WalMart opening in the Town in the fall.

A façade program has also been funded by the New York Main Street Program operated by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. Snowbelt Housing (Lewis County's not-for-profit housing agency) was awarded \$200,000 to fund facade renovations for 8 downtown buildings. Syracuse architects Crawford & Stearns have been selected to prepare the plans.

Village merchants have also formed a downtown business owners association. The organization's goal is return the retail and service environment in Lowville to its former glory by capitalizing on

the efforts of the town and village governments.

Programs and Funding continued from page 7

development, especially in the areas for forest products, farming, and tourism and recreation.

The Commission anticipates a growing demand for assistance in land use planning and natural resource protection as communities struggle to manage growth and development around the region.

September 2005

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New York State Tug Hill Commission
Dulles State Office Building
317 Washington Street
Watertown, New York 13601-3782

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