

March 12, 2021

## Updated Planning for Offsite Solar Paper Available; New Office of Renewable Siting Regulations Released

Commission staff recently completed significant updates to the commission's [Planning for Offsite Solar issue paper](#). Working with partners across the region's four counties, the updated paper includes information about the state's Office of Renewable Siting's new 94-c siting process (regulations for which have been released since the paper's revision!), and additional images to demonstrate various topics. The document is quite thorough, with 20 pages in the main section, for a total of 111 pages when all the appendices are included!

Please contact the office if your community has questions about solar.

### ISSUE PAPER SERIES

Planning for Offsite Solar Energy Projects  
February 2021



NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

DULLES STATE OFFICE BUILDING - 317 WASHINGTON STREET - WATERTOWN, NY 13601 - (315) 785-2380 - [WWW.TUGHILL.ORG](http://WWW.TUGHILL.ORG)

### IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida and Oswego Counties  
Development Authority of the North Country  
Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Oswego and St. Lawrence County Planning Departments  
Jefferson and Lewis County Industrial Development Agencies  
Jefferson, Lewis and Oswego County Soil & Water Conservation Districts  
Mohawk Valley EDGE

The Tug Hill Commission Technical and Issue Paper Series are designed to help local officials and citizens in the Tug Hill region and other rural parts of New York State. The Technical Paper Series provides guidance on procedures based on questions frequently received by the Commission. The Issue Paper Series provides background on key issues facing the region without taking advocacy positions. Other papers in each series are available from the Tug Hill Commission. Please call us or visit our website for more information.



### In This Issue

- Planning for Offsite Solar Paper
- THC to Meet
- Farms Conserved
- A Primer for Highways Webinar
- Letters from a Tug Hill Logger – Part 3 Webinar
- New Climate Webinar
- Western Zoning
- Snowmobile Survey
- NBRC Grant
- RACOG to Meet
- Agriculture Review
- Burn Ban
- TAX Exempt for Municipalities
- NYPF Membership
- Banded Eagle Spotted
- Commission Presents at Solar Webinar
- Webinars and Recordings Available

## March 15 Tug Hill Commission Board Meeting

The Tug Hill Commission board will meet Monday, March 15 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85472663375> or via phone at (929) 205-6099 US, meeting ID 854 7266 3375. The public is welcome to attend.

## Two Tug Hill Farms to be Conserved

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust was awarded \$1,625,406 in [NYS Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative](#) grants last week to protect Flat Rock Farms, located in the town of Denmark in Lewis County; and Jasdale Farm, located in the town of Turin in Lewis County. Dairy farmers continue to face challenges from prolonged low milk prices, increasing the threat that viable agricultural land may be converted to non-farm development.

[Through this program](#), proceeds from the purchase of development rights (PDR) on agricultural land will allow farmers an opportunity to diversify their operations or to transition their farms to the next generation at more affordable costs, while ensuring the land forever remains used for agricultural purposes.

Approximately \$5 million in the program is still available. Awards will be made on a rolling basis until those funds are committed. The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets encourages its partners across the state to apply for the remaining funds.



### A Primer for Highways

Thursday March 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time

Highways by prescription (use); width and bounds; encroachments and obstructions by abutting owners; abandonment by non-use and discontinuance; minimum maintenance highways; and seasonally limited use roads. Featuring Lori Mithen-Demasi.

To register: [us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_r6CImSfxQVOv1WmbLw1zwg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_r6CImSfxQVOv1WmbLw1zwg)

### Letters from a Tug Hill Logger - Part 3

Wednesday March 24, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time

This three-part series will be narrated by Leona and Peter Cheresnoski, the granddaughter and great-grandson of John Clemons and keepers of his treasured scrapbooks of memories. They will read letters, share stories, show off artifacts and photos and “spin yarns” of Tug Hill logging in its hey-day, all through the eyes of two remarkable personalities, one who wrote the stories and the other that broadcast them over the radio for the masses to hear.

To register: [us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_SglXM7TJSSCQccG2uv6eSw](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SglXM7TJSSCQccG2uv6eSw)

### A New Climate on Both Large and Small Scales

The commission is hosting a free webinar called “*A New Climate on Both Large and Small Scales*” on Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. eastern time. Meteorologist David Eichorn will provide an updated meteorological perspective on Tug Hill’s changing climate and changing local weather. Mr. Eichorn’s talk was well-received at the commission’s 2018 Black River Watershed Conference. The commission is excited to now make his updated presentation available to a broader audience and serve as an alternative to the typical keynote address given at the annual Tug Hill Local Government Conference which was not held again in 2021 due to the pandemic. Mr. Eichorn will discuss data related to climate change through a meteorological perspective and review how a warmer Arctic can impact our Northeastern weather. He will also look at one of the region’s big climate drivers, the El Nino/La Nina cycle in the Pacific and investigate its role in the changing climate. And lastly, Mr. Eichorn will explain the “Polar Vortex” - is this a new catch phrase or is there something more to it? His message to local governments is generally to plan for more unpredictability in weather patterns.

Register for this free event at [us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_4ytumAawRHmncowBvOQejw](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4ytumAawRHmncowBvOQejw).

David Eichorn is a meteorologist with over 30 years of experience who retired from Syracuse-area television in 2016. As a meteorologist, Dave has won awards for severe weather coverage of the superstorm of March 1993, Hurricane Gloria, and for educating the public in the science of meteorology. While Dave is most widely known for his tv weather broadcasts, he has also expanded his work into lecturing and education, teaching at several colleges across Central New York. Dave is a visiting professor at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry where he teaches introductory meteorology and environmental meteorology. He is a full member of the American Meteorological Society and has a specialized background in meso-scale (small scale) atmospheric modeling and lake effect snow forecasting. Dave has a B.S. degree in Environmental Science from the SUNY Empire State College and a master’s degree in Environmental Science from SUNY ESF.



### Western Begins Work on Zoning Update

The town of Western Planning and Zoning Boards have begun work on a comprehensive overhaul of their zoning law, which dates from the 1980s. The boards are looking at combining certain zones and redrawing some zone boundaries. The law will also be brought up to date in terms of syncing with state planning statutes and including new uses, such as large scale solar facilities. The town recently adopted a comprehensive plan which will guide this effort.

# Snowmobiling Survey Still Open; Will Close by April 1

The data collection portion of the Tug Hill/Lewis County Snowmobiling Economic Impact Study has been quite successful to date, with almost 2,000 responses received. Students from the Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College have been busy the past several weekends intercepting snowmobilers on the trail at locations across the Tug Hill region. Additionally, the survey is available to complete online at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCTHRSNOW2021](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCTHRSNOW2021).

The effort has been highlighted recently in the [Central NY Business Journal](#) and the NYS Association of Counties daily newsletter. Partners on the project are Lewis County Economic Development, Jefferson County Economic Development, the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, Oneida County Tourism, Oswego County Community Development, Tourism and Planning, Operation Oswego County, the Tug Hill Commission and several area snowmobile clubs

Once data collection is complete, results will be analyzed by Camoin 360 to determine the economic impact of snowmobiling in the region. The final report is expected summer 2021.

## Northern Border Regional Commission Grant Round Announced

The Northern Border Regional Commission's (NBRC) [State Economic & Infrastructure Development](#) grant application materials are now available. Letters of intent are due by March 26, with an application deadline of May 14 (**a week earlier than earlier reported**). There will be approximately \$4.5 million available for each state (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York). All four Tug Hill counties are within the program area and all continued to be considered distressed, which makes them eligible for 80% grant 20% match.

Grant categories are:

1. Transportation infrastructure
2. Basic public infrastructure (waste, water, and energy)
3. Telecommunications infrastructure
4. Renewable and Alternative Energy
5. Business and Workforce Development
6. Basic health care
7. Resource Conservation, Tourism, Recreation

Maximum awards of up to \$1,000,000 will be made to eligible infrastructure projects, with a \$350,000 limit for non-infrastructure projects. Public bodies, 501© organizations, Native American tribes, and state governments can apply. State economic development plans and the NBRC's [five-year strategic plan](#) will guide decision making.

Potential applicants can express interest through letters of interest, which are not required, but are strongly encouraged. Letters must be submitted to [loi@nbrc.gov](mailto:loi@nbrc.gov) by March 26th at 5PM. Initial inquiries concerning eligibility, suitability, and integration with economic development priorities, should be directed to each NBRC State's Program Manager, who in NYS is Kyle Wilber at the NYS Department of State, (518) 473-3694, [kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov](mailto:kyle.wilber@dos.ny.gov). Questions about the application itself should be directed to the NBRC's Program Director, Andrea Smith, at [asmith@nbrc.gov](mailto:asmith@nbrc.gov), or (603) 369-3001.

## RACOG Board Meeting March 16

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) will be having their board meeting on March 16 at 6 p.m. by Zoom. Kurt Tennant, Chief US Customs & Border Protection Officer, will be presenting to board members. Kurt will be speaking about what communities need to know about foreign businesses setting up shop in their areas. He will also talk about some of his previous experiences when he was with the Ogdensburg Bridge Authority.

[www.racog.org](http://www.racog.org)



# Jefferson County Agricultural District Eight Review

The NYS Agriculture and Markets Agricultural District's program requires county legislatures to review their agricultural districts every eight years. Jefferson County is currently reviewing their Southeast Agricultural District #1 in the towns of Champion, Rodman, Rutland, Wilna, and Worth and portions of the towns of Adams, Hounsfield, Watertown and Lorraine, consisting of over 49,000 acres. The review process starts with a 30 day review period between March 1 and 31, 2021. During this period landowners may request to add or remove land by completing a survey and submitting it to the Jefferson County Department of Planning.

Town maps showing agricultural district parcels may be viewed on the Jefferson County website [here](#). Farmers currently in the district will receive a survey to fill out and farmers who are not currently in the district should contact the Jefferson County [Department of Planning](#) to obtain a survey and request being added to the district. Information on the benefits of agricultural districts is available on the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets [website](#).

Additionally, agricultural districts maps are available on the [Lewis](#), [Oneida](#) and [Oswego](#) County websites. Each county and specific agricultural district have differing review timeframes.

## New York State Annual Burn Ban Starts

The annual state ban on outdoor burning begins on March 16 and extends through May 14. While things are still presently snow covered over most of the north country, once spring arrives conditions quickly arise which are conducive to wildfires. With many people furloughed, laid off or working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is tempting to get a jump on your yard work by burning yard debris, but please obey the law and refrain from burning until the expiration of the burn ban.

The burning of outdoor brush and debris is historically the single largest cause of spring wildfires in the state according to the DEC. In 2020 DEC's forest rangers extinguished 192 wildfires that burned more than 1,100 acres. Additionally, local fire departments, most of them staffed by volunteers, are frequently called to leave their families and jobs and place themselves in harm's way to respond to wildfires caused by illegal burning of debris.

The DEC posts a daily fire danger rating map on their website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html) once there is a moderate fire danger anywhere in the state. Violators of the state's open burning regulations are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for the first offense.

For more information about NY State's burn ban and information about the open burning regulations in general check out the Commission's white paper at [www.tughill.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Open-Burning-Regulations-2018-Update.pdf](http://www.tughill.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Open-Burning-Regulations-2018-Update.pdf) or check out the DEC's "Learn Before You Burn" webpage at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/32064.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/32064.html).

## Tax Exempt Information for Municipalities

Municipalities have the ability to make municipal purchases without paying the sales taxes ordinarily due. Municipalities need not apply for tax exempt status as they are tax exempt automatically. But municipalities do not have tax exempt numbers, and they are specifically prohibited from using tax exempt purchase certificates to make tax exempt purchases.

Instead, proper municipal practice as directed by the state comptroller's office, is to make purchases via governmental purchase order, or to provide a governmental entity letter, which is available from the state Sales Tax Exempt Organizations Unit by calling 518.485.2889. After the municipality provides information to the Sales Tax Exempt Organizations Unit, that unit will process the request and provide a governmental entity letter to the municipality, which can be used for future purchases.

### References:

[https://www.tax.ny.gov/pubs\\_and\\_bulls/tg\\_bulletins/st/purchases\\_and\\_sales\\_by\\_governmental\\_entities.htm](https://www.tax.ny.gov/pubs_and_bulls/tg_bulletins/st/purchases_and_sales_by_governmental_entities.htm)

[https://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/tg\\_bulletins/sales/b18\\_700s.pdf](https://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/tg_bulletins/sales/b18_700s.pdf)



## NYPF Training and Publications for Members

The [New York Planning Federation](#) (NYPF)'s mission is to serve as a resource and advocate to promote sound planning and zoning practices in NYS. Founded in 1937, the NYPF offers an annual conference as well as other training for municipalities, publications, newsletters, and a variety of resources to assist planning and zoning boards across NYS.

Membership fees for municipalities are based on population and range from \$270 to \$495. NYPF can help municipalities meet state training requirements for planning and zoning board members through NYPF's online webinars, recorded programs, and live training. Members also receive the newsletter, "Planning News", as well as an E-Newsletter, technical reports on current issues, and are eligible for discounted rates on the most popular books including *All You Ever Wanted to Know about Zoning* (recently updated), *The Comprehensive Plan in NYS* (updates coming 2021) and *The Short Course: A Basic Guide for Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals in New York State*.

## Eagle Banded 26 Years Ago Spotted In Lewis County (from DEC)

It is an outstanding opportunity to see three American bald eagles devouring their lunch, but even more fantastic of an opportunity to be able to learn there's more to the story.

Bill Straite of Oneida County sent us this photo a while ago. No doubt, it's a great one! DEC wildlife biologists noticed right away the center eagle was banded, and contacted the federal bird banding laboratory to learn more about it.



Photo courtesy of Bill Straite.

The eagle was banded in June 1995 – 26 years ago – in Parishville, NY, St. Lawrence County.

## Commission Presents on Cornell Solar Webinar

Commission planning director Matt Johnson presented as part of the Cornell Climate Smart Farming's winter webinar series last month. Matt's presentation focused on local government regulation of solar projects. David Kay, Senior Extension Associate at Cornell, also presented with a focus on the implications of large solar installations and leasing on farmland.

The webinar recording, both powerpoint presentations, and a file showing the chat taking place during the meeting are all available at [climatesmartfarming.org/resources/solaronaglandwebinar/](https://climatesmartfarming.org/resources/solaronaglandwebinar/).

## Webinar Recording and Materials Available

The commission and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust concluded their three part webinar series about conservation on Tug Hill with a presentation titled "Forest Conservation" by Neal Bungard, USDA Forest Service and Jason Drobnack, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on Wednesday March 10. You can find the [YouTube Video](#) and handouts from the [USDA Forest Service](#) and the [NYSDEC](#) by clicking these links. You can also find these materials plus recordings and materials from all our previously recorded webinars on our website at <https://tughill.org/services/training/>.

## Contact Us

**NYS Tug Hill Commission**  
317 Washington Street  
Watertown, NY 13601

Phone: 315-785-2380  
Toll Free within the region:  
1-888-785-2380  
Email: [tughill@tughill.org](mailto:tughill@tughill.org)

Visit us at:

Web: [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TugHillCommission](https://www.facebook.com/TugHillCommission)

To request our newsletter electronically please email [gwen@tughill.org](mailto:gwen@tughill.org) or call

1-888-785-2380.

For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our [calendar](#).