

Commission Elects Officers for 2025-26

The Tug Hill Commission met on Monday, January 27 in Parish for their first meeting of 2025. The first order of business was to elect commission officers for the 2025-26 term. The new Tug Hill Commission chair is Geraldine (Gerry) Ritter, from Forestport, Oneida County; the new Tug Hill Commission vice chair is William (Bill) Scriber from Parish, Oswego County; and Tom Boxberger, from Watertown, Jefferson County, was re-elected as the Tug Hill Commission secretary.

Gerry has served on the Tug Hill Commission's board since July 2017. She has held various positions with the town of Forestport, including the planning board chair, and retired from the Tug Hill Commission in 2014 as the municipal management consultant (i.e. circuit rider) for the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments. She was recognized by the Genesis Group of the Mohawk Valley as a community leader and received the Joseph Carucci Legacy Award in 2014. Gerry is the first woman to serve as the chair of the Tug Hill Commission.

Bill has also served on the Tug Hill Commission's board since July 2017. He is the planning board chair in Parish and has been for many years, and previously served as the town's supervisor. He retired in December 2024 as the executive director of the Port of Oswego Authority, overseeing a period of growth for the port. Bill has experience on many other boards, including the APW School District, Oswego County BOCES, and SUNY Oswego.

Tom has served on the Tug Hill Commission's board since 2008 and has filled the role of secretary since 2010. He is the planning board co-chair in Watertown and serves on the Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District board and the State Civil Service Employees Federal Credit Union board. Tom retired from the NYS Department of Health in 2008.

The board and commission executive director Katie Malinowski extended sincere thanks to Jan Bogdanowicz and Mike Yerdon for their service as board chair and vice chair for the past 12 years.



Jan Bogdanowicz passes the gavel to Gerry Ritter.

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The 2025-26 Tug Hill Commission board. Front row left to right: Tom Boxberger, Gerry Ritter, Leona Chereshnoski, Mike Yerdon. Back row left to right: Bill Scriber, Jan Bogdanowicz, Bob Keller.

NOCCOG Welcomes New Director



At a special meeting held January 23, the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) executive committee unanimously appointed Pam Dibble, from Annsville, as the newest director to the NOCCOG board.

A lifelong resident of the town of Annsville, Pam takes great pride in having raised her family in a small rural community. After retiring as an administrative assistant for a prominent accounting firm, and with the passing of her husband, Pam found she had too much time on her hands and started a second career with the Camden Central School District. She is currently a teacher's assistant, working with special needs students in the Pre-K program.

Pam currently serves on the Annsville Town Board, where she has for several years, and has also served as the chair of the Annsville Bicentennial Committee and served as the secretary for both the Oneida County Snowmobile Association and the town's local snowmobile club. Pam enjoys spending time with her family, including her dog and two cats. She enjoys gardening, as well as doing all her own home repairs and remodeling.

The NOCCOG Board of Directors welcomes Pam, and is looking forward to her ideas, input, and expertise!

North Shore Council of Governments Winter Meeting

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) met on January 23, 2025, with over 30 attendees, including representatives from each member municipality. The meeting featured a presentation by Bill Buchan from the town of Constantia Sewer Board, supported by Dustin Clark of Barton & Loguidice and Mark Bombardo from Oswego County. They discussed the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor Sewer (SOCRIS) project with a map that displayed potential areas that could benefit from this sewer project. Buchan highlighted the group's efforts to have this initiative as Constantia's first funding option for their next round of grants and encouraged surrounding municipalities to do the same.



NorCOG's business meeting included officer elections, re-electing Richard Colesante (Constantia) as chairman and Vern Sundet (West Monroe) as fiscal agent. Mudd Murphy (Central Square) was newly elected as vice chairman. The council also reviewed and approved slight adjustments to NorCOG's intermunicipal agreement and bylaws, solidifying its operational framework. NorCOG signed a meeting-to-meeting contract with Rodney Campbell as an associate circuit rider to assist Heidi Tompkins with meeting coverage. The transition from Paul Baxter to Heidi Tompkins as circuit rider is nearing completion, as Paul prepares for his retirement at the end of March. The council approved bronze-level sponsorship for the Tug Hill Commission Local Government Conference.

Looking ahead, NorCOG identified several action items, including exploring logo design, signage, and branding opportunities along the Route 49 corridor to enhance the North Shore's identity and improve wayfinding to parking, trails, and other local attractions. Additionally, they expressed interest in meeting with assessors to discuss the potential impact of the new NYS DEC wetland regulations on property values. NorCOG will meet next on Thursday, March 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the West Monroe Town Hall.

Albion Begins Comprehensive Plan Update

The town of Albion has started their comprehensive plan update by scheduling a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (often referred to as SWOT) exercise on **Thursday, February 13, 6:30 p.m.** at the Altmar/Albion Municipal Building. The SWOT exercise provides an opportunity for the public to actively contribute to the direction of Albion's growth and development. During the session, participants will be asked to share their insights into what makes the town thrive, the challenges it faces, potential areas for growth, and any threats or risk to its long-term success. The information collected will then be used to create a survey providing an additional opportunity to collect input from residents and landowners. The results from both the SWOT session and the survey will guide the comprehensive plan committee in formulating specific goals, strategies, and objectives for the town's future. Gathering diverse perspectives ensures that Albion's comprehensive plan reflects the shared vision of its residents.

Community Roundtables: Advancing Agrivoltaics in New York

REGISTER NOW



American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Tug Hill Commission (THC) are working together to host a series of roundtables in upstate New York to discuss agrivoltaics—a practice that integrates solar energy development and farming on the same piece of land.

American Farmland Trust



JOIN US FOR AN UPCOMING EVENT

1

WEDNESDAY, FEB 26, 2025, 6-8 P.M.
CCE of Oneida County, 121 2nd St,
Oriskany, NY 13424

2

THURSDAY, FEB 27, 2025, 6-8 P.M.
Citi BOCES, 179 County Route 64,
Mexico, NY 13114

3

WEDNESDAY, MAR 26, 2025, 6-8 P.M.
CCE of Jefferson County, 203 N Hamilton St,
Watertown, NY 13601

4

THURSDAY, MAR 27, 2025, 6-8 P.M.
Howard G. Sackett Technical Center,
5836 NY-12, Glenfield, NY 13343

LEARN MORE BY VISITING WWW.FARMLAND.ORG/NYAGPVRoundtables



TUG HILL WINTER WILDLIFE WEBINAR SERIES

BATS OF NEW YORK: CHALLENGES AND CONSERVATION

Wednesday, February 12, 6PM

Join us for an exciting webinar with Lucara Aman, a bat technician with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, as we dive into the fascinating world of New York's bats.

Webinar Highlights:

- The most common and endangered bat species in the Tug Hill region, including Indiana and Northern long-eared bats.
- Threats like white-nose syndrome and their impact on bat populations.
- How DEC monitors and manages bat populations and how you can help.
- Bats are very important biocontrol predators.



Don't miss this chance to discover how we can support these incredible creatures!

LUCARA AMAN
NYS DEC Bat Technician



Photo Credit: Mass.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION: [TINYURL.COM/NEWYORKBATS](https://tinyurl.com/newyorkbats)

Understanding the New DEC Wetlands Regulations

This event will be facilitated by Jessica Hart, DEC Region 6 Permit Administrator, and Steven Heerkens, DEC Biologist. The training session will provide an in-depth overview of the recent updates to the Article 24 Regulated Freshwater Wetlands Program regulations, which took effect on January 1, 2025. Attendees will gain a better understanding of these changes, including their impact on the jurisdictional determination process (i.e., figuring out who has the authority to make decisions). The session will also include a Q&A segment to address questions about the new regulations and implementation processes.

Event Details:



March 6, 2025
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm



In-Person

Lewis County Outdoor
Services Building | 7356
East Rd Lowville, NY



Virtual Attendance

Microsoft Teams | To
register, visit:
[https://tinyurl.com/Lewis
CountyDECWetlands](https://tinyurl.com/LewisCountyDECWetlands)

Event Speakers:



Jessica Hart

DEC Region 6 Permit
Administrator



Steven Heerkens

DEC Biologist



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



LEWIS
COUNTY
NEW YORK



Tug Hill Region I-81 Sign Updated

The NYS Department of Transportation has been changing the exit numbers on Interstate 81 for the past several months. The exit numbers now follow a mile-based system based on the distance in miles from the Pennsylvania border to the Canadian border, moving from south to north.

The sign designating the Tug Hill Region exits on I-81 north near the Oswego County/ Onondaga County border was recently changed. Instead of being located between exits 32 and 42, the region is now located between exits 106 and 147. That 41-mile length of highway is also well known for its bands of lake effect snow, which have been out in full force this winter.

2024 Black River Initiative Newsletter Released

The NYS Tug Hill Commission and NYS DEC's Great Lakes Program are excited to announce the release of the 2024 Black River Initiative Newsletter! This annual publication highlights significant conservation achievements in the Black River Watershed.

This year's key highlights include:

- Trout Unlimited Beaver River Reconnection Project: Enhancing habitat connectivity.
- Formation of the Black River Coalition of Districts: Strengthening regional collaboration.
- Black River Adaptive Modeling Report: Addressing data gaps for improved management.
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Easement on the Independence River: Conserving critical land to protect water quality and wildlife habitats.
- Septic Replacement Fund Expansion: Supporting priority waterbodies.

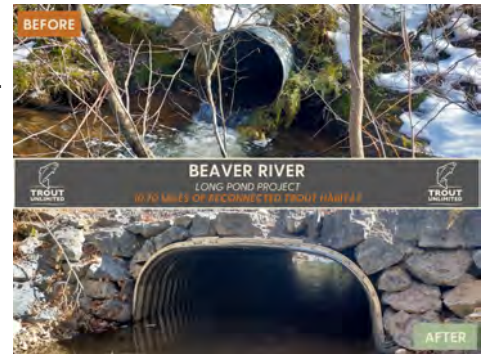


Photo credit: Jesse Vadala and Jacob Fetterman, Trout Unlimited.

Soil and Water Conservation District Projects: Driving sustainable practices.

These projects showcase the dedication of organizations, governments, and individuals working to protect the watershed's water quality and ecosystems.

The 2024 newsletter and past editions are available online. Visit tughill.org to explore these achievements and celebrate the continued progress in the Black River Watershed.

Best Practices in Amish Communities Workshop Well-Attended

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments and the NYS Tug Hill Commission hosted a *Best Practices for Land Use, Code Enforcement, and Property Tax Assessment in Amish Communities* workshop on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at the town of Lee Municipal Office. The intent of the workshop was to provide a better understanding of the Amish community and provide insight for local officials, who often find themselves navigating the intersection of modern-day responsibilities and the traditional way of life upheld by Amish communities. Invited speakers included George Frantz, Associate Professor, City and Regional Planning, Cornell University; Brian Tollisen, PE, Deputy Director, NYS Department of State, Division of Building Standards and Codes; and Warren J. Wheeler, Executive Director, NYS Assessors Association and assessor for four Oswego County towns. The three-part workshop provided an opportunity for assessors, municipal officials, planning and zoning boards, and code enforcement professionals to discuss their unique challenges, while gaining a better understanding of the Amish beliefs and culture. Access the presentations provided by the speakers on the commission's website here: [Past Workshop Presentations](#).

Rainfall Recorders Needed for 2025

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Jefferson County's rainfall data form is available for 2025. Each town in Jefferson County has volunteers who record rainfall levels during the months of May, June, July, August, and September. CCE will provide volunteers with a rain gauge and pre-paid postcards (or e-mail a fillable form) to complete daily and return to CCE at the end of each month. Volunteers are needed in the following towns: Adams, Alexandria, Antwerp, Cape Vincent, Champion, Clayton, Ellensburg, Hounsfield, LeRay, Lorraine, Lyme, Orleans, Pamela, Philadelphia, Rodman, Rutland, Theresa, Watertown, city of Watertown, Wilna, and Worth. If you or someone you know would like to sign up, contact Cierra Williams (clw247@cornell.edu) by Monday, February 17, 2025.

Naturally Lewis Grant Applications Open

Naturally Lewis has opened its 2025 grant applications for businesses, community organizations, school districts, and youth. Grant opportunities are available for projects that build business, support existing businesses experiencing unforeseen expenses, support startup entrepreneurs, small-scale projects, high school students, and vacant properties in downtown areas. Most grant applications remain open on a rolling basis. The "Student Pitch Competition" closes on May 1, 2025. Visit their [website](#) for more information about each grant.

Drinking Water Source Protection Free Technical Assistance

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) are now accepting applications for the 2025 Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). This program offers municipalities free technical assistance to protect public drinking water supplies before they are treated for consumption.

Up to 30 volunteer communities will receive help creating a customized source protection plan. DWSP2 is open to all public drinking water supplies in New York, regardless of size. Participants will work with experts to assess vulnerabilities, identify contamination risks, and implement protective measures, ultimately safeguarding public health, enhancing environmental protection, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of water sources.

Municipalities can apply by completing an online application by **Friday, February 28, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.** Interested water suppliers are also encouraged to attend a **virtual webinar on February 4, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.** to learn more.

For more details, visit the [DEC website](#) or email source.water@dec.ny.gov.

Oneida Lake Walleye Angler Survey

Oneida Lake is home to New York's most popular inland walleye fishery. Scientists at the Cornell Biological Field Station on Oneida Lake regularly conduct angler creel surveys to obtain walleye catch and harvest information, which is used by DEC to manage the fishery. To help determine if current surveys adequately measure the information needed for appropriately managing the fishery, a more complete understanding of walleye angler behaviors is needed.

If you fish for walleye in Oneida Lake, please help DEC manage the fishery by responding to [this brief survey](#) before **February 7**.

Contact Us

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

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