

HEADWATERS



2018 NEWSLETTER & 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT, ISSUE 55

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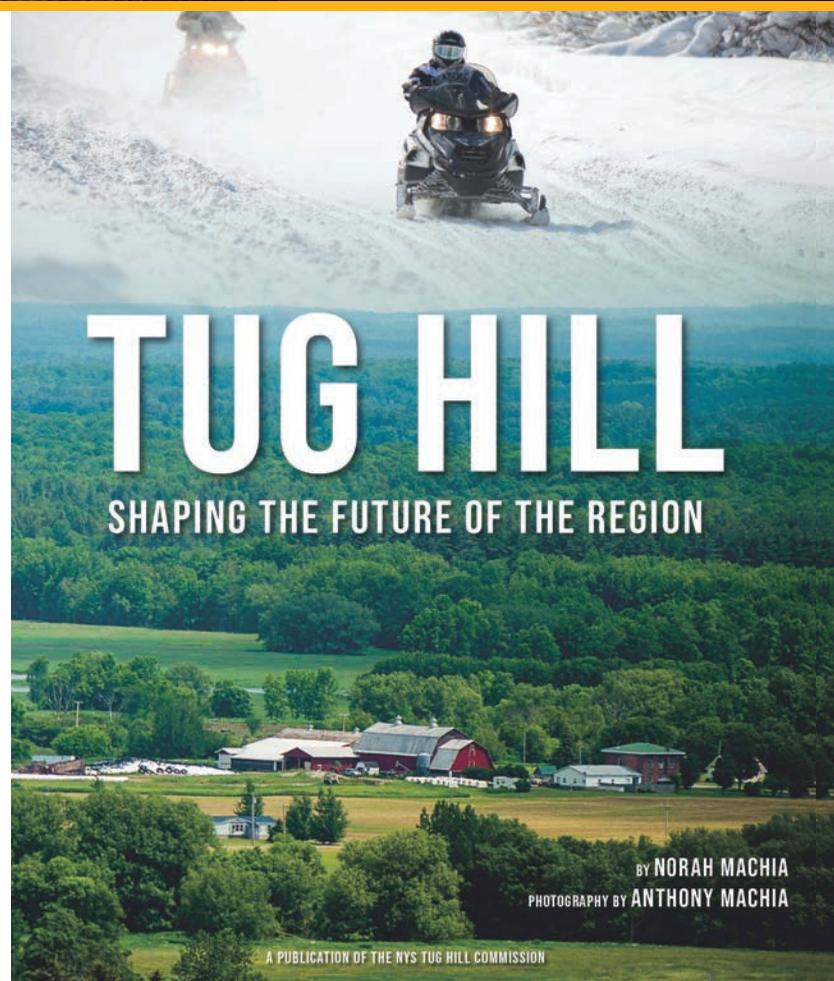
Commission Celebrates 45 Years

It's 1972. New York State has organized several commissions focused on different regions of the diverse state. Some concerns are being raised in a rural area known as Tug Hill, regarding various development proposals. Assemblyman Crawford and Senator Barclay introduce legislation and it makes its way through both chambers, and is signed by Governor Rockefeller. The Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill is created, and meets for the first time in April of 1973.

Few at the time would have believed that the Tug Hill Commission would continue to exist 45 years later, with the same grassroots approach and emphasis on cooperation and compromise to achieve both local and state goals. But in 2018, the commission celebrated its 45th anniversary

in Camden with approximately 100 colleagues and partners from across the region and beyond.

With entertainment provided by the NYS Old Tyme Fiddlers Association, the event honored the memory of Commissioner Arnie Talgo, who passed away early in 2018. Executive Director Katie Malinowski reviewed the past year's activities and looked forward to new initiatives and challenges coming in 2019. The commission's three past executive directors, Ben Coe, Bob Quinn, and John Bartow reminisced about their time serving the region. All guests were provided a complimentary copy of *Tug Hill, Shaping the Future of the Region*, and author Norah Machia shared stories of her travels around Tug Hill when researching the book. ■



BY NORAH MACHIA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY MACHIA

A PUBLICATION OF THE NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION

Meet the NYS Tug Hill Commission's Watertown 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.

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Back, left to right: Jennifer Harvill, Philip Street, Matthew Johnson, Jean Waterbury. Front: Carla Fowler, Katie Malinowski, Felicia Passino, Gwen Decker.

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



The annual Local Government Conference is the biggest training event organized by the Tug Hill Commission each year. In 2018, keynote speaker Regina Clarke delivered an energetic and interactive session to start the day.

And the Survey Says...

A unique requirement of the Tug Hill Commission's enabling legislation is that "the commission shall also report every five years on the results of a survey of local officials throughout the Tug Hill region in regard to the effectiveness of commission programs (Article 37 of Executive Law, Section 847-e)." Little has changed from the first survey instrument developed in 1985 by Cornell University so results can confidently be compared across years.

The most recent local leaders survey was conducted in 2018, and achieved a response rate of 64%, the highest in over 30 years. The commission continues to get high marks from the region's towns, villages, and partner organizations. At least one survey was received from every local government in the Tug Hill region, with a wide

variety of local official roles represented, including town/village board members, planning board members, clerks, highway/public works superintendents, zoning board of appeals members, and council of government members.

All of the commission's core programs – land use planning, training, grant writing, natural resource support, circuit rider services, and technical assistance – were rated by over 80% of respondents as essential or important, as well as effective. Cooperation, expertise, and understanding area needs are the commission's top-rated characteristics. Ninety-seven percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that the Tug Hill Commission should continue its mission. Full survey results are available on the commission's website. ■

ABOUT HEADWATERS

Headwaters is the annual newsletter report of the NYS 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

Jan J. Bogdanowicz
Lewis County

VICE CHAIRMAN

Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.
Oswego County

SECRETARY

Thomas E. Boxberger
Jefferson County

MEMBERS

Leona M. Chereshnoski
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Roger W. Maciejko
Lewis County

Geraldine J. Ritter
Oneida County

William W. Scriber
Oswego County

Partnership Brings Complete Streets Expert

The Tug Hill Commission and Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization started a new partnership in 2018, to help residents in Jefferson and Lewis counties become healthier by

Prior to the workshops, the commission surveyed town, village, county and school officials in the counties to determine attitudes, interest, and awareness of Complete Streets concepts



Workshop attendees participate in a "walk audit" with expert Mark Fenton in the village of Lowville.

encouraging physical activity. Through grant funding, the commission brought nationally-renowned speaker Mark Fenton to West Carthage and Lowville for interactive workshops about Complete Streets. By adopting policies and taking actions to create streets where people are encouraged to walk and bike, communities help residents be more physically active and make their communities safer and more attractive.

among local officials. An informational pamphlet was included with each survey that described in more detail what the term Complete Streets means. While three-quarters of survey respondents were not familiar with a complete streets project, most felt that a complete streets policy would benefit their community, and prioritized street and sidewalk repair, as well as building new sidewalks. ■

Super COG Discusses Regional Issues

Thirty people from the Tug Hill region's five councils of governments (COGs), the commission board and commission staff, participated in a Super COG meeting in May 2018 at the Redfield Fire Hall. COG attendees hold a variety of positions, including supervisors, mayors, council members, trustees, and planning board members. Held periodically at the request of the COGs, this interactive meeting serves as a venue for sharing information about regional issues.

This year's meeting included an overview of the commission's Local Leaders Survey results, as well as updates on minimum maintenance roads, forest tax law 480a, and various wind proposals. Each council then had an opportunity to share items pertinent to their area. Those topics included an increased membership in COGs, Special Area maps, broadband expansion, investments in sewer and water infrastructure, and various energy projects.



Senate Board Appointments Made

Commissioners Tom Boxberger (Town of Watertown, Jefferson County), Roger Maciejko (Town of Turin, Lewis County), and Mike Yerdon (Town of Redfield, Oswego County) were all reappointed to five-year terms in 2018 by the President Pro Tem of the NYS Senate.

Tom was originally appointed to the commission board in 2008, and currently serves as secretary. He was the NYS Health Department District Director for almost 30 years, working in Jefferson and Lewis counties. He has a wide variety of experience serving on non-profit and municipal boards, including the town of Watertown planning board, Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District board, and the State Civil Services Employees Federal Credit Union board.

Roger was originally appointed to the commission board in 1996. He was the town of Turin supervisor for over a decade, and had a 30-year career with the Lewis County Sheriff's Department as Deputy Sheriff. He was instrumental in the creation of the State of New York Juvenile Officers Association, founded in 1975 and still in effect today.

Mike was originally appointed to the commission board in 1997, and currently serves as vice-chairman. He was the town of Redfield supervisor for 16 years, and currently works as their code enforcement officer. Mike has been a volunteer firefighter for 37 years, and served on the Sandy Creek school board for many years, including five years as president. ■

COGREPORTS

COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS REPORTS

Tug Hill Councils of Governments Map



There are five councils of governments (COGs) in the Tug Hill region. These independent intermunicipal organizations are supported with staff from the Tug Hill Commission and local government dues. Currently 54 of the 59 towns and villages within the region belong to a COG.

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-  Cooperative Tug Hill Council
-  North Shore Council of Governments
-  Northern Oneida County Council of Governments
-  River Area Council of Governments
-  Salmon Rivers Council of Governments
-  Unaffiliated



Angie Kimball, Jennifer Armstrong-Symonds, Paul Baxter, Mickey Dietrich.

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) added the town of Adams as a member in 2018, bringing the total number of CTHC municipalities to 21. From 2003 until 2017, CTHC included 16 towns operating via inter-municipal agreement. In 2017, the four villages within the 16 towns joined CTHC.

Minimum maintenance roads continue to be a priority, with the legal case in West Turin decided

in favor of the town, mainly based on the timing of the filing of the case. CTHC and Tug Hill commission staff continue to work on state-wide legislation on low volume roads.

CTHC's special area protection program under the Tug Hill Reserve Act made progress in 2018, with the town of Turin's updated map approved by the council. The town of Boylston adopted their map locally at the

end of the year, to be reviewed by CTHC in spring 2019 for addition to the regional map. This will leave only one of the 16 original CTHC towns with a map to update, and the possibility of new actions and mapping to be undertaken by newly joined municipalities.

The Cooperative Tug Hill Zoning Board of Appeals heard two cases this year. The town of Redfield approved their first zoning law, and the village of Lyons Falls is near completion on a new zoning law. CTHC benefitted from Tug Hill Commission intern John King, who built on the 2017 CTHC Resource Management Plan update by drafting "mini-plans" for CTHC towns that lack an individual town comprehensive plan. The mini-plans are based, in part, on previous multi-town collaborative planning work adopted by the council in the past, but not individually adopted by member towns.

Four potential new wind power projects are active in the CTHC area: Number Three, Deer River, Mad River and Roaring Brook.

The first three are at varying stages in the NYS Public Service Commission's (PSC) Article 10 process. Number Three wind has a complete application submitted to the PSC and has begun the administrative hearing process. Deer River is currently in the stipulation phase of Article 10, which is where all parties agree on the studies to be conducted. The Mad River project has a Preliminary Scoping Statement filed. The Roaring Brook project pre-dates Article 10 and is locally permitted. Additionally, the existing Maple Ridge wind project is negotiating a new PILOT with the affected taxing jurisdictions.

The town of Lewis is building a new salt shed using grant funds awarded late in 2017, and in late 2018 the towns of Williamstown and Florence were also awarded grant funds for salt shed construction. The village of Port Leyden also received grant funding for a new secure records storage facility in 2018. ■



Salmon Rivers Council of Governments

After preliminary work to evaluate scope, cost, and feasibility, the Albion Town Board decided to discontinue efforts toward bringing public water to the town.

The town of Amboy planning board continued its review and updating of the town's comprehensive plan.

The town and village of Parish continue to move things forward in bringing public water to Parish. On November 13, 2018, the town and village held a referendum on district formation which passed, nearly two to one. The Parish planning board continues working

on an update of Parish's comprehensive plan.

In 2018, the state Department of Environmental Conservation held a public meeting in Altmar on proposed changes to the Happy Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA). These changes would include efforts to rejuvenate selected portions of land on a rotating basis to provide a varied habitat for wildlife. In addition, the towns containing parts of the Happy Valley WMA (Albion, Amboy, Parish, Williamstown) began efforts to evaluate how the currently tax-exempt land might receive the same treatment as other area WMAs. ■



Growth in River Area Council of Governments

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) grew in 2018, adding the towns of Lowville and Denmark. Website updates were completed for RACOG and Champion, the town of Lowville created a new website and Deferiet is working on a new website as well.

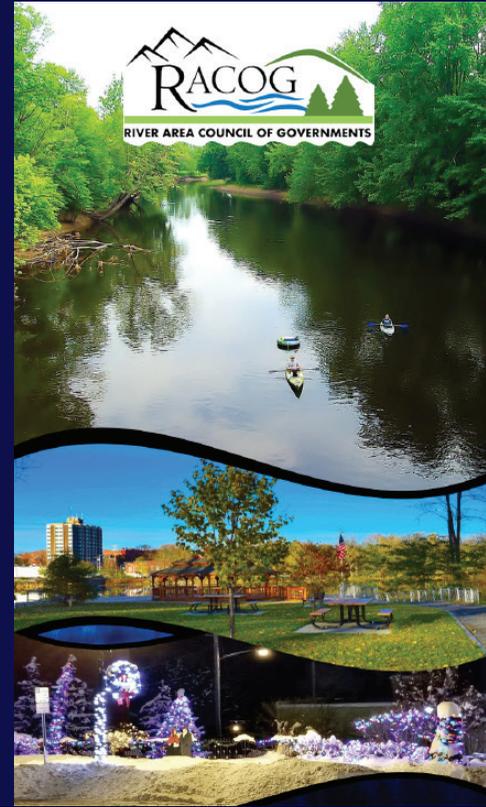
Through a partnership with Monroe Community College and remote GIS intern Kelsey Hurley, RACOG created an inventory of community resources and is displaying them on a new map on the commission's GIS portal <https://tughill.giscloud.com>. A new brochure highlighting RACOG and recent projects was also completed, and is available at municipal offices and on the RACOG website. RACOG meetings throughout

the year have focused on various presentations to inform members about potential projects. RACOG heard in June from developer Ronald Trottier about plans for the railroad bed from Lowville to Carthage and from Lowville to Croghan. Several RACOG meetings focused on street light LED conversion and included presentations from the Adirondack North Country Association, National Grid, RealTerm Energy, and the NY Power Authority. Additionally, the Fort Drum Employment Readiness program shared ways that communities can connect with soldiers that are leaving military service, including an internship program.

RACOG circuit rider Mickey Dietrich and intern Seth Lapp kayaked the Black River to map po-

tential hazards. This field work led to a Black River navigation report and PDF map that can be loaded onto a mobile device to assist people with navigation.

RACOG became the first regional organization in NY, outside of counties, to join NY Alerts. This emergency alert system is being used by Champion to notify residents during water emergencies, and West Carthage to alert residents to hydrant flushing. With free GIS Cloud licensing by RACOG from a GIS Day contest, RACOG plans to expand their online map viewer in 2019 to incorporate demographic, census, and economic data into the map portal. ■



North Shore Council of Governments

Oswego County completed its two year shared services panel process in 2018, and the participant towns, villages, and cities agreed to continue joint meet-

ings in the future to consider other opportunities to save money and improve services in local government. The county shared services plan can be

found at www.oswegocounty.com/2018%20ss%20report.pdf.

The village of Central Square is nearing completion of review and revision of village zoning.

The town of Constantia was the first of the North Shore Council of Governments municipalities to move forward in 2018 to a new website design with more modern CMS (content management system) underpinnings. Its web address is www.townofconstantia-ny.us. The website now is more easily maintainable by a wider group of people.

The NorCOG website itself and the balance of NorCOG-hosted websites are expected to follow suit in 2019. The village of Central Square, which has its own web site arrangements, also has comprehensively updated its web site (www.villageofcentralsquare-ny.us).

Progress is still stalled on the Central New York Raceway Park proposal in the town of Hastings. Super DIRT Week was hosted by Oswego Speedway in the city of Oswego in 2018 for the third year running, and announced plans in 2018 to remain in Oswego for at least the next three years.

The town of West Monroe began review of the town's subdivision local law, and work continues on the sewer project which will ultimately replace the existing Big Bay sewer system through an intermunicipal agreement with the adjacent town of Hastings. The project will also add users from the Toad Harbor area. ■



Northern Oneida County COG Projects Funded

Several NOCCOG communities were awarded funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA), including parks grants in Ava, Floyd and Trenton; salt sheds in Boonville and Remsen, storm water funding for the village of Remsen; and main street projects in the village of Boonville.

In October, the town of Boonville finished salt storage facility, for which they were awarded more than \$380,000 in Mohawk Valley CFA funds. The massive structure, at 72 feet by 160 feet, holds salt for both the town and village of Boonville. The project was prioritized due to the proximity

of the salt pile to the municipal water supply as well as the neighboring canal. The town of Remsen also received more than \$140,000 in grant funds for a salt storage building, also completed.

The town of Floyd was awarded nearly \$100,000 for community parks improvements, as well as funds to plant trees. Ava received over \$250,000 for a new town park. Trenton will also make town park improvements in 2019 with over \$150,000 in state funding.

The village of Camden completed the Riverwalk Trail, connecting downtown with

Forest Park, and main street improvements that allowed numerous business owners in the historic business district to complete renovations inside and outside. Annsville began construction on a water extension with more than \$638,000 in funding through the CFA process.

NOCCOG and Tug Hill Commission staff assisted with the Barneveld dissolution after a voter petition was filed last year, the second NOCCOG village to dissolve. NOCCOG welcomed a new Associate Advisor, John Healt of West Leyden, and added a new executive board member, town of Steu-

ben Supervisor Joe Rowlands.

NOCCOG continues to receive financial support from Oneida County. Training is provided throughout the year by the Local Government Education Committee of Oneida and Herkimer Counties (with current local government advisor Jen Armstrong and past local government advisors Steve Hunter and Gerry Ritter as members). The NOCCOG website is also undergoing a significant update to make it easier to navigate and connect communities with staff and with neighboring local officials. ■

Commission Funding 2018-19

The Tug Hill Commission's funding has remained constant at ~\$1 million for the seventh year in a row. Almost all of the commission's funding comes from its annual state appropriation. Approximately 85% of the budget is spent on salaries, with the balance covering commission operating expenses.

In 2018-19, commission staff helped partner communities and organizations secure approximately \$600K in grants funds, trained more than 1,300 local officials and started working on 38 new projects across the region, maintained progress on an additional 47 projects and answered many technical assistance questions.

Commission staff also worked with state agency partners on

a variety of statewide priorities and initiatives. These included shared services, municipal dissolutions, watershed programs, and conservation projects.

The commission employs 12 people, four of whom are circuit riders for the region's five council of governments. The other eight staff provide program and administrative support out of the commission's office in Watertown. Commission staff provide support in many areas including planning, community development, training, natural resources and GIS.

The commission continues to look for fiscal savings while sustaining vital services to the Tug Hill region, and looks forward to helping our communities in the coming year. ■



Remembering Arnie Talgo

The Tug Hill Commission lost a long-time commissioner and supporter when Arnie Talgo passed away on January 10, 2018 after a long illness. The commission honored Arnie at its November annual dinner, presenting his widow Betty Talgo and children Chris and Brooke (pictured above, with Commissioner Ritter and Executive Director Malinowski) with a Loretta Lepkowski painting of his beloved hunting club.

Arnie served his community and the Tug Hill region for many years. He was appointed to the commission in 1996, served two terms as chairman, and was a member at the time of his death, marking over 20 years of service. He was a member of the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments Executive Committee for 23 years, chairman of the Steuben Planning Board for over 20 years, and board member with the Adirondack North Country Association for 12 years. ■



NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION

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Training Opportunities Abound

Keeping on top of the newest requirements for local government and hot topics facing rural communities can be a challenge. The Tug Hill Commission works hard to make it easier for towns and village officials to gain the knowledge and training they need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

The “flagship” event of the year is the commission’s annual Local Government Conference held at Jefferson Community College at the end of March. With eight concurrent sessions designed for town and village boards, planning boards, zoning boards, clerks, highway/DPW departments, and assessors, there is something for everyone at the LGC. Dozens of exhibitors are present to meet directly with local officials, and networking with colleagues from across the Tug Hill region and beyond allows for an exchange of stories and ideas.

Throughout the year, commission staff makes available two-hour trainings sessions around Tug Hill on a variety of topics. In 2018, experts presented on grant preparedness, lake-effect snow, SEQR basics, cemetery abandonment, town budget basics, and more! Many of the presentations are available at www.tughill.org/services/training/workshops/.

Another way that staff delivers information to communities is through a series of technical and issue papers. Commission technical papers provide guidance on procedures based on frequently received questions. These range from *Abandoned Cemeteries and*

Municipal Responsibilities, to Adopting and Amending Zoning by Local Law. The commission’s issue paper series provides background on key issues facing the region without taking advocacy positions. Recently published issue papers include *Protecting Town Roads from Snowplowing: A Checklist* and *The Montague Doppler Radar, an Overview*. All current technical and issue papers can be found at www.tughill.org/publications/technical-issue-papers/. ■



Mickey Dietrich, NYS Tug Hill Commission