

Best Practices for Land Use, Code Enforcement, and Property Tax Assessment in Amish Communities Workshop January 28

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments and the Tug Hill Commission have organized a free workshop on Tuesday, January 28, from 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. at the Town of Lee Municipal Offices, 5808 Stokes Lee Center Road, Lee Center, NY 13363, with a snow date of Thursday, January 30, same time and location. Refreshments will be served, and all are welcome to join but must register in advance at www.tinyurl.com/NOCCOGworkshop or reach out to John Healt at jhealt@tughill.org, 315-941-2818.

Local officials often find themselves navigating the intersection of modern-day responsibilities and the traditional way of life upheld Amish communities. This three-part workshop provides an opportunity for assessors, municipal officials, planning and zoning board members, and code enforcement professionals to explore these unique challenges, while gaining a better understanding of the Amish beliefs and culture. Invited presenters will share insights and discuss practical solutions that support local compliance while continuing to respect long-standing community values. The topics covered will include an introduction to the Amish culture, proactive planning and zoning, code enforcement best practices, and assessment best practices. There will also be ample time for questions and answers. Speakers include George Frantz, Associate Professor, City and Regional Planning, Cornell University; Brian Tolisen, Deputy Director, NYS Department of State Division of Building Standards and Codes; and Warren J. Wheeler, IAO, Executive Director, NYS Assessors Association.

Register Now for Tug Hill Local Government Conference

Local government officials across Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego counties and beyond can now register for the Tug Hill Commission's 34th annual Local Government Conference to be held at the Turning Stone Conference Center, 5218 Patrick Road, Verona, NY 13478. Registration and detailed session descriptions for both the Tuesday, April 1 full day of training and the Monday, March 31 afternoon focused sessions are available at tughill.org/localgovernmentconference/. There are also details about hotel accommodations and exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities. Please call the office at 315-785-2380 with any questions.

In This Issue

- Best Practices for Land Use, Code Enforcement and Property Tax Assessment in Amish Communities Workshop
- Register for THC Local Government Conference
- Basics of Running a Meeting Webinar
- ACORN Community Brainstorming Session
- NBRC Grant Program Webinars
- LGRMIF Grants
- DEC Releases Bobcat Management Plan
- DEC Seeks Trappers Assistance with Furbearer Health Research
- Fiscal Oversight Webinar
- Annual Tree Sales at Conservation Districts and NYS DEC
- Upcoming THTLT Events

The conference draws over 600 attendees and over 25 exhibitors, and provides training and networking opportunities for town supervisors, village mayors, town and village board members, clerks, planning and zoning board members, highway superintendents, assessors, and other government officials. Anyone is welcome to attend. Registrations can be completed online with credit card payment, or through the mail with a check.

The traditional **main conference** and concurrent sessions will take place **Tuesday, April 1**. The regular registration fee is \$90 (\$180 after February 28). The full day features topics ranging from the role of the code enforcement officer, regulating short-term rentals, fire protection, siting and permitting of renewable energy projects, and DEC's new freshwater wetlands regulations. Several courses are eligible for credit in the [Association of Towns'](#) Certified Town Official program.

Monday afternoon, March 31, will feature two concurrent sessions from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.: **Tackling Vacancy, Blight, and Housing in Small Towns & Rural Communities** and **Budgeting and Accounting for Small Communities Mini-Course**. There is a \$25 fee for the afternoon sessions (\$50 after February 28).

The **conference reception** will be held on **Monday evening, March 31**, from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m., sponsored by our platinum sponsor, [GYMO Architecture, Engineering & Land Surveying](#). There is a \$20 fee for this event (\$40 after February 28, 2025). Hearty appetizers will be served, and a cash bar will be available.

Basics of Running a Meeting Webinar January 23

The MRB Group and Hancock Estabrook are offering free annual training to assist local governments, municipal officials, and planning and zoning boards members. The program includes ten hours of remote training designed to provide a comprehensive education that encompasses all aspects of municipal governance. Each program in the series will be provided remotely on the fourth Thursday of each month with subject matter experts from MRB Group and knowledgeable attorneys from [Hancock Estabrook, LLP](#). Many topics can qualify for the education requirements for members of planning boards and zoning boards of appeals, who need four hours of training credits each year, upon approval of individual municipalities.

The first webinar, "Getting it Together: The Basics of Running a Meeting" will be held on Thursday, January 23 from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Register [here](#).

Community Brainstorming Session January 30

The Adirondack Climate Outreach and Resilience Network (ACORN) will hold a community listening session for the Tug Hill region on **Thursday, January 30, from 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.** at the **Howard G. Sackett Technical Center**, 5836 NY-12, Glenfield, NY 13343. Light dinner fare will be served.



This event aims to bring together community members, local organizations, and leaders to explore the needs and solutions to help Tug Hill communities build resilience to changing weather patterns, such as warmer winters, flooding, and storms. All are encouraged to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas. Together, proactive solutions will be identified that can help the region adapt to these changing conditions. This will also identify specific needs to bring federal, state, and private funding to the area. If you have any questions about the event, please contact Jillian Lee at 315-785-2406 or jillian@tughill.org or ACORN's Project Coordinator, Sunita Halasz, at sunitahalasz@gmail.com. Please register [here](#).

Northern Border Regional Commission Spring 2025 Grant Program Webinars

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) welcomes potential applicants to join their upcoming Spring 2025 information sessions. Learn more about core NBRC programs and get more information about NBRC's specific programs: Catalyst, Forest Economy, and Timber for Transit. Pre-Applications are due by February 28. Applications by invitation are due on April 11.

The program overview webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., register [here](#). Additionally, program-specific information sessions will take place on Wednesday, February 5, details [here](#).

Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund Grants

New York State Archives has confirmed another cycle for its Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grant program for 2025-2026. This program was established to assist local governments with improving records management and archival administration. For the most recent webinar recording on the LGRMIF 2025-2026 grant cycle, see [here](#). Eligible applicants include local government entities, including towns and villages. This grant will support project categories related to disaster management, document conversion and access, files management, historical records, and inactive records. Notably, this is not a grant program that requires a "match" for funds, but contributions by the applicant (e.g. the time and labor of the designated project manager) are a competitive factor for awards.

At this time, the precise dates of the grant cycle have not yet been announced, although the grant cycle for 2025-2026 has been confirmed. Use this time to register early and plan for the application process. The application process uses an online grant portal, [eGrants](#), for the initial application and submission of final reports. All grants are to be submitted electronically. Note: In order to apply for an LGRMIF grant, your local government's Records Management Officer (RMO) **must** have a NYS Directory Service (NYSDS) account linked specifically to the eGrants system. If you/your RMO do not have a NYSDS account, you will need to register. Detailed instructions are available here, further down the [webpage](#).

For direct questions about the grant program, please contact New York State Archives Grants Administration Unit at archgrants@nysed.gov or via phone at (518) 474-6926.

DEC Releases New York State Bobcat Management Plan

The NYS Bobcat Management Plan (2024–2033) outlines strategies to conserve bobcat populations, provide sustainable opportunities for public use, and address ecological challenges. Bobcat populations were once severely diminished but have rebounded due to effective management practices. It builds on the success of earlier plans to ensure that bobcats remain a valued part of New York’s wildlife.

Key Goals

1. Maintain or Enhance Bobcat Populations: Ensure viable populations in areas with suitable habitat, including Tug Hill.
2. Promote Sustainable Use: Support hunting, trapping, and non-consumptive activities like wildlife observation.
3. Engage the Public: Increase understanding of bobcats and their role in ecosystems.

Highlights of the Plan

- Population Trends: Bobcats are expanding beyond their historical range, now thriving in central and western New York as well as their core areas, including Tug Hill, the Adirondacks, and the Catskills. Observation and harvest data indicate stable or increasing populations across the state.
- Management Strategies - Continue the pelt-sealing program to monitor harvests; collect harvest-independent data to evaluate population trends in areas like Tug Hill; foster public awareness of bobcats as a sustainable resource to minimize conflicts.
- Tug Hill Specifics: The Tug Hill region contributes to northern New York’s strong bobcat harvest trends, with stable or increasing populations supported by its mixed forest habitats; observation densities in Tug Hill, reported via hunter and trapper surveys, highlight its importance as a core habitat.

DEC Seeks Trappers Assistance with Furbearer Health Research Project

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working with the Northeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, university researchers, and other state wildlife agency biologists and veterinarians on a project investigating furbearer health. The project aims to identify diseases and toxins in northeastern furbearers and investigate potential impacts on furbearer populations. The project focuses on gray foxes and fishers.

One of the primary focuses will be to investigate the prevalence of anticoagulant [rodenticides](#) in fisher and gray fox populations. Previous research on trapper-submitted fishers in New York found that nearly 80% of the more than 100 samples tested were positive for exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides. These popular rodenticides can cause uncontrolled bleeding and death in high doses. Lower levels of exposure may lead to reduced reproduction, poor body condition, and a suppressed immune system leaving animals vulnerable to other pathogens.

This project depends on getting a large number of samples from various areas across the Northeast. DEC is asking trappers and furbearer hunters to consider submitting carcasses of harvested fishers and gray foxes. The carcasses can be skinned. If you are interested in donating carcasses for this research, please contact your [Regional DEC Wildlife Office](#) for more information.

Fiscal Oversight Webinar January 22

The [Office of the State Comptroller](#) is delivering a webinar on the fiscal oversight responsibilities of the governing board on Wednesday, January 22 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. The governing board’s oversight role can touch virtually every aspect of a local government’s operations. This session will discuss some key functions including budget responsibilities, interim reporting, the audit of claims, and the annual audit requirements. Resources available to assist in these oversight activities will also be provided. Register [here](#).

Annual Tree Sales at Conservation Districts and NYS DEC

Many soil & water conservation districts hold annual tree sales, and now is the time to place orders for spring of 2025. Brief details of sales in the region are below with links to more information. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation also holds an annual tree and shrub seedling sale. These sales offer low-cost, New York-grown tree and shrub species for sale to encourage plantings that help conserve New York's natural resources and foster the next generation of forests.

Additionally, applications are now being accepted for the nursery's School Seedling Program. From now until March 28, schools and youth education organizations across New York State may apply to receive 25 free seedlings to plant with students. The goal of the program is to help instill a sense of environmental stewardship among New York's youth and set up a foundation that will allow students to make informed decisions about the use of natural resources.

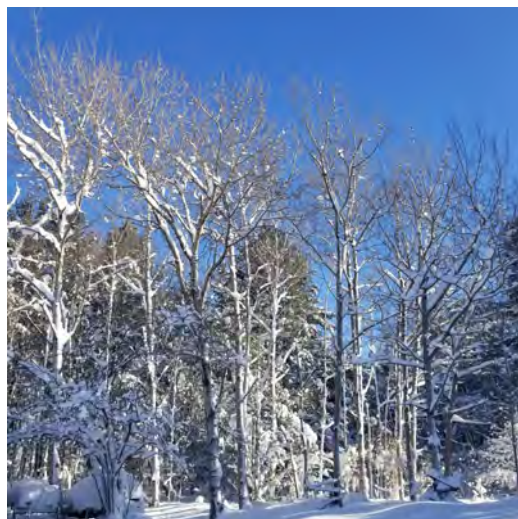
[Jefferson County](#): Order by February 28, prepaid orders available April 11 and 12, pickup in Burrville. Call 315-782-2749 for more information.

[Lewis County](#): Order March 5, pick up April 24 and 25 in Lowville. Call 315-376-6122.

[Oswego County](#): Order by March 31, pickup April 14 and 15 in Volney. Call 315-592-9663 for more information.

[NYS DEC](#): Order by May 14, with several pickup and delivery options. Call 518-587-1120 for more information and to place an order.

[School Seedling Program](#): Applications must be submitted by March 28, and seedlings are shipping on several dates in May.



Upcoming Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Events

Blake Sanctuary Owl Prowl and Twilight Walk, January 31, 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Enjoy a twilight walk and owl prowl in the woods with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT) at the Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the town of Rutland. 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! This is the first in a series of owl prowl twilight walks for 2025.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Walk and Talk, February 14, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Join a guided Hemlock Woolly Adelgid walk and tree survey at Camden's Forest Park. Participants will take an easy walk, stopping at points along the way to learn how to recognize Eastern Hemlock trees, examine the trees on and off the trail, and report observations using their smartphone through a free mobile application called iMapInvasives (a community science tool).

Register and learn more about all events at tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/events/

Contact Us

NYS Tug Hill Commission
317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Phone: 315-785-2380
Toll Free within the region:
1-888-785-2380
Email: tughill@tughill.org

Visit us at:

Web: www.tughill.org

Facebook:
[www.facebook.com/
TugHillCommission](https://www.facebook.com/TugHillCommission)

Instagram: [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/tughill)

YouTube: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/tughill)

To request our newsletter electronically please email gwen@tughill.org.

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