

Commission Adopts Updated Outside Region Policy

The Tug Hill Commission adopted an updated outside region policy at its December 11, 2023 board meeting, available in its entirety [here](#). The new policy reaffirms the commission's legislated charge to provide state assistance to local governments and organizations located in the area described as "lying between Lake Ontario, the Black River and Oneida Lake" as merited and needed because of the importance of these resources to the state, and because of the small population and relative poverty of the region. The purpose of the commission is to enable local governments, private organizations, and individuals to shape the future of the Tug Hill region, and to demonstrate and communicate ways that this can be done by other rural areas. Commission programs are geared toward the conservation and productive use of the natural resources of the region, strengthening of the long-term economy, employment, cultural and social resources, and the general well-being of the rural communities. The commission has facilitated local action as the most enduring and cost-effective method of retaining the rural and remote character of this land, and of retaining the independent way of life of its people and their economy.

The Tug Hill Commission delivers its services primarily through regional councils of governments (COGs), which currently consist of the Cooperative Tug Hill Council, the North Shore Council of Governments, the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments, the River Area Council of Governments, and the Salmon Rivers Council of Governments. The commission's financial and staff resources are finite and currently used to the fullest extent with the 59 towns and villages within the legislatively defined region, and the five additional communities that have joined regional COGs. Additional municipalities located in the general area have expressed interest in joining COGs and are of a similar nature and share natural resources with current Tug Hill communities, particularly watersheds.

With additional financial resources to support the salaries, benefits and associated non-personal expenses for additional staff members, the commission would be willing to serve additional communities between the commission's current boundary to the Lake Ontario shoreline, and directly adjacent to the commission's current boundary on the east of the Black River, totaling no more than 16 towns and villages, if those communities request membership and are accepted by a COG. However, until such time that additional financial resources are made available, the commission will not be able to provide more than minimal direction and assistance, as currently provided, to any additional outside region communities.

Please contact commission Executive Director Katie Malinowski with any questions regarding the outside region policy.

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Fort Drum Selected for Multi-Domain Task Force

Earlier this month, U.S. Senator Schumer announced that Fort Drum will add nearly 1,500 personnel by housing the U.S. Army Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) #2, along with Wiesbaden, Germany. The Army has planned to build five MDTFs to support the various combatant commands, with three units focused on the Pacific, one unit focused on Europe and one for global response. Fort Drum will share the MDTF supporting General Cavoli and the entire European Command (EUCOM) with the Army's base in Wiesbaden, Germany. MDTF soldiers will likely rotate between Wiesbaden and Fort Drum, starting in 2025.

The MDTF's combine land, air, sea, cyber, and space capabilities into one unit that supports combatant commanders (i.e. joint forces) and is essential to building joint readiness while strengthening the United States' interoperability with key allies and partners. The second MDTF was activated in 2021 in Wiesbaden but will now share its home with Fort Drum. The formal announcement is expected in mid-January.

New V-Fire Grants Due April 30

The New York State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-2024 Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) grant program is a state-funded \$25,000,000 competitive grant program that supports the enhancement of the security and safety of the citizens of New York State by providing critical funding to strengthen volunteer fire departments and districts statewide. Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$1,000,000 if proposing projects for construction, renovation, or purchase costs for critical facilities (buildings, training facilities, etc.) that support fire operations, or up to \$500,000 if proposing projects for allowable fire service equipment to upgrade and improve their response capabilities.

Only eligible entities that are located within NY and serve one or more local governments may apply. Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$1,000,000 if proposing projects for construction, renovation, or purchase costs for critical facilities (buildings, training facilities, etc.) that support fire operations, or up to \$500,000 if proposing projects for allowable fire service equipment to upgrade and improve their response capabilities. Eligible applicants include:

- **Volunteer Fire Companies** comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters, that are responsible for providing fire protection services to one or more jurisdiction(s).
- **Municipalities – Villages, Towns, Cities and Fire Districts** responsible for providing fire protection through a fire department comprised of 100% volunteer firefighter membership.
- **Counties and Municipal Shared Services Applications:** Counties may only apply on behalf of local volunteer fire departments that are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighter membership, provided the applying county has a minimum of 60% documented approval from the volunteer fire departments within the county that will directly benefit from the requested project(s). Requests for grant funds under a county application must be for shareable projects that will benefit and be accessible to the volunteer fire departments represented in the application. Two or more municipalities may apply for shared projects that will benefit and be accessible to two or more volunteer fire departments.

All nonprofit organizations are required to be prequalified or prequalified exempt prior to grant application. **Please note that prequalification in the Grants Gateway will transition to the Statewide Financial System (SFS) on January 16, 2024. Information regarding the transition can be found [here](#).** If you are not currently **prequalified or prequalified exempt** in the Grants Gateway, starting January 16, 2024, you will need to register your organization and complete the prequalification process in SFS. For additional information, please reference the Grants Management [website](#).

Questions regarding the SFY 2023-2024 V-FIRE grant program should be directed to Grant.Info@dhses.ny.gov. To the degree possible, each inquiry should cite the request for applications (RFA) section and paragraph to which it refers. Written questions will be accepted until noon on April 23, 2024. Deadline to apply is April 30, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. For additional information including the RFA, FAQ sheets and E-grant tutorials visit the [Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services website](#).

Tug Hill Commission 2024 Meeting Calendar

At the December business meeting, the commission board adopted their 2024 meeting calendar. For more details as dates approach, see the commission's [website](#).

| Date | Location | COG | Time |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Monday, January 22 | Trenton | NOCCOG | 10:00 a.m. |
| Monday, March 18 | Pulaski | SRCG | 10:00 a.m. |
| Monday, April 15 | Martinsburg | CTHC | 10:00 a.m. |
| Monday, May 20 | Central Square | NorCOG | 10:00 a.m. |
| Monday, June 17 | Denmark | RACOG | 10:00 a.m. |
| Monday, September 16 | Floyd | NOCCOG | 10:00 a.m. |
| Thursday, October 17 | TBD | Annual Dinner | TBD |
| Monday, December 9 | Watertown | | 10:00 a.m. |



Tug Hill Winter Wildlife Webinar Series

1 of 4

FISHER

TUESDAY JANUARY 16, 2024, 6PM

Join us for a four-part webinar series focusing on the diverse wildlife that inhabit Tug Hill.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation staff will present new research on Tug Hill and Adirondack fisher populations, and fisher ecology on Tug Hill.



**FISHER, OTTER,
BOBCAT, AND GROUSE
OH MY!!**

Tune in for the rest of the winter wildlife series, to tentatively include river otter, bobcat, and birds of Tug Hill.



Register at:

tinyurl.com/TugHillFisher

CONTACT INFO:

gabriel@tughill.org | 315-785-2387



Special District Formation and Knowledge Inventory Resources for Communities

The commission frequently collaborates with outstanding partners to support each other in common missions, and this year was no exception. When both the commission and Lewis County came together after hearing from many communities about the process of forming water districts, it was decided that a concise resource about the process would be useful for communities. Using the expertise of partners at the [Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center/Center for Sustainable Community Solutions](#) and the [New York Water Environment Association](#), a combined effort created [Special District Formation in NYS: A Quick Guide for Town Boards](#). If your community is thinking about forming a new water or sewer district, please consult this quick guide. It outlines the important steps and details about the process that you will have to consider. Along with that guide, additional resources are available at that same location.



POSITION KNOWLEDGE INVENTORY
Syracuse University
Environmental Finance Center
2023



Our partners at the Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center/Center for Sustainable Community Solutions also helped meet the need to create a resource about planning for personnel changes within towns and villages. When employees or elected officials leave their positions, they take with them all the experience and knowledge essential to the work they did, and critical to your organization, community, and current and future employees. If that knowledge is lost, it can undermine organizational capacity, and cause disruptions in services and performance. The [“Position Knowledge Inventory”](#) tool was developed to help municipalities and other organizations retain critical organizational knowledge and expertise in order to ensure continuity of service long after positions change.



Special District Formation in NYS:

A Quick Guide for Town Boards

NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities Program 3.0

The NYS Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program has evolved with its latest iteration, CEC 3.0, presenting enhanced opportunities for municipalities. This round introduces larger grant allocations, additional clean energy actions, and various prospects for securing funding, executing sustainable projects, and generating cost savings.

CEC 3.0 introduces two types of grants, each requiring a separate agreement with NYSERDA:

Designation Grants: Municipalities earn points by completing high-impact actions, each assigned specific points. Different point thresholds and designation levels lead to increased grant funding. Funding levels decrease slightly after October 1, 2024. Municipalities must submit actions qualifying them for the designation grant by 9/30/24 at 11:59 p.m. EST to be eligible for funding. For detailed information on designation requirements and restrictions, municipalities are encouraged to read the full funding opportunity available on the [NYSERDA website](#).

Action Grants: Action Grants are available for completing community campaigns. Community Campaign areas are community solar, clean heating and cooling, and electric vehicles. Municipalities can enroll in community campaigns at tiers 1-3 depending on community engagement, unlocking progressively higher grant opportunities.

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission will hold a webinar providing an overview of the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities 3.0 program on January 10, 2024 at 1 p.m. Register [here](#).

| Designation Level | Number of Points | Funding for Small Municipalities (Up to 39,999 population) | Funding for Large Municipalities (40,000 or greater population) |
|---|------------------|--|---|
| CEC Designation - must complete 4 high-impact actions | N/A | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| 1-Star Designation | 1,000 | \$10,000 | \$10,000 |
| 2-Star Designation | 3,000 | \$50,000 | \$125,000 |
| 3-Star Designation | 5,000 | \$100,000 | \$200,000 |
| 4-Star Designation | 7,000 | \$175,000 | \$275,000 |
| 5-Star Designation | 9,000) | \$250,000 | \$350,000 |

Current funding levels through September 30, 2024.

NYS Archives LGRMIF Grants Kickoff Workshop January 9

NY State Archives staff David Lowry, Maria McCashion, Michael Martin, Monica Hauck-Whealton, and Sarah Durling will present a 2024-25 Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund webinar on Tuesday, January 9 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. The webinar will provide information on:

- how to prepare for grant writing season
- important dates and requirements
- the resources and contacts to prepare a strong application

Register on the [NYS Archives Workshop webpage](#). Registration for this webinar will close at 4 p.m. on January 8. All webinars are recorded for future viewing.

Working Group Analyzes Battery Storage System Fires

In response to battery storage systems fires in Jefferson, Orange, and Suffolk Counties over the summer of 2023, Governor Hochul convened the Interagency Fire Safety Working Group on Emergency Response. Earlier this month, the working group's initial findings on the battery storage system fires in the three counties were released.

The working group's initial findings found that there were no reported injuries at the battery storage system site locations. They also reported that there were no harmful levels of toxins detected at the sites or in the surrounding areas based on air, soil, and water quality analysis. The working group is currently working with the impacted facilities to obtain Root Cause Analysis (RCA) reports for analysis by subject matter experts.

Other functions of the working group include evaluating fire codes and conducting a statewide inspection of battery storage systems above 300kW. In the first quarter of 2024, the working group is expecting to release a draft of fire code review recommendations for public comment. In the second quarter of 2024, the working group will be concluding the statewide inspections of battery storage systems.

Upcoming Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Events

More information is available on the [Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust website](#). Reservations required for most events.

First Day Outing, January 1, 2024, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Join Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT) for a casual first day walk on Monday, January 1 beginning at 11 a.m. at THTLT's 140-acre Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Rutland. Well behaved dogs on leashes are welcome to join, too.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Walk and Talk, January 10, 2024, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Join THTLT for a guided walk at the Trenton Greenbelt Trails, Holland Patent on Wednesday, January 10 and learn to recognize and report Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) (or the lack thereof) – an invasive insect that kills hemlock trees. This is the third of five informational survey outings being held in and near the Tug Hill region this winter in partnership with the St. Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM).

The next HWA walk and talk will be held on February 14 at Camden Forest Park.

Blake Sanctuary Owl Prowl and Twilight Walk, January 19, 2024, 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Starting 30 minutes before sunset, enjoy a twilight walk and owl prowling with THTLT at the Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary. Learn about the ways animals are adapted to a low-light lifestyle, look for all types of animal tracks and signs, and look and listen for owls!

Additional Owl Prowl Twilight Walks: Forest Park on January 27, 2024, and Blake Sanctuary on February 23, 2024.

Salmon River Falls Snowshoe Walk, February 10, 2024, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Take an easy afternoon walk with THTLT in the fresh air at Salmon River Falls Unique Area near Altmar. Snowshoes if snow cover allows, but snow boots should be fine, too.

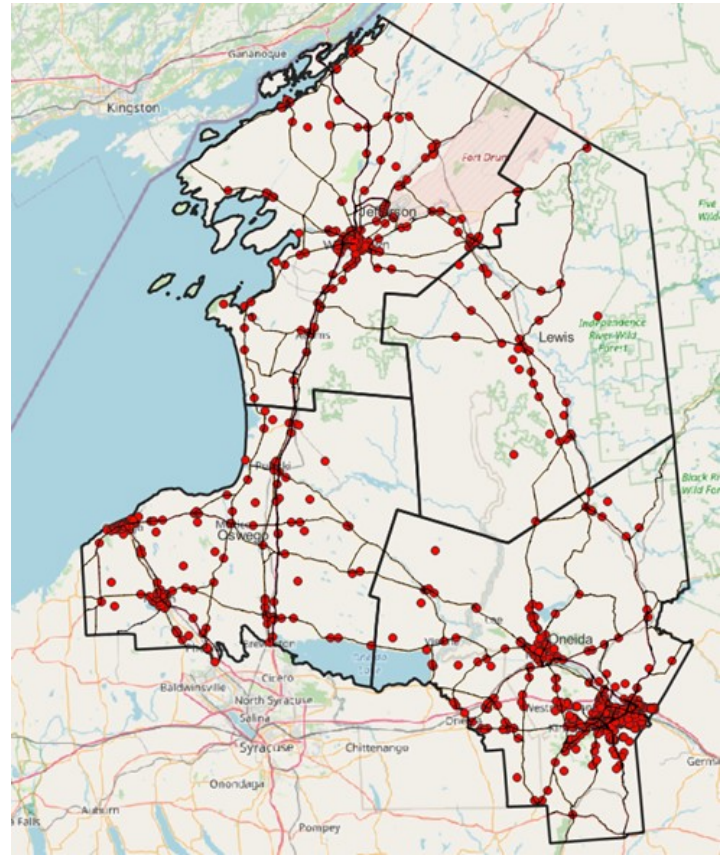
Rodman Comprehensive Plan Survey begins on January 1



The town of Rodman is currently undergoing a comprehensive plan update. As part of the update, a town wide survey will be conducted. Postcards will be sent out to residents to encourage public participation by explaining what a comprehensive plan is, and how to take the survey. The survey will be available online and paper copies are available by calling the town clerk at (315) 232-2522. The survey is scheduled to open on January 1 and run for a month before closing on February 1.

Tug Hill Traffic Corner: Distracted Driving Crash & Ticket Data 2023

Distracted driving continues to be one of the top contributing factors in motor vehicle crashes in New York State. Distracted driving includes any activities that take away the driver's attention. Activities such as talking on a cell phone, texting, eating, drinking, using the radio, changing navigation settings, etc., can divert the driver's attention from the road. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), it takes "five seconds to read a text message. A vehicle moving at 55 mph can travel about the length of a football field within that time." From January 1, 2023 through December 21, 2023, 14.5% of all crashes involved a form of distracted driving within the four-county region. Out of the total number of crashes where distracted driving was a contributing factor, 10.2% of the crashes involved young drivers between the ages of 16 – 20. The figures below show locations of crashes, number of crashes by county, and tickets issued by county for incidents of distracted driving.



Tips to Prevent Distracted Driving

- Don't text and drive: pull off the road at a safe location (preferably a text-stop).
- Set navigation settings, radio stations, and climate control settings before driving.
- Conduct personal hygiene at home.
- Eat before or after your trip: drink/food spills are a major cause of distraction.
- Store loose items: loose items rolling on the floorboard take attention from driving.
- Know the law in the state you're traveling in.
- Tending to kids: pull over at a safe location to deal with situations involving kids in the car.

| Distracted Driving Jan 1 - Dec 21, 2023 | | |
|---|--------------|----------------------------|
| | Total 2023 | Youth Drivers Only (16-20) |
| Jefferson | 285 | 25 |
| Lewis | 35 | 6 |
| Oneida | 899 | 93 |
| Oswego | 228 | 23 |
| Crash Totals 4-CTY | 1,447 | 147 |

| 2023 Tickets Issued | | |
|---------------------|------------|---------|
| | Cell Phone | Texting |
| Jefferson | 216 | 439 |
| Lewis | 20 | 66 |
| Oneida | 338 | 445 |
| Oswego | 187 | 365 |

Contact Us

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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](#).