

## A Walk Through History: “Castorland Ramble” Well-Attended

In partnership with the Oneida County History Center, the Tug Hill Commission successfully hosted the “Castorland Ramble,” its first-ever driving tour on Saturday, October 12. With approximately 30 people in attendance, the tour group followed loosely in the footsteps of French explorers Simon Desjardins and Pierre Pharoux. Each site created a more vivid picture of the travels of Desjardins and Pharoux, tying in famous names and places along the way, creating a web of connections that influenced early American history.



Loraine O'Donnell discussing the history of Constable Hall.

The tour began in Lyons Falls at the public boat launch below the falls. Hundreds of years ago, the extent of the Black River in the deeded Castorland tract was unknown, and it was approximately at this point that Desjardins and Pharoux reported seeing a hitherto-unknown waterfall that greatly impeded their progress. The Lyons Falls Boat Launch is adjacent to the site, now private property, where the two explorers established a small “Castorland” farm downstream of the falls.



Patrick Reynolds, beginning tour at Lyons Falls Boat Launch.

The second stage of the tour included a stop at Constable Hall, A Federal-style mansion-turned-house-museum, guided by Constable Hall’s executive director Loraine O’Donnell. Constable Hall is foundational to early New York History, with the Constables being one of the foremost early New York families.

The next leg of the tour crossed into Oneida County at the Steuben Memorial State Historic Site in Steuben. Baron von Steuben, a Prussian military officer, is perhaps best remembered for his contributions to the American Revolutionary War as Inspector General of the Continental Army. His efforts reformed the army into a disciplined fighting force, and his written works continue to

influence modern U.S. Army manuals. What is less well-known, however, is Steuben’s friendship with Pharoux and Desjardins, who stayed with him at his cabin for shelter and relief from illness. The site includes a log cabin, built as a faithful replica of Steuben’s original estate cabin. Steuben’s body has since been re-interred with a large memorial tomb, accessible to public via a small trail to the “Sacred Grove”.

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### Commission Board Meeting

Monday, October 21 at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Martinsburg,  
5405 Cemetery Road, Martinsburg, New York 13404.  
The public is welcome to attend.

## Castorland Ramble continued from pg. 1

The tour reached its conclusion in Utica at the Oneida County History Center, with a behind-the-scenes viewing of its special collections. The collections are a wealth of historical information, perhaps some of the most unique artifacts included: Baron von Steuben's sword (not a replica), a 1796 Castorland coin replica, and the original map of the Baron's estate as designed by Pharoux, which sadly never came to fruition with the baron's passing shortly after plans were completed.

The commission would like to extend its gratitude to the Oneida County History Center for partnering on this event and Patrick Reynolds, the director of public programs, for his expertise and passion on the subject.

To view Patrick Reynolds's "Castorland Connections" presentation, see the YouTube video [here](#).



Baron von Steuben's memorial, in the Sacred Grove.



Interior of the cabin replica at the Steuben Memorial Site.



Special collections, Pharoux's map & Baron von Steuben's sword.

## Presentations Available: 2024 NYSACC Conference

The 2024 NYS Association of Conservation Commissions' Conference on the Environment was September 18-20. On September 18, a virtual day of presentations included topics about renewable energy, natural resources economy, the environment, recreation and tourism, grant writing, NYS 30x30 and 70x30 plans, and career advice for students. Presenters represented public, private, and nonprofit sectors. All presentations can be viewed on YouTube here: [tinyurl.com/NYSACC-Presentations](https://tinyurl.com/NYSACC-Presentations). Each video description indicates the timing of the presentations, presenters, and titles.

## Work Zone Package Give Away

The NYS LTAP Center - Cornell Local Roads Program is offering a eighth year of its work zone package program, which provides sets of work zone equipment at no charge to highway and public works departments in NY. All highway and public works departments are eligible to request a package, but priority will be given to those agencies that recently lost equipment due to a flood, fire, theft, or other unforeseen circumstances. This program started in 2009, with funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) to purchase over 65 sets of work zone equipment. This year's grant is from the GTSC and will allow for the purchase of 22 sets of equipment.

The work zone kit includes:

- 2 - ANSI Class II vests
- 2 - Whistles with lanyards
- 2 - Hard hats
- 2 - 18" stop-slow paddles
- 6 - 36" roll-up signs
- 6 - Sign stands
- 20 - 28" cones with stripes
- 2 - Work zone pocket guides
- 2 - Flagger pocket guides



Applications must be completed and returned by November 15, 2024. Fill out the application [online](#) or [download](#) it and email it to [clrp@cornell.edu](mailto:clrp@cornell.edu), or visit the NYS LTAP Center - Cornell Local Roads Program work zone giveaway webpage: [cals.cornell.edu/nysltap-local-roads/work-zone-packages](https://cals.cornell.edu/nysltap-local-roads/work-zone-packages). If your municipality does not receive a free kit, the packet is available for purchase for \$2000.



# The Little Voices by Lee Wasmuth



## TUG HILL'S FORGOTTEN AUTHOR

Tuesday, November 19, 2024  
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
via Zoom



### ABOUT

Portraying daily life and a burgeoning romance set in Tug Hill Country, *The Little Voices* depicts the mostly-autobiographical life of Lee Wasmuth, a Tug Hill native whose early childhood was spent in the Page community along the Glenfield & Western Railroad. Starting in Fall of 1933, twenty-five segmented chapters of *The Little Voices* were printed in installments of the Watertown Daily Times. In the telling of Wasmuth's story, the reader is invited to experience familiar names and places on the core forest of Tug Hill and Black River Valley through the lens of the fictional protagonist, Allan Hargrave.

Learn more about Wasmuth, *The Little Voices*, and life on Tug Hill through Jill Markham O'Hara, Wasmuth's great niece.

### REGISTRATION

Attendance is free, but pre-registration is required. To register, use the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/tughilllittlevoices>

Or call the Tug Hill Commission office at (315) 785-2380.



# Cornell Local Roads Webinars Online

The NYS Local Technical Assistance Program hosted by the Cornell Local Roads Program has many webinars and online training courses available for those unable to attend in-person training programs. Additional details as well as registration information are on the Cornell Local Roads Program website's [Training and Events](#) page.

Their "Foundational Webinar" series is an ongoing series of free webinars focused on important principles key to local highway operations and management. Each webinar offers a way to learn the basics of a particular topic, and with all subjects taken together, they cover the foundation of local highway issues. Many are offered yearly or every other year to allow people to access the entire series. The current series begins November 12 with "The Basics of a Good Road" and ends March 11, 2025, with "Pavement Maintenance," with generally weekly webinars between the two, all held on Tuesdays from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Additionally, there is a "Roadway Departure" webinar series which includes four classes starting with "Combating Roadway Departures" on October 31. The remaining webinars in the series are on "Local Road Safety Plans", "Proven Countermeasures", and "Improvements at Curves" which will be shown on the following Thursdays from 9:00 -10:00 a.m.

# Cannabis Community Grants and Locator Maps Available

The New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) has announced availability of the first round of the Community Investment Program, funded by taxes on legal adult-use cannabis sales. In this first 2024 grant cycle, only 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations who provide services for young people (individuals ages 0-24 years) in designated geographies of New York State are eligible to apply. Organizations do NOT have to be affiliated with any cannabis-related businesses or activities to apply. Details on how the grants will be distributed geographically are available on the OCM website at [cannabis.ny.gov/reinvestment](https://cannabis.ny.gov/reinvestment).

In this first 2024 grant cycle, grant funds can be used to support a broad array of services for young people, ages 0-24, focusing on at least one of three program areas: mental health, workforce development, or housing. The total available funding for this grant opportunity is \$5,000,000. Each individual grant award will total \$100,000.

**OCM has also** launched its [Legal Online Cannabis Activities Locator \(LOCAL\) map](#). Municipalities may find these tools useful for viewing legal and regulated industries in their areas. The LOCAL map features two key mapping tools. One is an industry-focused map tailored for applicants, licensees, and stakeholders, which offers advanced capabilities such as generating proximity reports, searching licenses, exporting data, and navigating multiple data layers to meet regulatory requirements. The other is a consumer-focused dispensary map, which allows the user to easily locate the nearest legal and regulated dispensary.

# October 22 FOIL & Open Meetings Law Info Sessions

On Tuesday, October 22, Kristin O'Neill, deputy director and counsel for the Committee on Open Government, will be presenting two virtual information sessions; [Freedom of Information Law](#) (FOIL) from 10:00 - 11:40 a.m. followed by [Open Meetings Law](#) from 1:00 - 2:40 p.m. All are welcome to sign up for one or both programs. Each program will consist of a one-hour overview of the statute, followed by 30 minutes of a question-and-answer period.

Pre-registration is required, and all registrations will be automatically approved. A confirmation email will be received from WebEx, with instructions for joining the session. If registrants do not see the confirmation email, it is advised to check spam or junk folders, as staff is not able to provide WebEx technical support.

# SBA Loan Assistance and FEMA Disaster Aid

Homeowners, residents, and businesses in the North Country can now apply for loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to aid recovery from severe weather events, including the remnants of Tropical Storm Debby and the flooding on July 10. Federal assistance is available in contiguous counties including Clinton, Franklin, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Oneida, Oswego, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington.

## SBA Loan Details

- **Homeowners** can apply for loans up to **\$500,000** to repair their primary residences.
- **Homeowners and renters** are eligible for loans up to **\$100,000** to repair or replace damaged personal property.
- **Business owners** can seek loans up to **\$2 million** for replacing real property, inventory, machinery, and other physical losses.
- **Businesses and non-profits** may apply for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to **\$2 million** to maintain necessary working capital until normal operations resume.

## Key Deadlines:

- Applications for loans related to physical property damage must be submitted by **November 8, 2024**.
- The deadline for Economic Injury applications is **June 9, 2025**.

For detailed information about these low-interest disaster loans, including application procedures, visit the SBA's website, [here](#), or contact their Customer Service Center at **(800) 659-2955**.

In addition to SBA loans, FEMA has announced federal disaster assistance for New York to support recovery efforts in areas impacted by Tropical Storm Debby from August 8–10, 2024. This assistance is available to state, tribal, and eligible local governments, as well as certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis. Public Assistance federal funding will help with emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the storm in counties including Allegany, Broome, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Ontario, Steuben, St. Lawrence, and Yates. Additionally, hazard mitigation measures are funded statewide. Learn more on [FEMA's website](#).

This is an important opportunity for residents and businesses in the Tug Hill Region to secure the financial help they need to recover from the impact of severe weather events.

## Upcoming Watershed Meetings November 14 and 15

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Great Lakes program is holding a next round of Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA) Sub-Basin Work Group meetings this fall to provide updates on baseline conditions characterization, network with work group members, and coordinate work planning.

The Southeast Lake Ontario meeting will be on Thursday, November 14 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Skä•noñh Great Law of Peace Center, 6680 Onondaga Lake Parkway, Liverpool. An optional center tour will be held from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. [Click here to register](#) (in-person and virtually).

The Northeast Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River meeting will be on Friday, November 15 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Dobisky Center, 100 Riverside Ave., Ogdensburg. [Click here to register](#) (in-person and virtually).

Please reach out to DEC Great Lakes Program staff at [great-lakes@dec.ny.gov](mailto:great-lakes@dec.ny.gov) for questions about the work group meetings.



# Transportation Resiliency Survey Open Through October 25

The Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the city of Watertown, has initiated a transportation resiliency study along with the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). The purpose of the study is to assess how weather and extreme weather events impact transportation accessibility and travel for residents. As part of this effort, WJCTC is conducting a survey to gather input from the community on their experiences with weather-related disruptions to their travel.

The information collected will help identify key issues and could play a significant role in security funding opportunities. These funds could then be used by municipalities to improve local infrastructure and enhance transportation resiliency. Residents/community members are encouraged to participate in the survey, which can be accessed at the following link: [bartonloguidi-ce.mysocialpinpoint.com/wjctc-resiliency-study](https://bartonloguidi-ce.mysocialpinpoint.com/wjctc-resiliency-study). The survey closes on October 25.

## October 28 Compost Workshop

The Center for EcoTechnology (CET), in partnership with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), will host a free compost site operators' workshop at Whitten Family Farm in Winthrop, NY on October 28. This full-day event focuses on best practices for composting food scraps and is open to operators from various backgrounds.

Led by expert James McSweeney of Compost Technical Services, the workshop includes an introduction to composting; recipe development; pile monitoring and management; troubleshooting and neighbor relations; and site design principles. Participants will begin with a classroom session, followed by hands-on activities at Whitten Family Farm.

This workshop is intended for operators of composting facilities, community composting site operators, and individuals interested in starting commercial operations

Priority registration is available for New York-based composters. To register and for more information, visit CET's [website](#) or contact [RethinkFoodWasteNY@cetonline.org](mailto:RethinkFoodWasteNY@cetonline.org) or 866-306-0911.

## Association of Towns February Conference Registration Open

Registration is open for the Association of Towns of the State of New York's (AOT) 2025 Annual Meeting and Training School. It will be held from February 16 through February 18 at the NYC Marriot Marquis. [Register by November 1](#) to secure discounted registration and hotel rates. A tentative agenda is also available online.

## SLELO PRISM HWA Survey Trainings

The St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) is offering Hemlock Woolly Adelgid survey trainings. Join guided hikes with SLELO PRISM and their partners at the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to learn to survey for and report hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA)—an invasive insect that kills hemlock trees. Hikes are held once a month from October through March, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., at various public trails.



The first hike will be on October 30 at the Inman Glide Trail in Rodman. Participants will learn how to identify hemlock trees and HWA and how to report observations to NYiMapinvasives. Registration is required. For details and a full schedule, please visit [www.sleloinvasives.org/event/7382/](http://www.sleloinvasives.org/event/7382/).

### Contact Us

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To request our newsletter electronically please email [gwen@tughill.org](mailto:gwen@tughill.org).

For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our [calendar](#).