

# HEADWATERS



2022 NEWSLETTER &amp; 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT, ISSUE 59

NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION · DULLES STATE OFFICE BUILDING · 317 WASHINGTON STREET · WATERTOWN, NY 13601 · (315) 785-2380 · WWW.TUGHILL.ORG



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## Commission Celebrates 50 Years of Service to Tug Hill

Zero Dock Street in Carthage hosted the Tug Hill Commission's 2022 annual meeting and community recognition award ceremony in October. Chairman Jan Bogdanowicz reflected on the beginnings of the Tug Hill Commission in 1972 and announced 2023 as a year of celebration when the commission enters its 50th year of service to the Tug Hill region.

Executive Director Katie Malinowski presented the 2022 Tug Hill Community Recognition Awards to the villages of Carthage, Copenhagen, and Deferiet. The three villages, working in close partnership with BOCES, improved their communities with board walks, benches, picnic tables and more to encourage residents and visitors to walk and enjoy everything these villag-

es have to offer. Jason Wagner, natural resources chief at Fort Drum, presented to the group on activities and initiatives being undertaken on Fort Drum to manage change and ensure the continued success for the home of the 10th Mountain Division.

Commission officers for 2023-24 were elected at the December commission meeting, with the current slate of officers re-elected for another two-year term: Jan Bogdanowicz, chairman, Mike Yerdon, vice-chairman, and Tom Boxberger, secretary.

Upcoming celebrations of the commission's 50th anniversary include a new WPBS-TV "Park It: Tug Hill" video, and an enhanced annual dinner in October. Over the years, the Tug



*Over 90 people enjoyed food, entertainment and informative presentations at the commission's annual dinner.*

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 re-

tained their unique character and culture.

The commission board and staff look forward to another 50 years of helping local government and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region. ■

# Meet the NYS Tug Hill Commission's Staff

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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## CIRCUIT RIDER

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From left first row: Angie Kimball, Taylor McKinney, Carla Fowler, Felicia Passino, Jennifer Harvill, Gwen Decker, Katie Malinowski. Second row: Matthew Smith, Gabriel Yerdon, Matthew Johnson, Paul Baxter, Mickey Dietrich, John Healt.

## Meet the Commissioners



### CHAIRMAN

Jan J. Bogdanowicz  
Lewis County



### VICE CHAIRMAN

Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.  
Oswego County



### SECRETARY

Thomas E. Boxberger  
Jefferson County



Leona M. Chereshnoski  
Jefferson County



Roger W. Maciejko  
Jefferson County



Geraldine J. Ritter  
Oneida County



William W. Scriber  
Oswego County

### MEMBERS

Cover photo credit: Kathy Hanchek.

## ABOUT HEADWATERS

Headwaters is the annual newsletter report of the NYS Tug Hill Commission. The uniqueness of the Tug Hill region and its natural resources were recognized by New York State in the early 1970s when it created the Tug Hill Commission.

The commission uses a grassroots approach considered a model for fostering environmental protection and appropriate rural economic development in a way that retains "home rule" by local government. The commission provides assistance to the region's towns and villages and helps them with their day-to-day issues. This, in turn, leverages conservation and sustainable development that benefits the communities and state as a whole.

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.

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



# Learning Opportunities Abound

In 2022, the commission provided four municipal training sessions and six presentations focusing on cultural and historical enrichment. The training season kicked off in February with a Clean Energy Communities webinar presented by the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority and Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, in cooperation with the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments.

In March, “Fifty Years in a Hunting Club on Tug Hill” was presented with Jack Thoden of the Brandy Brook Sports Club. Brandy Brook was established in 1965 when it leased 3,600 acres of land from Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper, in the now defunct hamlet of Page. It is a great example of the tradition of hunting clubs all over Tug Hill.

port punch card” contest and attendees generally enjoyed the new location, especially not having to brave the elements when changing sessions.

In May, the commission co-hosted a hybrid presentation with the Oneida County History Association, “Built to Last: The Legacy of the CCC in the Tug Hill Region.” This event explored the history and projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in our area, and how this program provided the framework for AmeriCorps, Excelsior Conservation Corps, and the Student Conservation Association.

Seventy people attended the Black River Watershed Conference held in June at Three Willows in Lyons Falls. Centered around water quality topics, this annual event attracts at-

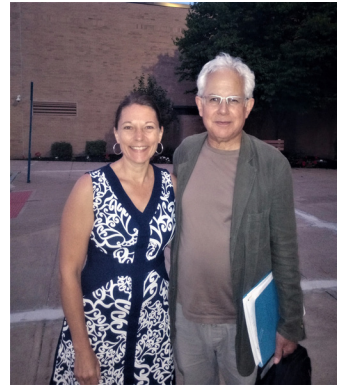


2022 Local Government Conference attendees at Turning Stone Event Center.

The Local Government Conference (LGC) was held for the very first time at Turning Stone Event Center in April. The LGC featured a keynote by Andrew Fish of Centerstate CEO, which explored how Tug Hill leaders can capitalize on an ever-changing economic landscape by creating opportunities that leverage its resources and people while preserving what makes the region so important. Vendors appreciated the “pass-

tendees from both within the region and across the north country and state.

In July, the Friends of the Black River presented “The Castorland Journal: An Account of the Exploration and Settlement of New York State by French Emigres in the Years 1793-1797” with Dr. John Gallucci. The diaries of Pharoux and Desjardin, translated by Dr. Gallucci, provide a “Lewis and



From left: Heidi Lehman and Dr. John Gallucci at the Castorland Journal presentation.

Clark type” account of their exploration of the Black River Valley.

“A Century Gone By: Revisiting Swancott Mills” brought the story of logging and milling on Tug Hill to life by Jim Burke, author of the book “A Lifetime on the Hill,” Leigh Portner, logger, Linn tractor enthusiast, and history lover; and Robert Sauer, Tug Hill Sage, retired Harden forester and Camden local official.

In October, attorney Mark Cuthbertson presented “Sign Regulations and the First Amendment,” which included the nuances of the First Amendment, sign regulations, and relevant court cases. Laird Petrie also presented a very

well-attended two-day “Budgeting and Accounting” workshop at Tailwater Lodge. Prior to retiring in 2021, Mr. Petrie worked as a municipal auditor for the State Comptroller’s Office in the Syracuse regional office for 27 years. Since his retirement, Laird has been providing valuable and tailored technical assistance and training to towns and villages in a four-county area through a contract with the Tug Hill Commission.

The finale was held in December with the sixth installment of the Constable Chronicles, “Into the Adirondack Wilderness” presented by Martha Constable Murray and Peter Hayes of the Constable Hall Association. The webinar described the explorations of the five children who grew up at Constable Hall in the early 1800s. They were all outdoor-oriented and by the 1830s, were ranging through the western Adirondacks from Big Moose to Blue Mountain Lake – some of the very first non-native people to see the area. ■



From left: Mark Clark, Katie Malinowski, Jim Burke, Bob Sauer, Leigh and Doris Portner at the Swancott Mills presentation in West Leyden.

# COG REPORTS



There are five councils of governments (COGs) in the Tug Hill region. These independent intermunicipal organizations are supported with staff from the Tug Hill Commission and local government dues. Currently 55 of the 59 towns and villages within the region belong to a COG.

## COOPERATIVE TUG HILL COUNCIL

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## Tug Hill Region's Population Declines by 1.5%

The U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census of Population and Housing, along with its five-year American Community Survey, helps provide a clearer picture of Tug Hill's people and economy. Access to accurate, detailed demographic information is important for comprehensive plans and a valuable resource to community stakeholders.

From 2010 to 2020, New York State grew by 4.2 percent to exceed a population of 20 million people. In contrast, the Tug Hill region's overall population declined by 1.49 percent to an estimated total of 102,409. Ten regional towns and two villages added to their population; thirty-one towns and sixteen villages saw a population decrease. The largest town continues to be Hastings, and the smallest town is Montague. The town of Watertown experienced the highest rate of growth, increasing in the last 10 years by 32.3 percent.

The Office of the State Comptroller has an online interactive dashboard to filter state, county, and municipal census data. Commission staff recently completed an in-depth analysis of the 2020 census data which is available on the commission's website. ■

## Tug Hill Region Census Trends

From 2010 to 2020

COGS Pop. % change

CTHC 19,920 1.09  
decrease

RACOG 23,030 4.69  
decrease

NOCCOG 38,235 4.62  
decrease

NorCOG 10,728 3.12  
decrease

SRCOG 6,729 4.69  
decrease

Geographic Region Total:



As of 2020, the estimated total population for the Tug Hill Region is:

105,053

from portions of Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and Oneida counties

### Largest Town & Village

Hastings (town)

9,342

Lowville (village)

3,272

### Smallest Town & Village

Montague (town)

97

Turin (village)

197

versus



# The Cooperative Tug Hill Council

Cooperative Tug Hill Council municipalities were quite busy as things headed back to normal in the wake of the pandemic. The new Lorraine-Worth consolidated court's first justice resigned mid-year, so a temporarily appointed justice from a neighboring town filled in until a new justice was elected in November. Lorraine also adopted an updated official road map. Osceola and Harrisburg are working on adopting mini comprehensive plans, drawn from the cooperative planning work CTHC municipalities have done for many years.

More work on these COG-wide projects will continue in 2023.

Worth is working on a major zoning and subdivision regulation update and is now considering expansion of their mini-plan into a full comprehensive plan. Other CTHC municipalities are also in the queue for in depth comprehensive plans. Several municipalities are working on solar energy local laws or updates to their zoning laws regarding solar and wind energy, seasonal use zoning, and battery energy storage systems, among other things.

The effort for statewide legislation to allow for the minimum maintenance classification of roads by amending NYS Highway Law was unsuccessful again in 2022. A new bill, A2225/S1836, has been introduced in the 2023-2024 legislative session. New strategies are being discussed with various municipalities and steps are being taken to move forward with a new approach to the issue, as this remains a priority for CTHC.

Both the spring and fall meetings were held in person for members of the council this year for the first time since 2019. Both meetings were well attended with presentations from Lewis County regarding roads at the spring meeting and Dr. Scott Steiger from SUNY Oswego speaking about a lake-effect lightning study at the fall meeting. Additionally, Pinckney's Special Areas map was updated and approved to be added to the regional map, the last of the original 16 towns to complete that update. Construction continued on the Number Three wind project in

2022 which is expected to be online in 2023. Construction was completed on the Roaring Brook wind farm, which began operating in early 2022. The Deer River wind project, the third of four wind projects active in the CTHC area, continues through the Article 10 process and is currently investigating technically feasible locations for aircraft detection lighting systems as required by its operating certificate. Several solar projects are also in various stages of development in CTHC municipalities.

With 22 member municipalities, associate circuit riders are key to maintaining meeting coverage. Associate Circuit Rider Kelley Martin briefly worked with CTHC. New Associate Circuit Rider Christine Healt began attending meetings later in the year, joining veteran Associate Circuit Rider Beth Steria-Rush. ■



Marsh Road, a minimum maintenance road in Lorraine, that provides access to Winona State Forest and serves as a snowmobile trail.

# Salmon River Council of Governments

The town and village of Parish and the Salmon Rivers Council of Governments continue to monitor efforts made to return the Little Salmon River to a more natural state which would support the reintroduction of salmon to its original range. A study was performed which quantified the physical and biological impacts of dam removal.

Orwell continued to move forward toward developing an alternate water supply source to alleviate quantity and quality problems with their current source. In November, the town received news that the

governor had awarded \$1.25 million in Community Block Grants through NYS Homes and Community Development for improvements to their public water system.

The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments continued to share an associate circuit rider with the North Shore Council of Governments and sought additional personnel to best cover municipal needs.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, the nature of its impacts changed. The use of Zoom as a remote access method diminished, with

it being used less by remote meeting attendance by local officials, and more as a means of 'broadcasting' meetings. And, as COVID restrictions eased over time, town and village

halls reopened and municipal meetings approached conduct of pre-COVID times. Periodic upswings in COVID prompted continued attention to best COVID practices. ■



2022 Budget and Accounting workshop at Tailwater Lodge in July.

# River Area Council of Governments

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) expanded again in 2022, adding the town of Croghan.

The first RACOG economic visioning summit was held in April at Zero Dock Street in Carthage. Presenters included staff from the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, Carthage Area Chamber of Commerce, town of Wilna, Jefferson County IDA, Lewis County IDA, Jefferson County Planning, Lewis County Planning, and the Tug Hill Commission. The presentations were followed by an interactive exercise to look at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

RACOG continued to partner with Jefferson-Lewis BOCES students to complete projects. A visual communications class student designed a promotional banner for RACOG. Three RACOG members received the "Community Award" at the

Tug Hill Commission's annual dinner for their work with Jefferson-Lewis BOCES students on walkable community projects.

A project to develop a RACOG promotional video was started in partnership with CGI Video. Footage was taken throughout the area highlighting various aspects of the business industry, surrounding landscapes, recreational activities, education, and innovation. Introductory videos interviewing supervisors and mayors were also conducted, and the video should be complete early in 2023.

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) LED street lighting conversion project neared completion. Communities received county shared service funds, along with the NYPA Smart City Technology grant funding, Local Government Efficiency grant funding, and National Grid incentives toward the cost of the project.

Individual community projects included continued progress in Deferiet related to the old St. Regis Paper Mill, with a Brownfield Opportunity Area plan to begin soon and NYSEDA continuing to look at the site for a Build Ready project. Castorland built a new board/community room, and the towns of Champion, Wilna, and villages of Carthage and West Carthage worked on an

economic resiliency and recovery plan. The town and village of Lowville completed their joint comprehensive plan, and a new community pavilion was built in the village of Copenhagen.

RACOG would like to wish past chairman Wayne McIlroy a happy retirement and thank him for his years of service. ■



*From left to right: Mickey Dietrich, RACOG Circuit Rider; Leo Paige, BOCES; Brian Taube, BOCES; Wayne McIlroy, Carthage President; Jeff Ginger, BOCES; Janet Zando, Deferiet Mayor; Chuck Meyer, BOCES; Mark Souva, Copenhagen Mayor; Katie Malinowski, Tug Hill Commission Executive Director.*

# North Shore Council of Governments

In July 2022, the North Shore and Salmon Rivers Councils of Governments held their first joint dinner meeting ever, at Tailwater Lodge in Altmar, with guest speakers Dave Turner, the Oswego County planning director and leader of the county's ARPA funding response, and Ellen Holst, president of the county economic development organization, Operation Oswego County.

Both North Shore and Salmon Rivers continued to pursue state action to address the subject of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the Oswego County portion of the Tug Hill region. Municipal receipt of funds from the state to replace taxes lost by land converted to state WMAs

has not been consistent, and in Oswego County, some towns receive such payments while others do not. North Shore and Salmon Rivers would like to see a more uniform approach executed by the state.

North Shore was successful in getting a traffic study performed for the portion of the COG within the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council area. The traffic studies developed will be useful in evaluating traffic demands on the North Shore.

In November of 2022, Constantia received news that the governor had awarded \$1.25 million in Community Block Grants through NYS Homes

and Community Development toward the cost of developing sewers in the Constantia-Bernhards Bay sewer district, which is being constructed to take the place of a significant amount of old and failing septic systems, many of which are

inadequate for more intensive demands placed on them since their original installation. ■



*Dave Turner addresses members of the North Shore and Salmon Rivers Councils of Governments.*



# Northern Oneida County Council of Governments

2022 brought a few big changes to NOCCOG municipalities through elections, resignations, and retirements. Filling vacancies has become a challenge, with many towns and villages struggling to find and retain employees, various board members, and other appointed positions.

Many NOCCOG municipalities have begun to use the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Countless projects are being considered, from park improvements to expanding LED lighting and new water meters.

Water and sewer system upgrades and improvements are underway in the villages of Camden and Sylvan Beach,

as well as the town of Vienna. Forestport is looking to expand their water district.

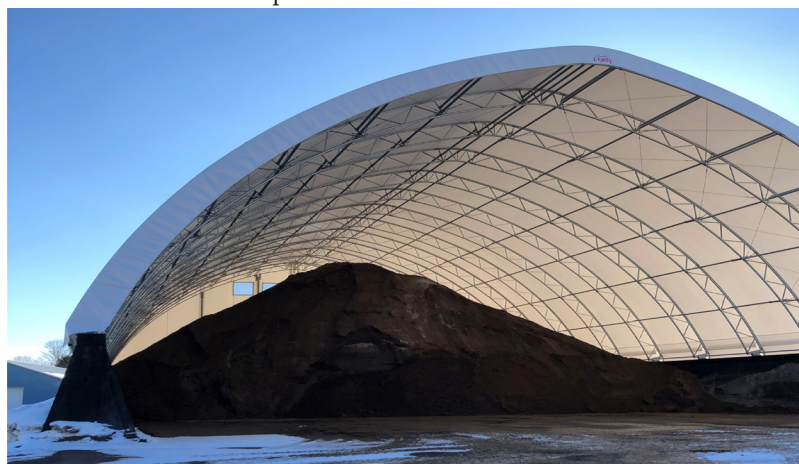
New sand and salt storage sheds were completed in Ava and Trenton. The towns of Remsen and Western are considering options for new municipal offices, while Sylvan Beach is reviewing plans for a new welcome center.

Vienna revised and adopted their comprehensive plan, while the towns of Remsen, Camden, Forestport, Boonville and the village of Boonville are preparing to revise plans. Western continues a town-wide property reassessment. Vienna and Ava updated their zoning regulations, and the towns of Trenton, Floyd, Camden, and

Boonville all modified their local solar laws. Steuben and Lee are reviewing their subdivision laws.

The Global Positioning System (GPS) program continued, with work done in Trenton and Camden. NOCCOG is expand-

ing its community outreach by starting a scholarship program in each of the four NOCCOG school districts. Associate Municipal Advisors Lisa Bellinger and Joe Rowlands continue to provide valuable assistance to NOCCOG. ■



*New salt storage shed in Ava.*

## 2022-23 Commission Funding

The Tug Hill Commission's funding remained steady for the period April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023. 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 2022-23, commission staff trained more than 1,100 local officials and others using Zoom virtual webinars as well as in-person trainings. The Local Government Conference was held in April after a two-year hiatus. Staff started working on 23 new projects across the region, made progress on an additional 54 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, renewable energy, shared services, broadband and recreation.

The commission employed 13 people, including four circuit riders for the region's five councils of governments. The other nine staff members provide program and administrative support out of the commission's Watertown office.

The commission looks forward to continuing its 50-year mission of helping our communities in the coming year. ■

## Welcome New Staff

The commission welcomed three new staff members this year. Taylor McKinney is a project specialist, coming to the commission after several years at Zoo New York. She has a B.A. in history and anthropology with a minor in medical anthropology from Syracuse University. Taylor enjoys working with animals, cultivating houseplants, art projects, and videogames.

Matthew Smith is the new planner, with a degree in political science and a minor in history from Siena College. He interned with the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) and the city of Saratoga Springs planning department. Matthew enjoys gardening, auto racing, and soccer.

Gabriel Yerdon is a project specialist, and previously worked as an eDNA technician with The Nature Conservancy and an environmental scientist contracted with the EPA. He studied environmental science and biology at Tufts University after completing a yearlong service-learning program in Brazil. Gabriel enjoys hunting, hiking, skiing, and traveling. ■



*From left: Taylor McKinney, Matthew Smith and Gabriel Yerdon.*



## NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION

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# Emerging Land Use Issues on Tug Hill

Commission planning staff are working hard to stay on the forefront of emerging land use issues affecting the region. These issues continue to be dominated by the influx of large scale solar power projects across Tug Hill. Many towns and villages have been working with planning staff on creating and updating

standards for reviewing these projects. Key to this work is finding a balance between agricultural preservation, rural character, and the state's alternative energy goals. It is important to note that while larger projects are reviewed and approved by the state Office for Renewable Energy Sources,

local regulations are taken into account in those reviews.

Short term rentals are another topic that many communities are grappling with, especially those with waterfront or other outdoor recreation amenities. Municipalities should know that they have tools at their

disposal to help these operations provide economic benefits while tempering any negative impacts on the neighborhoods in which they are located.

A third topic that continues to be an issue for many communities is that of small, under-the-radar campgrounds that pop up in areas with outdoor recreation opportunities. Several communities across the region have attempted to control these from becoming problems in terms of sanitation and other safety matters. The commission will continue to monitor and study these and other issues and produce issue and technical papers on them when needed. There are also numerous opportunities for in person or online training that covers these and other hot button topics. ■



*Solar array, courtesy Lewis County.*