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First Tug Hill Community Awards Presented

The village of Deferiet and the Martinsburg Historical Society received the first two Tug Hill Community Recognition Awards at the Tug Hill Commission's annual dinner in October at the Tailwater Lodge in Altmar. With approximately 80 people in attendance, commission chairman Jan Bogdanowicz and executive director Katie Malinowski presented plaques to the village of Deferiet for their playground rebuild, and to the Martinsburg Historical Society for the restoration of abandoned cemeteries.

In April 2021, the commission canvassed for completed projects by both municipal and community groups that fit various criteria, with overarching goals of building local capacity, using partnerships, securing community support and being transferrable to other communities—all that mirror the Tug

Hill Commission's approach to its work.

The village of Deferiet is a small, tight-knit community in Jefferson County, a former "company town" that took a hit in 2004 when the St. Regis Paper Mill closed. Spearheaded by trustee Nancy Dutton, the village undertook a multi-year effort to raise funds to rebuild their unsafe, outdated playground at a cost of approximately \$100,000. Multiple funding sources were secured, from can drives and hot dog sales to larger grants from New York State, the Northern New York Community Foundation, and KABOOM!, a private foundation. The village also secured materials from businesses like Home Depot and volunteer labor from Fort Drum. The build itself was a community event, and since the successful completion of the playground



From left: Nancy Dutton, Deferiet trustee; Jan Bogdanowicz, commission chairman; Katie Malinowski, commission executive director; Janet Zando, Deferiet mayor.

in 2018, the village has shared its approach and tips to many other communities.

The Martinsburg Historical Society has completed four restorations of inactive and abandoned cemeteries in the

town, with a fifth underway. Each restoration is done in collaboration with the town of Martinsburg and community volunteers. Society members research the history of the

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Meet the NYS Tug Hill Commission's 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), training and related fields.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Katie Malinowski
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24 years of service

SECRETARY

Gwen Decker
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10 years of service

ADMINISTRATIVE

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PLANNING DIRECTOR

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17 years of service

CIRCUIT RIDER

Angie Kimball
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10 years of service

CIRCUIT RIDER

John Healt
jhealt@tughill.org
1 year of service

CIRCUIT RIDER

Mickey Dietrich
mickey@tughill.org
20 years of service

CIRCUIT RIDER

Paul Baxter
paul@tughill.org
43 years of service



From left first row: Jennifer Harvill, Katie Malinowski, Alaina Mallette, Gwen Decker. Second row: Felicia Passino, Matt Johnson, Mickey Dietrich, Angie Kimball. Third row: Paul Baxter, John Healt, Carla Fowler.

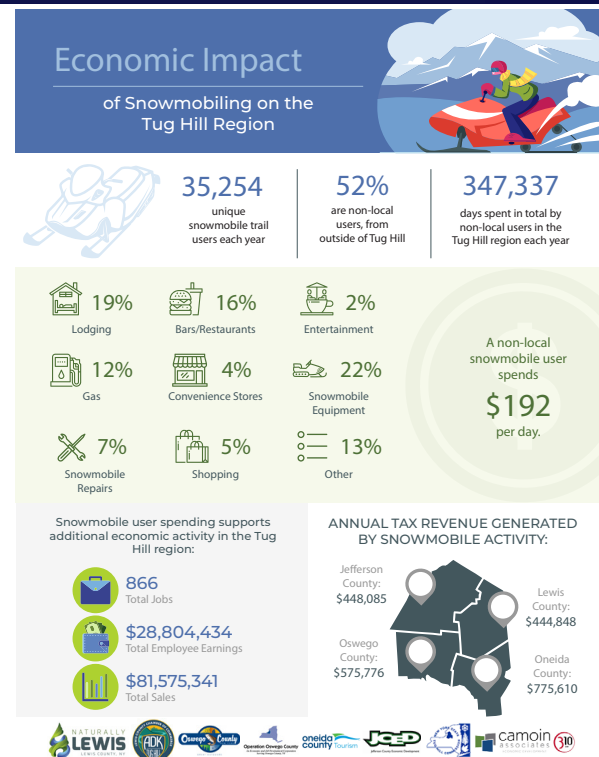
"Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region"

Economic Impact of Snowmobiling Significant

A four-county partnership led by Lewis County Economic Development and including the Tug Hill Commission, Jefferson County Economic Development, Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, Oswego County Tourism, Oneida County Tourism, and Operation Oswego County, Inc. completed an economic impact and fiscal benefit analysis of the snowmobile industry on the Tug Hill region in 2021.

Working with Camoin 310 and the Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College (JCC), the study was designed to quantify economic impacts that would not occur but for snowmobiling. A survey developed by JCC was conducted to gather data from snowmobilers about user spending, including number of visits, spending habits, location of origin, and feedback on the trail network. The survey was distributed online, emailed directly to snowmobile clubs, and conducted on the trail as an intercept survey. Camoin 310 then analyzed the data and ran computer models to generate the final numbers.

The result is a study that estimates 35,254 unique snowmobile users, 866 jobs, \$28.8 million in earnings, and nearly \$81.6 million in sales annually across the four Tug Hill counties. ■



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.

Cover photo credit: Keith Brewer, Turin

CHAIRMAN

Jan J. Bogdanowicz
Lewis County
13 years of service

VICE CHAIRMAN

Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.
Oswego County
25 years of service

SECRETARY

Thomas E. Boxberger
Jefferson County
14 years of service

MEMBERS

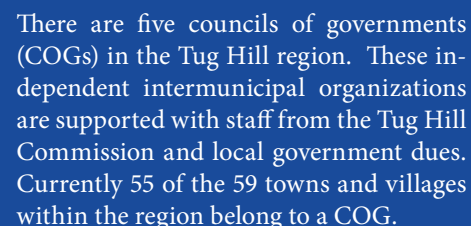
Leona M. Cheresnoski
Jefferson County
39 years of service

Roger W. Maciejko
Lewis County
26 years of service

Geraldine J. Ritter
Oneida County
5 years of service

William W. Scriber
Oswego County
5 years of service

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The commission has contracted with Laird Petrie in his retirement from the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC), to provide budgeting and accounting technical assistance to towns and villages belonging to one of the region's five Councils of Governments. Starting the program in October, the commission has fielded 10 requests for Laird's expertise to date ranging from help setting up a capital reserve fund to guidance on basic municipal recordkeeping.

services and government reorganization; and developing internal controls, policies and making recommendations to safeguard municipal assets.

In October of 2021, Laird presented budgeting workshops in the town of Albion and the village of Port Leyden. This free training was designed to assist local officials in preparing their 2022 budgets.

Mr. Petrie's contract to provide technical assistance will continue in 2022. Municipalities are encouraged to contact the commission to request his services. ■

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council

The continuing pandemic in 2021 had Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) towns and villages, like the rest of the world, dealing with the “new normal” to provide services and conduct business. Nearly all aspects of municipal business were impacted in some way, from remote tax collection and court services, to conducting safe public meetings and hearings. The nationwide shortage of CDL truck drivers left many highway departments short-staffed, which made keeping roads clear and regular maintenance work difficult.

CTHC municipalities met these challenges and accomplished some long-term goals this year. The new Lorraine-Worth consolidated court elected their first justice in November. The towns approved an Inter-Municipal Agreement outlining terms for the shared court, which operates out of Lorraine’s court facility. The towns of Pinckney and West Turin adopted updated official road maps and mini-comprehensive plans, excerpted from the cooperative planning work done over the last four decades.

The village of Adams expressed interest in joining the CTHC in February and circuit riders began meeting coverage from that point. Since the spring CTHC meeting was cancelled due to conditions caused by the pandemic, the village officially joined the council at their next scheduled meeting in September. The proposal was unanimously approved, bringing the total of CTHC municipalities to 22.

The Number Three wind project began construction in 2021 and is expected to be online in 2022. The Roaring Brook wind project completed construction and became operational in late 2021. The Deer River wind project continues through the Article 10 process.

Several municipalities approved or are working on solar energy local laws or updates to zoning laws regarding solar and wind energy issues. The town of Worth has been working diligently on a major update of their zoning regulations as well.

Osceola approved the first of two local laws to allow classification of low volume roads and the designation of minimum maintenance roads under Municipal Home Rule Law. The challenge to approve statewide legislation that allows for minimum maintenance classification of roads by amending NYS Highway law continues. New strategies are being discussed and meetings with state legislators are expected in 2022, as this issue remains a priority for CTHC municipalities.

In December, Associate Circuit Rider Karleigh Stuckey decided not to renew her contract with CTHC, so the search is on for her replacement. Until the position is filled, Associate Circuit Rider Beth Steria and Coordinator Angie Kimball will provide meeting coverage for the municipalities formerly serviced by Karleigh. Best of luck to Karleigh in her new endeavors. ■



Salmon Rivers Council of Governments

Salmon Rivers towns and villages continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Remote access methods such as Zoom and telephone access to municipal meetings became a more routine element employed to protect both public health and public accessibility to meetings, serving the public’s right to know.

The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments began sharing an associate circuit rider with the North Shore Council of Governments, implementing the approach successfully employed in other Tug Hill Councils of Governments.

Amboy adopted its draft comprehensive plan update in 2021, and the plan is posted to the town’s website www.townofamboy-ny.us.

The effort to bring water to the town and village of Parish came to an end for the foreseeable future when a referendum did not receive district residents’ approval at the new, higher estimated cost level. The town of Orwell (pictured on right) began evaluating alternatives for continued problems with elevated nitrate levels and insufficient water supply. ■



River Area Council of Governments

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) grew again in 2021, adding the village of Lowville. RACOG is now made up of the towns of Champion, Denmark, Lowville, Wilna, and the villages of Carthage, Castorland, Copenhagen, Deferiet, Lowville, and West Carthage.

A new community group was formed called the “Friends of the Black River.” This group has mapped out cultural resources and navigational hazards along a segment of the river. As part of an evolving Black River Floating Museum concept, the group will update the www.blackriverny.com website with historically significant sites.

Member communities worked with the Adirondack North Country Association to get Clean Energy Community

(CEC) certifications. The New York Power Authority wrapped up the construction phase of the LED street lighting project, which also helps communities get their CEC certification. The town of Champion and village of West Carthage advanced Community Choice Aggregation and the community solar opt-in program with Good Energy. Lewis County selected Joules Assets to administer the Community Choice Aggregation program for their communities, and other communities outside the county having interest in working together.

Several members continued to work with Jefferson-Lewis BOCES on complete street projects like bike racks, benches, picnic tables, kiosks, and boardwalks. Communities have also taken advantage of funding made available through Lewis

County for walkability projects.

A Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) grant submitted on behalf of the village of Deferiet was awarded. The BOA grant begins a process to clean up the old paper

mill site. The town and village of Lowville wrapped up their comprehensive planning process, with new ideas incorporated in its rollout such as an online comprehensive plan created on the town of Lowville website. ■



North Shore Council of Governments

North Shore communities continued to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic with remote access, participation, and public access to meetings. Municipal buildings were closed periodically, and local officials were available by appointment

rather than offering open office hours. Highway departments and DPWs strove to meet public needs while contending with employee illnesses.

In 2021, the North Shore Council of Governments implement-

ed the approach successfully employed by other councils of governments in the Tug Hill region, with utilization of an associate circuit rider to assist the COG circuit rider with meeting coverage. North Shore's inaugural assistant circuit rider is Vern Sundet.

The town of Constantia's effort to bring sewers to the town moved forward in 2021 with the announcement of a \$4.6 million grant from the New York State Water Quality Improvement Program, which brought the estimated annual cost per user to \$850. This completes the funding package for this project, which also includes \$5 million from a New York State WIIA grant, a \$3 million USDA Rural Development grant, and loans from the state Environmental Facilities Corporation (\$20 million interest free), and USDA (\$6.4

million Rural Development poverty rate loan at 1.125% interest). The total project cost is estimated at \$39 million, and completion is projected to take place over the next three to four years.

The town of West Monroe (pictured at left) acquired land for a sand pit to serve town needs.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) began work on adapting the former Cleveland Elementary School, bought by DEC in 2019, for DEC's use as a training academy and the village of Cleveland held discussions with them on additional uses which might be available to the community. ■



Northern Oneida County Council of Governments

The start of 2021 brought in many of 2020's challenges, but the 17 NOCCOG communities pressed on. Whether virtually or in person, the work of local government continued without pause. Snow was removed and roads were repaired, essential services were provided, and challenges were overcome.

Unprecedented interest in large-scale solar project development caused many towns, including Camden, Boonville and Trenton, to amend land use plans and zoning laws. The town of Western began the process of a town-wide reassessment. Energy saving projects, such as LED street lighting, are completed or underway, and communities considered expanding walkways and elec-

tric vehicle charging stations. The towns of Ava and Trenton started planning for sand and salt storage buildings.

Some concerns NOCCOG communities faced reached across jurisdictional lines, such as what is eligible for ARPA spending or whether to opt out of the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act.

In early 2021, NOCCOG contributed to the Oneida and Herkimer County Broadband Study and continues to work with numerous other organizations to get broadband coverage to unserved and underserved areas. The Oneida and Herkimer Local Government Education Committee sponsored numerous trainings, in-

cluding topics such as the NYS Fire Code and dealing with zombie properties.

Associate Circuit Riders Lisa Bellinger and Joe Rowlands

attended well over 70 municipal meetings each, not counting the many trainings and webinars they also attended throughout the year. ■



Commission Funding 2021-22

The Tug Hill Commission's funding remained steady for the period April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022. Most of the commission's funding comes from its annual state appropriation. Approximately 90% of the budget is spent on salaries, with the balance covering commission operating expenses.

In 2021-22, commission staff trained more than 1,500 local officials using Zoom virtual webinars as well as a limited number of in-person trainings. Staff started working on 31 new projects across the region, made progress on an additional 39 projects, and answered many technical assistance questions.

Commission staff also continued working with state agency partners on a variety of state-

wide priorities and initiatives. These included COVID-19, American Rescue Plan Act, cannabis, the Climate Action Council, shared services, broadband, and recreation.

The commission employed 12 people, including four circuit riders for the region's five councils of governments. The other eight staff members provide program and administrative support out of the commission's Watertown office.

The commission looks forward to continuing its mission of helping our communities in the coming year. ■

Jean Waterbury Retires After 36 Years of Service

Widely known as the key orchestrator of the Tug Hill Local Government Conference, Jean Waterbury retired on July 23, 2021 after 36 years of service at the Tug Hill Commission.

Originally from Glens Falls, Jean graduated from Plattsburgh State University and started at the commission as an intern, invited to come back as a full-time employee in No-

vember 1984. Jean served in a variety of capacities at the commission, including technical assistance coordination, planning, projects management and temporary circuit rider. Above all, she was involved to varying degrees in organizing 30 Local Government Conferences.

Congratulations Jean! ■





NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION

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MARCH 2022

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From left: Patricia Dietrich, Martinsburg Historical Society member; Jan Bogdanowicz, commission chairman; Katie Malinowski, commission executive director.

cemetery and survey the names of individual burials, paying particular attention to veterans buried and the war they participated in. Using local media to publicize the efforts, family descendants often come forward and volunteer and fi-

nancially support the efforts. A professional stone restoration company works on the grave-stones. Once each restoration is complete the society rededicates the cemetery and honors the veterans, often including re-enactors. ■

County Fair Exhibit

The commission staff and volunteers spent much of July connecting with Tug Hill residents and visitors at the three county fairs that were open this year: Jefferson, Lewis, and Oneida. Commission staff and commissioners enjoy having the opportunity to get out in the communities and speak to residents and visitors about Tug Hill. Many residents shared stories about their favorite places to recreate and others shared concerns about emerging issues in their towns and villages.

In addition to connecting with Tug Hill residents and visitors, hosting a booth at the fairs provided the commission an opportunity to share publications and information with county residents. Tug Hill Recreation Guides, maps of the region, pamphlets, and more were shared with fairgoers, promoting the region and all it

has to offer. The commission's trifold display allowed people to catch a glimpse of the industries that make Tug Hill unique - farming, logging, and fishing, to name a few.

With the success of these county fairs and in anticipation for the 2022 fair season, the commission has invested in improving its tabling and display. In 2022, the commission will unveil an improved table display with new, interactive activities for fairgoers of all ages and giveaways to people who visit our booth. Exhibiting at events like the county fairs provides staff and commissioners an opportunity to listen to Tug Hill residents' and visitors' stories and share information widely. Especially during the pandemic, these opportunities to engage with the public have been transformative. ■