

November 5, 2021

## Mark Your Calendars: Tuesday, April 19, 2022, Tug Hill Local Government Conference

The Tug Hill Commission board and staff are excited to announce that the Local Government Conference will be back in 2022! We will be holding the conference at a new venue this year, the Turning Stone Event Center in Verona, Oneida County. We know this will be a shorter drive for some, and longer for others, but we hope you all consider joining us as we try something new. Benefits to the new location are a covered garage directly connected to the facility with free parking (including valet), all meeting rooms centrally located in one building, microphoned speakers in every room, and a date that gets us a little more past winter weather.

Registration and program details to come very soon!

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## NOCCOG Annual Dinner Meeting Well Attended

On Thursday, October 28, the Gone Coastal restaurant in Lee Center hosted the 37th Annual Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) dinner meeting. This is the first time since 2019 that the NOCCOG membership was able to meet in person. The council elected not to meet in 2020, due to the continuing health crisis. During the meeting, the minutes outlining the business actions of 2020, the 2022 budget, and the 2022 slate of officers were all approved. John Doiron is stepping down as Chair, but remaining on the Executive Board. Bob Sauer is to replace John as Chair, a position he has held in the past.

Longtime Director Mark Trnchik, who chose not to return to the Executive Board, was recognized for his eleven years of service, leadership, and dedication to NOCCOG.

The 65 attendees included Oneida County Legislators Steve Boucher and Steve DiMaggio, NYS Tug Hill Commission chairman Jan Bogdanowicz, commissioner Gerry Ritter and commission executive director, Katie Malinowski. Katie, along with Oneida County Tourism president, Kelly Blazosky, did a presentation on the recent four county snowmobile economic impact study. They discussed how the data was collected, the breakdown of the numbers with regard to demographics, money spent, taxes collected and jobs produced.

Deputies with the Oneida County Sheriff's Office Unmanned Aircraft Systems (drones) presented on the capabilities and numerous uses of the drone unit. Drone footage from actual use in the field was shown, as well as training footage from the pilots. The Sheriff's Office also offered their services to the municipalities, to help with potential projects, additional security for events, insurance claims or aerial photos. Both presentations were informative, interesting and entertaining! The NOCCOG Executive Board and staff are grateful to all that attended, and are appreciative of the continued support.



# Commission Broadband Page Launched

The commission is happy to announce the creation of a specific [broadband](#) page on the commission's website that will house important broadband resources for municipal officials, businesses, the public, and any others who are interested about the state of broadband on Tug Hill and beyond. Since 2020, the commission has worked with several regional organizations, counties, a consultant, and other partners to understand the broadband needs in the region and put all those resources on one site.

Please explore the page to find useful videos to understand broadband in New York State and our efforts at the commission. You will also find links to partnering counties' broadband study reports conducted by ECC Technologies and released to the public. The site will also provide a list of useful state and federal funding resources for broadband expansion in unserved and underserved areas. Lastly, the page contains a broadband map that shows funding-awarded census blocks, target areas for broadband expansion, census data, and other relevant layers for understanding the broadband landscape in our region. Though we are currently in the process of signing data sharing agreements with all partners, we anticipate the broadband map to cover 16 counties.

If there is any additional information you would like to see included please contact Alaina Mallette, planner at the commission, at [alaina@tughill.org](mailto:alaina@tughill.org).

## ReConnect Round Three Broadband Funding Opens November 24

USDA Rural Development announced that \$1.15 billion will be available to help people living in rural communities access high-speed internet. Up to \$200 million will be ReConnect Program loans, up to \$250 million will be loan/grant combinations, up to \$350 million will be grants with a 25% matching requirement, and up to \$350 million will be in grants with no matching requirement in tribal and socially vulnerable communities. The grant round will open on November 24, 2021. Eligibility requirements and considerations include:

- Serving an area without broadband speeds of 100 Mbps download speeds and 20 Mbps upload speeds;
- Commit to build facilities capable of providing broadband service at 100 Mbps download *and* upload speeds to every location in the proposed service area;
- Projects that serve low-density rural areas with locations lacking internet service of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds will be prioritized;
- Economic needs of the community to be served will be considered;
- The extent that a provider will offer affordable service options will be considered;
- Projects with a commitment to strong labor standards will be considered; and
- The expansion of service into tribal lands or an applicant who is a local government, Tribal Government, non-profit, or cooperative will be considered.

More detailed information is available at [ReConnect Loan and Grant Program | USDA](#). You can also attend one or both of the [ReConnect Program's two upcoming webinar topics](#), see details below to register. Slides, transcript, and recordings will be available after the webinars on the [ReConnect website](#).

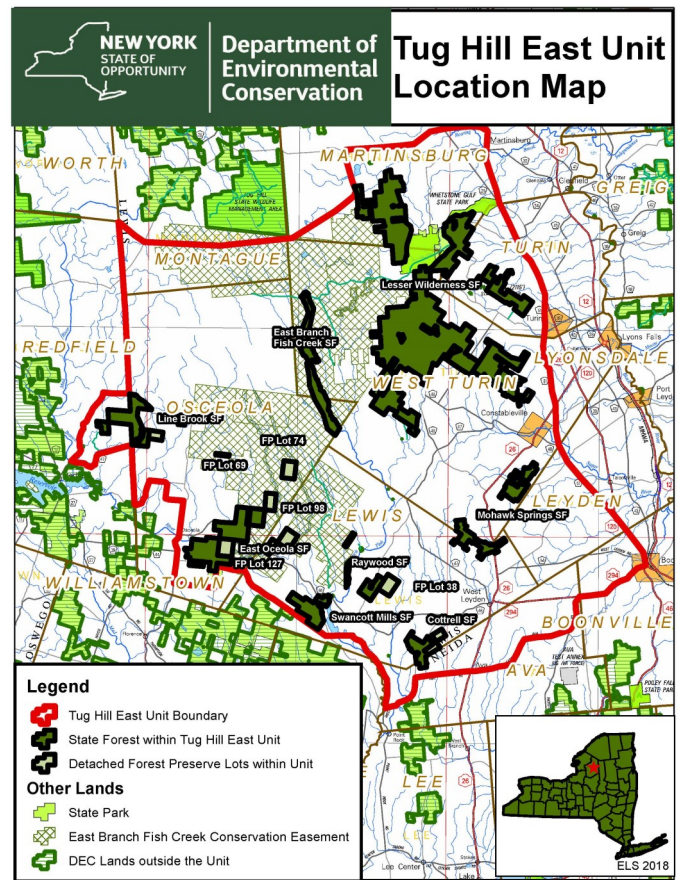
- **ReConnect Program Regulation Webinars.** Presented by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service, they will provide information about the ReConnect rule, including information about the eligibility requirements, application process, and criteria that will be used by USDA to assess applicants' creditworthiness.
  - Tuesday, November 9 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., [REGISTER HERE](#).
  - Tuesday, November 16 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. [REGISTER HERE](#).
- **ReConnect Program FY2022 Funding Opportunity Announcement Webinars.** To support the application process, staff from USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service will conduct a webinar on the funding announcement.
  - Wednesday, November 10 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. EST, [REGISTER HERE](#).
  - Thursday, November 18 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., [REGISTER HERE](#).

# DEC Accepting Public Comments on the Tug Hill East Draft Unit Management Plan

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is accepting public comments on the draft Tug Hill East Unit Management Plan (UMP) from now through December 15, 2021. The draft UMP covers 22,886 acres of land in seven State Forests, one Unique Area, and 13 detached Forest Preserve parcels in the Lewis County towns of Lewis, Martinsburg, Osceola, Turin, and West Turin, the Oneida County town of Ava, and the Oswego County town of Redfield.

According to the DEC, the draft UMP proposes increased opportunities for outdoor recreation, including seven new designated drive-up campsites, two walk-in primitive campsites, and a network of trails for the Motorized Access Program for Persons with Disabilities (MAPPWD). The plan also examines sustainable forest management to continue protection of wildlife habitat and wetlands in the face of climate change.

There is a presentation with more information about the draft plan for public review on the [DEC website](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4979.html#Public) ([www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4979.html#Public](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4979.html#Public)). An online survey to accept comments is available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/TugHillEast](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TugHillEast). Comments can also be submitted by mail to Andrea Mercurio, Forester, DEC Lowville Sub-Office, 7327 State Route 812, Lowville, NY 13367, or by email to [r6.ump@dec.ny.gov](mailto:r6.ump@dec.ny.gov).



## East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group Meets

Around 25 people met at Snow Ridge Ski Resort's Tavern 230 in Turin on October 21, 2021 for the annual meeting of the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group. There was no meeting in 2020 due to COVID. The group was formed in the mid-1990s in response to the sale of the Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper lands in southern Lewis County. Updates were heard from Molpus Woodlands Group (property manager for the Corrigan Fund), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

DEC provided the group information about completed and planned improvements to roads and bridges. DEC has also been working on a revision to the East Branch of Fish Creek Recreation Management Plan. The new draft plan will be out for public comment in the next several months.

The Nature Conservancy provided updates on an oak, pine and sugar maple planting project on their portion of the property, and plans for a future red spruce planting. Molpus discussed the impacts COVID had on their operations and their 480-a enrollment. Both landowners noted increased beaver activity and subsequent impacts on culverts, roads and bridges. Both are working with clubs to execute beaver nuisance permits.

Progress has been made on the non-motorized Tug Hill Traverse Trail with significant work done by Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Adirondack Mountain Club. The complete Fish Creek Update newsletter and an updated map of the finished and proposed sections of the Tug Hill Traverse Trail are available on the commission's website at [tughill.org/services/natural-resource-management/east-branch-of-fish-creek/](http://tughill.org/services/natural-resource-management/east-branch-of-fish-creek/).





New tools for longstanding challenges  
in code enforcement:

## Strategies for municipalities to tackle vacant, abandoned and unsafe properties

Eligible for NYS training/annual certification requirements

Topics covered include:

- Vacant Property Law
- Strategic Code Enforcement 101
- Article 19A
- Rental Inspection Program
- Data-driven Code Enforcement

Presenters:

- Municipal Attorney Hyde Clarke, Cherry Valley, Milford, etc.
- Tarik Abdelazim, Center for Community Progress
- John McCracken, City of Elmira Supervisor of Buildings and Code Enforcement

Thursday, November 18th 2021

5:00pm - 8:00pm

Location: TBA

Catered event. No cost to attend.

Register today: [www.gmvlb.org](http://www.gmvlb.org)

**for additional information and event updates  
or call 315-823-0814**

Hosted by: Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank (GMVLB) in coordination  
with Local Government Education Committee (LGEC)

# Cornell Local Roads Program Upcoming Webinars

All of the following webinars are free and held from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

- Basics of a Good Road (overview of roads and streets), November 9th, 2021, [Register Here](#)
- Snow & Ice Control Strategy, November 16th, 2021, [Register Here](#)
- Budget Basics, November 30th, 2021, [Register Here](#)
- Traffic Safety, December 7th, 2021, [Register Here](#)
- Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), December 14th, 2021, [Register Here](#)
- Roads & Streets Legal Issues, January 4th, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Department Duties, January 11th, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Worker Safety, January 25th, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Culverts, February 1st, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Finding, Retaining, and Motivating Employees, February 8th, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Work Zone, February 15th, 2022, [Register Here](#)
- Purchasing & Financing, February 22nd, 2022, [Register Here](#)

## PILOTs for Renewables Webinar Materials Online

Dylan Harris, attorney at Lewis & Greer, presented the “**PILOT Agreements, Valuation Issues, and Renewable Energy Issues**” webinar on November 3, sponsored by the Tug Hill Commission and Jefferson County Economic Development. A hot topic on Tug Hill and surrounding areas as solar project siting continues to increase, the video of the webinar and slides can be accessed at [tughill.org/services/training/](http://tughill.org/services/training/).

Dylan highlighted some changes to RPTL 487 in the final 2021-22 Governor's budget, including an extension of the exemption through 2030. Additionally, the prior requirement that any PILOT entered into cannot exceed what the project would have paid in property taxes, is now replaced with the PILOT entered into cannot exceed what the new NYSEDA calculator generates. The new calculator for PILOTs can be found [www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Clean-Energy-Siting/Solar-Guidebook](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Clean-Energy-Siting/Solar-Guidebook), under the **Solar Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT)** heading.

An important takeaway for local municipalities and schools that have passed a local law or resolution opting out of RPTL 487 is to make sure the local law or resolution has been filed with all the appropriate agencies as required. Those local laws need to be filed with the NYS Department of State, NYSEDA, and the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. Contact information is included in Dylan's slides, and the link to the Department of Taxation and Finance's list of opt-out laws can be found at [www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/legal/localop/487opt.htm](http://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/legal/localop/487opt.htm).

## Lowville Comprehensive Plan Wrapping Up

The town and village of Lowville comprehensive plan committee held their last meeting on Wednesday, November 3, 2021. They will begin the comprehensive plan adoption procedure in December. We recommend that any Lowville residents, business owners, and other interested parties review the final draft of the comprehensive plan and provide comments to the town and village of Lowville. You can find the draft plan at [Comprehensive Plan 2021 – Town of Lowville \(racog.org\)](http://Comprehensive Plan 2021 – Town of Lowville (racog.org)).

## New Invasive Species Documentary Released by DEC

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) just released a DEC-sponsored documentary, **Uninvited: The Spread of Invasive Species**, via YouTube. DEC's Division of Lands and Forests contracted with the Westfield Production Company to produce this documentary about the significant threat invasive species pose to New York's biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as public health and the State's economy. The full video will be watched on [NYSEDEC's YouTube Channel](#).

## Contact Us

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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](#).