

## NorCOG Public Survey Underway

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) is currently underway with an economic resilience and recovery study working with MRB Group, and seeks input from both local businesses and from the community at large.

The business survey is available at [www.tinyurl.com/norcogbusiness](http://www.tinyurl.com/norcogbusiness). The community survey can be found at [www.tinyurl.com/norcogcommunity](http://www.tinyurl.com/norcogcommunity). Each survey is brief – nine questions long.

Links to both surveys, and to more information on the study, are available on the [norcog.org](http://norcog.org) website under “Projects and Reports.”



## CTHC Fall Meeting Held

On Thursday, September 21, the Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) held their annual fall meeting at the Steak and Brew Restaurant in Turin. Thirteen of the 22 CTHC towns and villages were present, along with six Tug Hill Commission board and staff, members, as well as several other guests. Following approval of the previous meeting’s minutes and the most recent financial report, Chairman Roger Tibbetts presented the proposed 2024 budget with no increase from 2023. He also gave a budget projection which showed that dues should remain at current levels for several years. The proposed budget was approved.

The evening’s speaker was Candy Akin, director of the Lewis County Real Property office, describing the services they provide and the assistance they give to the assessors working in the Lewis County municipalities. The presentation on the amount of assistance the real property office provides was eye-opening for many attendees. Commission Executive Director Katie Malinowski also gave a report on the results of the commission’s 2023 local leaders survey, presented a draft of their amended outside region policy, and provided updates on several pieces of legislation they have been working on at the behest of the Tug Hill communities, including the minimum maintenance roads legislation for the town of Lorraine. Finally, the attendees were updated on several planning projects that commission staff is working on in CTHC.

Circuit Rider Angie Kimball spoke about interest from several more communities to join the Cooperative Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and that options to either increase the size of the ZBA or split into two boards are being investigated. Concerns about increasing vacancies in elected and appointed offices were discussed, with Osceola Town Supervisor Fran Yerdon leading a discussion on how to make more people aware of vacancies and get more people involved.

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## Traffic Safety Coordinator

The Tug Hill Commission has received grant funding, through the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC), to fund a part-time traffic safety coordinator (TSC) beginning on October 1, 2023. The TSC will assist communities within the four-county region in the form of community outreach and education, assistance with grant opportunities, conducting digital and physical data analysis on roadways, and providing assistance with the Metrocount traffic counter upon request. The position will also serve as a liaison between NYS Department of Transportation and highway departments, county traffic safety boards, local law enforcement agencies, GTSC, and local municipalities to address traffic safety concerns within communities. The TSC will serve municipalities by focusing on decreasing traffic related incidents while enhancing the safety and well-being of community residents.

Please contact Chris Barboza, planner at the commission, for more information, [chris@tughill.org](mailto:chris@tughill.org). He will be serving as the TSC for the foreseeable future, in addition to his planning work.

# Rodman Comprehensive Plan SWOT Exercise

The town of Rodman Comprehensive Plan Committee held a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) session on September 26 as part of their comprehensive plan update. The session, led by Tug Hill staff Matt Johnson, Christopher Barboza, Gabriel Yerdon, and Fort Drum intern Kaitlyn Valdez, targeted the input of planning board members, comprehensive plan committee members, and local residents. About 21 town residents (including board members) attended the session and provided valuable input.



A SWOT is a type of visioning exercise which helps gather thoughts and opinions about a community’s future. All comments will be compiled into a summary for the plan committee to review. Any relevant questions or concerns heard at the SWOT will be incorporated into a community survey to be sent out in the coming weeks.

# Black River Trash Bash Clean-Up

On September 13, members of the Jefferson County Water Quality Coordinating Committee participated in the Black River Trash Bash, an event held to raise awareness about the impact of trash and plastic pollution on water quality and the environment. The event was held at [Jefferson County’s Day Use Area in Felts Mills, NY](#). The reforestation property is about 292 acres in size with Felts Mills Creek, a tributary to the nearby Black River, running through it. About 60 pounds of litter was collected, which filled eight garbage bags. Thanks to White’s Lumber in Watertown for their donation of work gloves for the cleanup. Thanks also to [Channel 7 News for covering the story](#) and [North Country Public Radio](#) for covering this important event. The Lewis County WQCC held their event on September 26, and the Adirondack Communities Advisory League will be cleaning at Hawkinsville Dam on October 7. For more information about these events, contact Gabriel Yerdon ([gabriel@tughill.org](mailto:gabriel@tughill.org) or 315-785-2387) at the NYS Tug Hill Commission.



*Pictured from left to right: Emily Fell, Linda Gibbs, Brian Boyer, George Birth, Kaitlyn Valdez, Robin Hall, Jennifer Harvill, Rick Lopez, Anna Hardimann, and Gabriel Yerdon. Not pictured Rhonda Redder.*



# Tug Hill Traverse Concludes 2023 Trail Work

Core volunteers for the Tug Hill Traverse Trail recently enjoyed a picnic at the Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area in Montague, Lewis County to acknowledge the end of the 2023 trail maintenance and construction season. Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has partnered for several years with the Black River Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club to establish this historic 20-mile north/south hiking trail through the heart of Tug Hill. When complete, the Tug Hill Traverse Trail will extend from the DEC's Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area on the north to the West Leyden Osceola Rd on the south, and generally follows the East Branch of Fish Creek. Interim trailheads are located on the G&W and Michigan Mills roads, respectively.

Watch for opportunities to volunteer next field season!



Left to right: Bob McNamara, Ray Spahn, Cindy Stewart, Maddie Wakeman, Zach Wakeman, Bob Keller. Not picture, Jan Bogdanowicz.

# Salmon River Fish Hatchery Open House Well-Attended

On September 23, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) successfully hosted its 24<sup>th</sup> annual Salmon River Fish Hatchery Open House and Family Day in Altmar. For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Salmon River Fish Hatchery was packed in celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day.

The Salmon River Fish Hatchery's visitor center was filled with information tables and displays by conservation organizations, fishing and hunting clubs, outdoor recreation groups, and some state and federal entities to help people learn more about the Salmon River Corridor and the Lake Ontario ecosystem. Various native salmon, trout, and sturgeon species were at the forefront of these presentations. Special attention was paid to rare and threatened fish species in New York, and DEC staff also raised awareness for some invasive species. Visitors to the hatchery were welcomed to join guided tours of the facility, including behind-the-scenes insight on how the hatchery helps bolster the world-class salmon and trout fisheries in Lake Ontario and its tributaries, including the eponymous Salmon River.

The Tug Hill Commission was present among the tabling organizations, engaging with visitors, offering free Tug Hill Recreation Guides (also available online at [www.visittughill.com](http://www.visittughill.com)), and encouraging passersby to test their regional knowledge with the commission's trivia wheel.



Tug Hill Commission Project Specialists Gabriel Yerdon and Taylor McKinney.

# No Cost Technical Assistance to Develop and Implement a Drinking Water Source Protection Program

The NYS Departments of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Health (DOH) announced the availability of free technical assistance for municipalities to protect their public drinking water sources through the [Drinking Water Source Protection Program \(DWSP2\)](#). Up to 30 volunteer communities will work with technical assistance providers to develop programs that proactively protect public drinking water sources. Learn more by clicking [here](#).

The deadline to apply for the program is Tuesday, November 14th at 4 p.m.



# Glenfield & Western R.R.

The NYS Tug Hill Commission presents a historical workshop about the Glenfield & Western Railroad as part of their ongoing historical series.

The speaker will be Charley Sweredoski, a local resident interested in the history of the Glenfield & Western Railroad and has helped with researching and the compiling of facts and stories.



WHEN: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28,  
2023, AT NOON, 12P.M. TO 2P.M.

WHERE: WEST LEYDEN ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL, 1157 FISH CREEK RD, WEST  
LEYDEN, NY 13489

This is a live event with an optional live stream for remote viewers. All registrants will receive a zoom link, even if you choose to attend in-person.  
Please register for the event using the link below:

[www.tinyurl.com/glenfieldwesternrr](http://www.tinyurl.com/glenfieldwesternrr)

FOR QUESTIONS OR ASSISTANCE WITH REGISTERING, CONTACT [MSMITH@TUGHILL.ORG](mailto:MSMITH@TUGHILL.ORG)  
OR CALL 315-785-2384



# Meet our Intern: An Interview with Kaitlyn Valdez

## Where are you from?

I was born in Fort Stewart, Georgia. I spent time in Seattle early on, but I mostly identify with the time I grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. My father was in the military, and he raised me and my sister. We moved to Kansas City to be closer to my father's family and to have more educational opportunities. It was somewhat difficult to fit in, though as there were very few other military families in the area. That's part of the reason I joined the military: to move around, see new places, and meet different people.

## What are some of your favorite hobbies?

I like to take scenic hikes with my husband and my two dogs: a retriever mix, and small golden doodle, and play video games.

## Tell us a little about your experiences in the Army and Fort Drum?

The best part of my job is that I worked with people from all walks of life and all parts of the world. I had ideas on what I wanted to do with my life, but my time in the military has shown me that I want to work in a profession where I can be down on the ground, seeing changes happen, and be involved in the process.

## What are some of your favorite places to recreate or spend your free time?

Early on, I lived in Watertown, so I really liked and became familiar with Thompson Park. It's a favorite spot for my dogs to run around.

## What projects are you working on for the Tug Hill Commission?

I'm currently working on updates to the resource management plan for the RACOG area. I may also work on walkability for the interested communities in RACOG.

## Why are your projects at the Tug Hill Commission important?

Helping to bring out the potential of the area is a huge thing. My projects involve working with census data, which is interesting. I've noticed that the population in the region is declining, which is sad and surprising to me: personally, I really like this area, the snow, the seasons.

## What do you enjoy most about working at the Tug Hill Commission so far?

Everyone who works here is very committed and passionate about what they're doing. I also really like that the commission is non-regulatory and works by request to help communities. It can be harder for rural communities to find the same resources as larger areas, so helping to do that is important.

## What are some of the challenges with your internship and how do you solve them?

Really, the biggest challenge is that this is such a new experience: I just have to do it and keep going. It's a big shift going from a military to an office setting, but I'm starting to settle in more.

## What is in store for you after your internship with THC?

After my internship, I plan to go back to school to explore possibilities and find something that is the best fit for me but is also a good fit for whatever job market my husband and I decide to settle down in. In the past, I was interested in environmental science, but I am also interested in exploring urban planning or architecture.



Upcoming Event:

# Explore State and Federal Funding: Municipal Infrastructure Roundtable Discussion



**November 9, 2023**

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM ET

**Howard G. Sackett  
Technical Center**

located on the Glenfield  
campus of Jefferson-Lewis  
BOCES - 5836 State  
Highway 12, Glenfield, NY  
13343

**Are you interested in learning more about funding and financing municipal infrastructure in your town or village?**

**Join us** to learn about funding opportunities for safe and clean water management and other community investments from state and federal agency representatives. **Lunch will be provided.**

Following lunch, individual consultations with funders will be available to address your specific project funding questions and needs. We hope to see you there!



**Questions? Contact:**

Jes Eckerlin, [jeschn01@syr.edu](mailto:jeschn01@syr.edu)

**Register Today**

Click the button above, or register at: [efcnetwork.org/training-events/](https://efcnetwork.org/training-events/)



# Stormwater and Floodplain Trainings in Oneida County

Two training opportunities will be offered by the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (HOCCPP) and presented by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The first session is designed for codes officials. The second session is designed for planning and zoning board members. In both courses, attendees will learn about stormwater management and floodplain development. The course also provides an overview of the importance and goals of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Topics will include federal, state, and local responsibilities for water resource management and hazard mitigation to provide guidance for local administrators.

## **For Planning and Zoning Board Members**

October 25, 2023, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Mohawk Valley Community College (Utica Campus) Francis A. Wilcox Hall - WH225, 1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, NY 13501

[Click here for a flyer and registration form.](#) There is a \$10 registration fee, which includes refreshments. Please fill out the registration form and return it by October 17, 2023. For questions, contact the Oneida County Planning Department (315) 798-5710 or [planning@ocgov.net](mailto:planning@ocgov.net).

**This training provides an opportunity for Planning and Zoning Board members to receive two hours of training credits.**

## **For Codes Officials:**

Wednesday, November 8, 2023, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Madison-Oneida BOCES Costello Transportation Center, 1136 Freedom Drive, Oneida, NY 13421

[Click here for a flyer and registration form.](#) There is a \$15 registration fee, which includes refreshments. Please fill out the registration form and return it by October 31, 2023. For questions, contact the Oneida County Planning Department (315) 798-5710 or [planning@ocgov.net](mailto:planning@ocgov.net).

**This course (T02-07-2948) qualifies for 1 hour of NYS DOS code credits.**

## NYS GeoCON Held in Albany

Last week, Tug Hill staff members Matthew Smith and Taylor McKinney attended the NYS GeoCON, a conference for GIS professionals throughout New York State. The conference was held in Albany and featured many sessions and learning opportunities for those in attendance. Sessions included a walkthrough of the updates to the NYS Clearing-house website, a data hub for all things data, and *Interactive Zoning Maps: Solving Age Old Problems with GIS* which showcased the use of an interactive zoning map that was linked to the local code and regulations to help people better understand their local zoning code. Staff were able to network and make new connections, both locally and throughout the state.



### 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](#).