

Senate and Assembly Minimum Maintenance Roads Bills Reintroduced

Adoption of minimum maintenance road laws is a tool that towns across Tug Hill and other rural areas of New York State have used for decades using their home rule authority and powers under Highway and Vehicle & Traffic Law. However, based on several legal challenges from landowners on minimum maintenance roads that want year-round access, it has been apparent that state law authority is needed to provide additional authority for town designations.

For many years, various bills have been introduced in both the NYS Senate and Assembly. In the current 2023-24 legislative session, A02225/S01836 has been introduced and sent to each houses' transportation committees. Many entities have supported passage of this legislation over the years, including Tug Hill towns and councils of governments, and statewide entities such as the Association of Town Highway Superintendents and Association of Towns of NYS, among others. Additionally, the Climate Action Council Scoping Plan finalized last month included a recommendation to ***"expand legislation to secure local government's ability to designate Minimum Maintenance Roads to reduce subdivision and development pressure on roads that may result in conversion of farmland and forestland to other land uses."*** The Tug Hill Commission will track progress of this bill.

State Route 49 Traffic Data Collection Completed

At the request of the town of West Monroe, the Tug Hill Commission worked with the Syracuse Metropolitan Traffic Council (SMTC) to have turning counts completed for multiple intersections along State Route 49. The turning counts were conducted during the fall and were then processed by SMTC and delivered to the Tug Hill Commission. Data obtained from these turning counts have informed local officials about the current state of how traffic flows along State Route 49 through West Monroe. Through this, a better understanding of the traffic patterns may prove to be useful moving forward when addressing traffic issues or road maintenance.

The data showed a heavy flow of vehicles traveling westbound on State Route 49 toward I-81 in the morning hours and the reverse, most vehicles traveling eastbound during the evening commute, with vehicles turning off State Route 49 onto various roads. This confirms what was thought to be the case, however, now thanks to the help of SMTC, local officials have the data to support it.

Anyone who would like to see the raw number data, please email msmith@tughill.org.

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Salmon River Council of Governments Meets

The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments held their first meeting of 2023 on January 25 at the Albion-Altmar Municipal Building in Altmar. Orwell Supervisor William Potter was re-elected as chair, and Albion Supervisor Mike Faulkner as vice-chair.

The group reviewed and added to the compilation of town and village needs and concerns for Chairman Potter to communicate at the Tug Hill – COG Chairs meeting next Monday. Other business included distribution and initial review of maps of availability of broadband in Salmon Rivers towns, and approval of sponsorship of the Tug Hill 2023 Local Government Conference.

River Area Council of Governments Meets

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) held their January board meeting on January 25. Brian Peck, supervisor of the town of Champion was elected as chair and Janet Zando, mayor of the village of Deferiet was re-elected as vice chair.

RACOG was provided a summary of the 2022 economic visioning summit from the steering committee. One idea is to have a future RACOG meeting dedicated to a roundtable discussion about opportunities and ideas with Jefferson and Lewis Counties, Tug Hill Commission, and other organizations. It was also recommended by the committee to have the economic visioning summit again for 2023, which the board approved. It will be held on April 27, 2023 from 9 :00 a.m. to noon at the Jefferson-Lewis BOCES Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield, with free registration to include a buffet lunch provided by the BOCES culinary arts class.

The board also reviewed the draft CGI Digital promotional video that CGI Digital produced for the river area. Once the video is finalized, it will be posted on member community websites and the [RACOG](#) website.

With RACOG membership increasing and multiple municipal board meetings on the same evenings, the board approved to add a contract associate circuit rider. This will help the full-time circuit rider ensure that most meetings are attended every month. The next RACOG board meeting will be in May.

Watershed Planning Meeting Updates

Three watershed planning meetings were recently held for the Sandy Creeks, Oneida Lake, and Black River watersheds.

A 9 Element Watershed Management Plan is being developed for the Sandy Creeks watershed. An initial stakeholder meeting was held on January 17 and attendees had the opportunity to participate virtually or in person at the Sandy Creek Town Hall. Speakers included the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, Department of Environmental Conservation, Up-state Freshwater Institute (UFI), and the Tug Hill Commission. The meeting was well attended, and the public is invited to attend focus group meetings on Tuesday, January 31, and a public meeting and stakeholder input summary on Thursday February 16. More information can be found [here](#).

A 9 Element Plan is also being developed for the Oneida Lake watershed. The first public meeting was held virtually on January 24. Speakers included representatives from the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board, Cornell, UFI, and the Cornell Biological Field Station. The project advisory committee is made up of 26 regional organizations and agencies. Speakers provided an overview of the plan and discussed threats to Oneida Lake such as invasive species, increasing lake temperatures, and sedimentation. The lake's ecosystem has significantly fluctuated with introduction of invasives including mussels, spiny waterflea, and round goby. The next public meeting will be held in the fall of 2023. More information can be found [here](#).

The Black River Adaptive Modeling (BRAM) project, Phase 1, held a public meeting on January 25. The BRAM project aims to update the Black River 9 Element plan to a HUC 12 scale (a smaller, more detailed scale than the current HUC-11 scale). The public meeting brought together stakeholders and those who may have water quality data that could benefit the development of the BRAM project. Attendees also learned about water quality implementation activities completed in the watershed since the 2010 watershed management plan such as green infrastructure, wastewater treatment, and cover crop projects. If you have additional water quality data, related data, or questions and concerns please visit the [Black River Watershed Management Plan](#) website.

NOCCOG Sponsors Local Government Conference Registration for Membership

At the most recent meeting of the NOCCOG Executive Committee, the group decided to sponsor one registration from each NOCCOG member municipality to attend this year's Local Government Conference. As the 2023 Local Government Conference has an expanded agenda, registration could cover either day; the Drone Session on April 5, the full day of sessions on April 6, or the combined registration that covers both days. For more information, please contact John Healt, jhealt@tughill.org or 315-941-2818.

DRONES:

TRANSFORMING WORK, PLAY
AND
ECONOMIES



Wednesday
APRIL 5, 2023
Turning Stone
Conference
Center

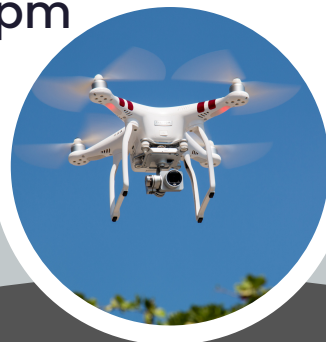
TURNING STONE CONFERENCE CENTER
2:00 – 5:00PM

- Keynote by NUAIR
- FAA Regulations
- Municipal Applications
- Hands On Instruction
- Chance to WIN a Mini Drone!
- LGC Reception at 5:30pm

\$75.00*

REGISTER BY MARCH 3

***RECEPTION INCLUDED WITH REGISTRATION**



For more information, visit:
tughill.org/lgc2023

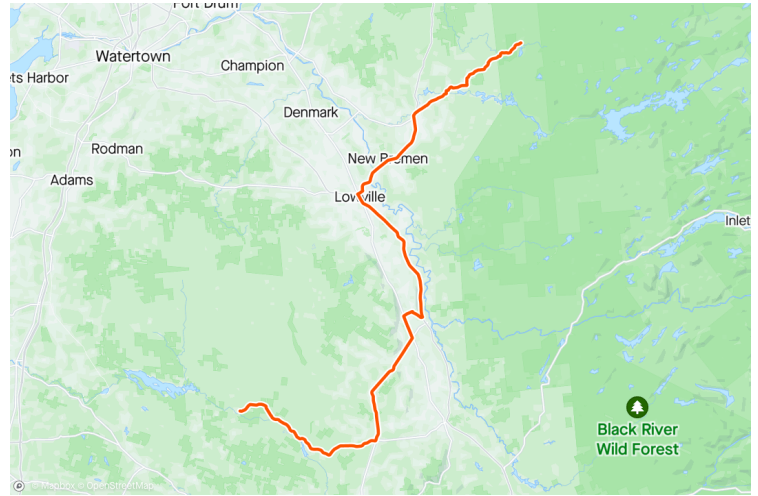


Adirondack Foothills Cycling Club Tug Hill Summer Events



The [Adirondack Foothills Cycling Club](#) will hold the Tour de Lewis and the North Winds Gravel Classic in 2023, both of which include portions of Tug Hill. The Tour de Lewis, held May 28, 2023, is a non-competitive ride through Lewis County's Adirondack Park, Black River Valley, and Tug Hill Plateau. Participation is open to recreational and competitive amateur cyclists alike. Riders of all abilities can participate in one of the three distances. Riders may opt to begin in Oswegatchie, Turin, or West Leyden for a 62, 28, or 15-mile ride, respectively. Ride finish and after party celebration will be held at the Osceola Ski and Sport Resort. Registration and more information can be found [here](#).

The North Winds Gravel Classic, held on July 16, 2023, is a timed event set in the remote wilderness of Tug Hill. With distances to suit riders of all capabilities and interest, the classic is a showcase of the fastest gravel in the Northeast. The name derives from the consistent winds that travel across Lake Ontario and up over Tug Hill, making this area well-suited site for wind farms and delivering on average the most annual snowfall east of the Rocky Mountains. More information and registration can be found [here](#).



“What Does Tug Hill Mean To You?” Contest Reminder

As of this year, the Tug Hill Commission will celebrate 50 years of serving its local communities and municipalities. As part of this celebration, the commission is hosting a poster contest, which is currently ongoing, until February 15. The Tug Hill Commission encourages any high school students (Grades 9 through 12) within the Tug Hill Region to apply. The theme of this contest is, “What Does Tug Hill Mean To You?” Submissions will be judged on originality, creativity, reflection of the contest theme, and artistic merit.

The contest's first place winner will have their submission featured on the brochure cover for [the 2023 Local Government Conference](#) on April 5 and 6 at the Turning Stone Conference Center in Verona, New York. Winning submissions will be announced no later than February 21, 2023.

Further details on contest rules and submission criteria can be found [here](#).

For questions, please contact Taylor McKinney at taylor@tughill.org or 315-785-2606.

Great Lakes Watershed Small Grants Available

The [Great Lakes Basin Small Grants](#) program is now accepting applications for project proposals up to \$50,000 until March 1. This program has directly supported implementation of NY's Great Lakes Action Agenda since 2014, and is a partnership effort of DEC and NY Sea Grant.

New York Sea Grant, in partnership with DEC, will host an upcoming webinar series to learn about the 2023 Request for Proposals, how to apply, and share information about other projects previously funded through this program. Webinars will be hosted Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m. on Zoom from January 25 through February 15. Register in advance [here](#).

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

Visit us at:

Web: www.tughill.org

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/TugHillCommission

Instagram: [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/tughillorg)

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](#).