

Executive

§ 847-a. Statement of legislative findings and purpose. The legislature hereby finds that for approximately twenty-five years, the Tug Hill commission has provided essential planning and technical services to the sixty-two local governments and to residents in the twenty-one hundred square mile Tug Hill region.

The legislature further finds that, lying between Lake Ontario, the Black River and Oneida Lake, is a region of approximately twenty-one hundred square miles that encompasses towns and villages scattered in a vast acreage of forest and farm land. The core of the region encompasses more than eight hundred square miles of remote forest land and the headwaters of several major rivers, with much of the area inaccessible by public road. These lands and waters are important to the state of New York as municipal water supply, as wildlife and plant habitat, as key resources supporting forest industry, farming, recreation and tourism and traditional land uses such as hunting and fishing. State assistance through the Tug Hill commission to help Tug Hill local governments and organizations is 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 legislature further finds that the Tug Hill commission, originally established in nineteen hundred seventy-two as a temporary state commission, has studied the Tug Hill region, provided technical assistance to the region's local governments and reported to the governor and legislature regarding the conservation and development of the Tug Hill 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 legislature finds that the Tug Hill commission's track record demonstrates its capability for working together with towns and villages for appropriate community and economic development and resource protection. Its continuation will enable municipalities to perform their basic local government functions.

It is the purpose of this article to insure continued municipal assistance, conservation, preservation and development in the region by continuing the Tug Hill commission, in order to serve those local government and regional needs, now and in the future.

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§ 847-b. Tug Hill commission; continuation. There is hereby continued the Tug Hill commission, hereinafter referred to as the commission, to consist of nine members to be appointed as follows: three by the governor, three by the temporary president of the senate and three by the speaker of the assembly. All of the appointees of each such officer shall be residents of the Tug Hill region, which includes, in Jefferson county, the towns of Adams, Champion, Lorraine, Rodman, Rutland, Watertown and Worth; in Lewis county, the towns of Denmark, Harrisburg, Lewis, Leyden, Lowville, Martinsburg, Montague, Osceola, Pinckney, Turin and West Turin; in Oneida county, the towns of Annsville, Ava, Boonville, Camden, Florence, Floyd, Forestport, Lee, Remsen, Steuben, Trenton, Vienna and Western; and in Oswego county, the towns of Albion, Amboy, Boylston, Constantia, Hastings, Orwell, Parish, Redfield, West Monroe and Williamstown. At least two commissioners shall be selected from each of the four counties respectively. The commission shall choose from among its members a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. The members of the Tug Hill commission serving on the effective date of this article shall continue in office and shall be deemed and held to constitute the members of the Tug Hill commission until their terms expire on August first, nineteen hundred ninety-eight. Thereafter, the term of office of each member appointed shall be for five years. Each member shall hold office until a successor has been appointed and qualified. Vacancies in membership of the commission occurring from any cause shall be filled by the officer authorized to make the original appointment of the member whose office becomes vacant.

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§ 847-c. Tug Hill commission powers and duties. The commission shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To adopt and use a seal; to sue and be sued; to appoint and remove officers, agents and employees and determine their qualifications, duties and compensation; to acquire, hold and dispose of personal property; to retain or employ counsel, private consultants, and independent contractors; to make and execute contracts and all other instruments necessary or convenient for the exercise of its powers and functions under this article.

2. To prepare, publish and disseminate information or reports to highlight for state agencies, local governments, and the general public issues, problems, and opportunities relevant to the Tug Hill region, in concert with state and federal agencies and others.

3. To stimulate action by public and private organizations on regionwide issues, problems and opportunities that affect the Tug Hill region, with primary emphasis on possible solutions at the local level and with attention to the ways in which information developed and experience gained in the Tug Hill region may be usefully shared elsewhere in New York state.

4. To request and receive from any department, division, office, board, bureau, commission, agency, or instrumentality of the state and from any political subdivision or agency thereof, such assistance and data as will enable it to conduct its studies and investigations hereunder.

5. To assist local governments and other appropriate state and local organizations to plan and work for a positive future, and to do this, as far as possible, through intermunicipal cooperation and through technical assistance, including planning assistance, legal assistance, training, citizen education and participation assistance, and assistance in preparation of grant applications to other entities.

6. To serve a coordinating role in utilizing the capabilities of other organizations to carry out the duties prescribed in this section.

7. To establish a central clearinghouse for technical studies, which may be used by members of the public, local governments, and state agencies in addressing state and regionwide resource conservation and development issues.

8. To develop agreements with local, county, or regional agencies to provide staff services; through grants or contracts to help finance services for intermunicipal cooperation; to provide planning services in conjunction with county planning departments and regional planning boards, and to provide supplementary technical assistance and educational services through public or private groups.

9. To apply for and receive from the federal and state government and public and private agencies, funds to accomplish the purposes of the commission and to solicit, receive and utilize gifts and donations of any kind from any source.

10. To assist municipalities in preparing and adopting comprehensive planning programs, including appropriate laws, ordinances and codes.

11. To enter into agreements for the extension of its powers and duties to other local governments, in concert with local, state and federal agencies and others.

12. To lease and manage real property, solely for the purpose of providing for the official offices of said commission.

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§ 847-d. Compensation. The members of such commission shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for their expenses actually and necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties hereunder within the amount available therefor by appropriation. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provisions of law, general, special or local, no officer or employee of the state or of any civil division thereof, shall be deemed to have forfeited or shall forfeit his office or employment by reason of his or her acceptance of membership on such commission.

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§ 847-e. Reports. The commission shall report on its progress in relation to its legislative purpose to the governor and to the legislature annually on or before the thirty-first day of March of each year. The commission shall also report every five years on the results of a survey of local officials throughout the Tug Hill region in regard to the effectiveness of commission programs.

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§ 847-f. Commission staff; benefits. The Tug Hill commission staff shall be eligible for management/confidential benefits as are available in subdivision two of section eleven of chapter four hundred sixty of the laws of nineteen hundred eighty-two as amended.