

Celebrating 50 Years of Tug Hill Relationships

January kicks off a year of celebration as the Tug Hill Commission reaches 50 years of service in 2023. Celebration activities thus far include a poster contest for high school students, revamped logos, commemorative coffee labels by Tug Hill Artisan Roasters, planning for an extra special annual dinner event in the fall, and an ongoing social media “Throwback Thursday” series posted to [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/tughillcommission) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/tughillcommission).

Over the years, the Tug Hill Commission has worked with many remarkable people, built relationships with dozens of towns and villages, and seen projects of all kinds develop across the region. While many things have changed in 50 years, the Tug Hill remains one of the most remote, natural landscapes in New York State and its communities have retained their unique character and culture. Each week, commission staff plan to take a walk through history to commemorate those important memories and events, and we encourage you to join us on the journey!

If you have worked with the Tug Hill Commission in the past (or are simply a Tug Hill history buff!) and have any stories, milestones, or photos that you would like to share, please contact Taylor McKinney at taylor@tughill.org.

Tug Hill Community Projects Funded

Three Tug Hill communities have been awarded funding to date through the state’s consolidated funding application. The commission worked directly with the village of Boonville on a joint town and village application to the 2022 - 2023 Environmental Protection Fund Smart Growth Community Planning and Zoning grant. The \$40,500 award will fund the *Town and Village of Boonville Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Update*. The town and village of Boonville will update their joint comprehensive plan to address smart growth principles and, aim to maintain the area’s “small town” character. The rural community includes a small urban area in the village and the areas assets include agriculture, forests, water, and minerals. The goal of the update will be to improve the community’s resiliency and economic opportunities while preserving the community’s natural assets.

The village of Boonville, through grants writer Lisa Kaiding, was also awarded \$328,125 in Environmental Protection Funds through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation for the *Erwin Park Renewal* project. The project will revamp the main entrance on NYS Route 12, construct a boardwalk and canoe/kayak launch, create an entrance to the Boonville Black River Feeder Canal, construct an amphitheater with seating built into the surrounding hill, and resurface the tennis court.

The *Village of Adams Community Park* was also awarded \$322,005 through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. This project will rehabilitate the park with recreational features inclusive to all ages and mobility levels, functioning to serve the community for events, exercise, play, and leisure. The commission has been working with the playground subcommittee of the Adams Revitalization Committee to help define and scope the project and to assist with grant writing, which was completed by Barton and Loguidice.

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NOCCOG Welcomes New Director

At a special meeting on January 10, the NOCCOG Executive Committee unanimously approved the appointment of Larry Mierek as the newest director to the board. A long-time resident of the town of Western, he grew up on his father’s dairy farm in Westernville. Larry graduated from Holland Patent Central School, and then from Utica College with a BS in Computer Science and has worked in the computer field over 35 years as a programmer and project/resource manager. Currently a councilman on the Western Town Board, where he has served for several years, Larry previously held the positions of town clerk and town supervisor. He is also on the Western Town Library Board of Trustees. Larry also enjoys hiking, snowshoeing, target shooting, and anything that brings him outdoors.

Black River Initiative 2022 Newsletter Now Available

In support of the Black River Initiative, the Tug Hill Commission, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Great Lakes Program, Jefferson and Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other partners publish the annual Black River Initiative newsletter. The newsletter highlights accomplishments within the watershed over the past year, and this year's highlights include the following:

- Annual Black River Watershed Conference
- Good News from Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Tree Planting in the Black River Watershed
- A New Threat to Forests in the Watershed
- Trout Unlimited Helps Get Grants for Culverts and more!

We hope you enjoy learning more about all the great work being done to support clean and healthy waters within the beautiful and water abundant Black River watershed. Please click [here](#) to access the Black River Initiative newsletter.



Access improvements to Deer River on NYS Route 12 in Copenhagen. Photo by NYSDEC.

Lewis County Broadband Expansion Completes First Phase

Residents and businesses in the Port Leyden and Diana areas of Lewis County have a new option for broadband internet access, as [Hudson Valley Wireless](#) is now offering internet service in those communities. Lewis County, using funding from the NYS Office of Homes and Community Renewal's Community Development Block Grant program (through the CARES Act), and by installing wireless equipment on existing county-owned towers, has now made internet service available to approximately 599 unserved households. The Development Authority of the North Country provided technical expertise and information to support the effort. Remaining grant funds will cover the cost of installation of customer equipment on a first-come, first-served basis for approximately 200 households that both live within the project area and are income-eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). In addition to receiving free standard installation and free equipment, subscribers that qualify for the ACP will also be eligible for the Microsoft Affordable Computer initiative with laptop or desktop devices starting at \$11.

As part of the ribbon cuttings held this week, Lewis County also celebrated the launch of 27 free public wi-fi hotspots in hamlets and villages through the county. Over the next year, with funding awarded to Lewis County by the Northern Border Regional Commission, Hudson Valley Wireless will expand its service area to include the towns of Harrisburg, Pinckney, Denmark, Lowville, and a portion of Montague. Relative to fiber expansion, through a public/private partnership with Spectrum, Lewis County Legislators also approved the use of ARPA funds to connect approximately 366 potential household in the towns of Croghan, Denmark, Watson, Lowville and Greig to highspeed internet. Furthermore, with funding from NYS's ConnectALL Initiative, the NY Power Authority will be working on a \$10 million pilot program to expand broadband in the town of Diana.



Representatives from Lewis County, the Development Authority of the North Country, Hudson Valley Wireless, and South Lewis Central School District display broadband equipment at the ribbon cutting event in Port Leyden.



Snow Ridge: Through the Years

A NYS Tug Hill Commission History Presentation



Snow has long shaped the history of the Tug Hill region, and “snow stories” are thoroughly intertwined with the lived experiences of its inhabitants. Following World War II, a booming economy and the Alpine expertise of returning veterans initiated the start of what would be a booming winter sports industry. The skiing craze that popped up overnight in the Eastern United States found an outpost at Snow Ridge, transforming the small town of Turin. In its seventy-plus years of operation, the Snow Ridge Ski Resort has evolved from a family-owned ski hill serviced by one handmade engine-operated rope tow into a hotspot that – in its golden age – produced future Olympic racers, served as the staging ground for cutting-edge athletic technology, and even hosted foreign dignitaries.

Join us this winter to explore Snow Ridge through the years!

Sunday, January 29, 2023
1:00PM to 3:00PM EST

Snow Ridge Ski Resort
4173 West Road
Turin, NY 13473

Also available via ZOOM

Pre-registration is required at

tinyurl.com/skisnowridge

Or call the Tug Hill Commission at
(315) 785- 2380

Assistance to Firefighters Grants Open



The Fiscal Year 2022 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) application period is now open. Helpful documents, including the notice of funding opportunity and application checklist, are posted at [FY 2022 Assistance to Firefighters Grant \(AFG\) Application Guidance Materials | FEMA.gov](#). The application period closes on Friday, February 10, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

Grant application development workshops continue through January 20. They are intended to provide the latest AFG program updates and tips to assist applicants in developing their narrative for the upcoming period. Each session will run approximately one hour. To attend, visit the [Workshop Schedule Page](#).

Commission Board Meeting January 23

The Tug Hill Commission will meet on Monday, January 23 at 10:00 a.m. at the town of Trenton, 8520 Old Poland Road Barneveld, NY 13304. The public is welcome to attend.

NYSDEC Launches Green Purchasing Communities Program

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recently launched a [Green Purchasing Communities \(GPC\) program](#) for local governments and is hosting an informational webinar about it on Tuesday, January 17 at 2:00 p.m. Please register by [clicking here](#). The program provides an easy to administer green procurement program for local governments and provides the community with recognition for implementing it. It's free and all local governments in New York State are eligible to participate.

Local governments that become a GPC commit to following the GreenNY purchasing specifications that NYS government uses. Over 75 different purchasing specifications are included, covering office and building management supplies, electronic equipment and appliances, food service items, and transportation items. There are specifications to follow for a wide variety of items frequently purchased by local governments.

NYS GIS Advisory Group Meeting

Commission staff attended the New York State GIS (Geographic Information System) Advisory Group meeting earlier this week. The meeting brought together people from many different NYS agencies including the NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Thruway Authority, NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and more to talk about how GIS is being utilized and improved upon statewide. The meeting was informative and covered topics such as finding talent pools, hiring strategies, and upgrades to the current NYS Clearinghouse website. The group concluded the meeting by briefly talking about its evolution and what the steps going forward will be.

RACOG Economic Visioning Summit Results

On January 12, a small group made up of Kristen Aucter (Lewis County Chamber of Commerce), Adam Fuller (Fuller Insurance Agency), Mickey Dietrich and Taylor McKinney (Tug Hill Commission), Megan Krowkowski (Lewis County Planning), and Jason Wendt (CREG Systems) met to discuss the results from the 2022 RACOG Economic Visioning Summit SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) exercise. The group focused their efforts on the opportunities portion of SWOT analysis and generated some ideas to share with the RACOG board for feedback. The group will meet again in February to continue going through the SWOT analysis.



Deferiet Solar and Brownfield Opportunity Area Update

At the January 11, 2023 village of Deferiet board meeting, Tom King and Tracy Darougar from the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority updated the board on the status of the potential solar project for the old St. Regis Paper mill site. David Paulsen, Jefferson County attorney, and David Zembiec, Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency, also spoke about the entire mill property and future development potential. Besides solar development, the site will also be considered for light industrial and commercial use. They were followed by Sarah Bullock, Wilna economic development coordinator, who is working on a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) designation with the village of Deferiet for the site. She talked about the status of the BOA, which just recently selected the consultant Elan Planning, Design, and Landscape Architecture, PLLC. to do the study and analysis for the project. Also in attendance was Kylie Peck with the NYS Department of State, who is the regional BOA contact.

As the project progresses, there will be multiple opportunities for public input and community involvement.

January 17 Webinar for Small Water System Funding

Small water systems throughout the US are facing many challenges associated with aging infrastructure, water supply reliability, water quality, changing regulations, and more. Funding is available to help small water system address their needs.



The Environmental Finance Center Network is partnering with the Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center to host a webinar on Tuesday, January 17 at 1 p.m., to provide an opportunity learn about the basics of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), including tips and tricks for completing a successful application. The webinar will also discuss opportunities to receive free technical assistance to support evaluations of funding options and development of applications.

Join presenter Maureen Kerner, PE, associate director, EPA Region 9 Environmental Finance Center, Office of Water Programs at California State University, Sacramento, in this webinar geared for managers and operators of water systems serving less than 10,000 people, decision-makers for water utilities, including mayors, finance officers, utility managers, public works directors, city councilors, board members, and clerks.

Click here to [register](#), or for more information contact Averi Davis, adavis02@syr.edu

RMO Webinar Training January 25

New York State Archives has a training webinar scheduled for **Wednesday, January 25** from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The session entitled "Your Role as a Local Government Records Management Officer" will explain why this essential position exists and review the role of a records management officer (RMO).

The webinar will also discuss the attributes of a good records management program and provide tools necessary to create and maintain a successful program. Services offered by State Archives and other organizations that can provide support for records management programs will also be reviewed.

The training is free and registration information can be found on the [workshop registration](#) page. State Archives also has many recorded webinars that are available for viewing anytime, available on their [webinar](#) page.

Stakeholder Meetings for Sandy Creeks, Black River, and Oneida Lake Watersheds

Three major watersheds in the Tug Hill region are getting much needed watershed management plan updates. All three initiatives are emphasizing public engagement and are hosting stakeholder meetings to gather feedback from interested community members.

For the Sandy Creeks Watershed, the first stakeholder meeting will be held on Tuesday January 17, 2023, 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Sandy Creek Town Hall, 1992 Harwood Drive, Sandy Creek, NY. Light refreshments will be served, please [register here](#). A virtual option is also available. The 9E Plan will identify water quality concerns, priority areas for water quality sampling, and strategies for addressing water quality concerns. The Sandy Creeks Watershed encompasses all or portions of the Towns of Adams, Ellisburg, Lorraine, Rodman, Worth, Sandy Creek, Boylston, and Richland.

The Oneida Lake Watershed public meeting will be held Tuesday, January 24, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. This plan will describe the community's water quality concerns and provide a strategy to address those concerns. If you would like to attend the public meeting to learn more about the initiative and share your input on a vision and a set of goals for the watershed, please [click here to register](#). The meeting will be held virtually on Zoom.

The Black River Adaptive Modeling Project, Phase I aims to identify existing water quality data, assess data usability, and identify gaps towards developing an adaptive watershed model for the Black River at the HUC 12 scale. Please [register here](#) to join on January 25, virtually via Zoom, to share your local knowledge and expertise on existing water quality data, issues, and needs, and to learn how you can get involved and benefit from the data being collected and shared as the project moves forward.

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To request our newsletter electronically please email gwen@tughill.org or call 1-888-785-2380.

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