

February 28 Regular Registration Deadline for LGC

Don't forget to submit your [Tug Hill Local Government Conference](#) (LGC) registration ASAP! If you are registering with a check, your registration sheet must be postmarked by February 28, 2025, to take advantage of the regular fee. If you are registering with a [credit card](#), the regular fee is also honored until February 28, 2025. On or after March 1, 2025, all fees are doubled. No refunds will be issued after February 28, 2025.

Monday, March 31, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., \$25: Choose between **Tackling Vacancy, Blight, and Housing in Small Communities** with the [New York Conference of Mayors](#) OR **Budgeting and Accounting for Small Communities Mini-Course** with Laird Pertrie and staff from the [New York Government Finance Officers' Association](#).

Monday, March 31, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., \$20: Mingle with attendees, speakers, and vendors at our conference reception, sponsored by platinum sponsor [GYMO Architecture, Engineering & Land Surveying](#). Hearty appetizers will be served, and a cash bar will be available.

Tuesday, April 1, 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., \$90: Four concurrent sessions on 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 (CTO) program.

Questions? Call the office, 315-785-2380.

Commission Board Meeting

Monday, March 17 at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Harrisburg town office, 7886 Cobb Rd., Harrisburg, NY.

The public is welcome to attend.

COG Leaders Meet in Adams

COG leadership and Tug Hill Commission staff met in Adams on January 30 to review the commission's budget, board, and staffing, and recently adopted consolidated procedures, principles and policies as they pertain to the councils. The group also reviewed the commission's draft 2025-2029 strategic plan and discussed several regional issues, including roads, the new DEC wetlands law, emergency services, filling board and staff positions, and Micron. The annual gathering helps maintain a good flow of information between the commission and COGs.



From top left: Katie Malinowski, Jennifer Harvill, Bob Sauer, John Healt, Matt Johnson, Heidi Tompkins, Rip Colesante, Roger Tibbetts, Angie Kimball.

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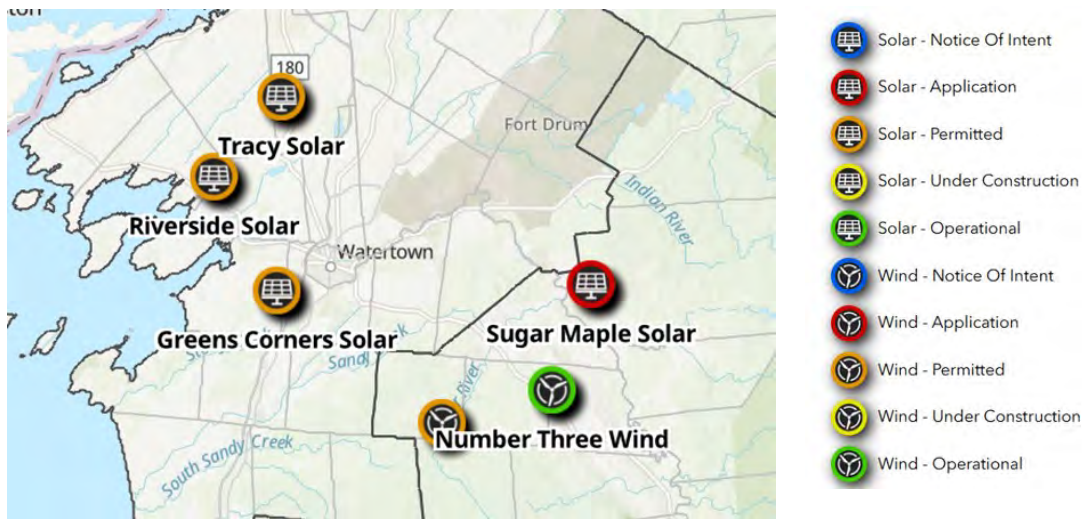
Sugar Maple Solar Submits Article VIII Application to ORES

On February 6, Sugar Maple Solar filed an Article VIII application for a siting permit to develop, design, construct, operate, maintain and decommission the Sugar Maple Solar facility with a nameplate generating capacity of up to 125 megawatts (MW) and a co-located 20 MW battery energy storage system in the town of Wilna, Jefferson County, and the town of Croghan, Lewis County, both members of the River Area Council of Governments. The next step is for the Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) to begin their 60-day application completeness review. The application materials are available [here](#).

The facility is proposed to include the installation and operation of photovoltaic solar arrays, inverters, electric collection lines, a collection substation, a new point of interconnection (POI) switchyard, and a battery energy storage system (BESS). The facility would interconnect to the electric grid through the new POI switchyard to National Grid's existing Black River-Taylorville Line 2 and North Carthage-Taylorville Line 8.

With its application, Sugar Maple Solar, LLC, submitted the required local agency account fee of \$125,000. Funds are available to eligible local agencies and potential community intervenors for use in contributing to the development of a complete record leading to an informed decision by ORES as to the appropriateness of the site and the facility, and for local agencies, for use in determining whether a proposed facility is designed to be sited, constructed, and operated in compliance with applicable local laws and regulations. Funding requests must be made no later than **4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 10**.

ORES has a mapping dashboard for all projects their office is involved with [here](#). The screenshot below shows ORES projects in the Jefferson and Lewis counties.



RACOG Economic Vision Summit Set for April 30

The River Area Council of Governments held their first meeting of 2025 on January 23. Jillian Lee, Tug Hill Commission project specialist, reported on the water/wastewater operator training effort with BOCES, the RACOG student board, and the Civic Service Student Activity Program (CSSAP). She also reported that she had met with representatives from the town and village of Carthage to discuss upgrades to the Carthage Park and potential sources of funding.

The board voted to elect Paul Smith chair and Yvonne Boliver vice chair of RACOG for another term. Several RACOG communities are busy with land use planning efforts. The town of Wilna and villages of Carthage and Deferiet are nearing the end of their comprehensive planning process, along with the town of Denmark and the villages of Castorland and Copenhagen. The plans will likely be completed in the spring.

The **RACOG Economic Visioning Summit** will take place on April 30 at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center from 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. The summit agenda includes information about community events, transportation initiatives, the CSSAP, RACOG student board, student internships, BOCES wastewater operator certification, and updates about local governments and economic development. [To register, click here](#). For more information, contact Mickey Dietrich mickey@tughill.org.

The next RACOG board meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, at the town of Wilna offices. [For more information about RACOG, click here](#).



TUG HILL WINTER WILDLIFE WEBINAR SERIES








AMERICAN CHESTNUT RESEARCH AND RESTORATION PROJECT

Wednesday, March 12, 6PM

Join us for an exciting webinar with Dakota Matthews, molecular lab manager for the American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, as we explore efforts to restore this iconic American tree.

Learn about:

-  The ecological and economic importance of the American chestnut
-  The history of its decline due to blight and its impact on forests
-  Breakthroughs in genetic research and the development of blight-resistant transgenic chestnut trees
-  Updates on the breeding program and field trials
-  Time for questions and discussion after the presentation

Don't miss this opportunity to learn about cutting-edge conservation science and the future of the American chestnut!

DAKOTA MATTHEWS

Molecular Biology Lab Manager
American Chestnut Research &
Restoration Project
SUNY ESF



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

February 26 and 27 Agrivoltaics Roundtables in Oneida and Oswego Counties

The Tug Hill Commission (THC) and American Farmland Trust (AFT) are hosting a series of community roundtables in upstate New York to explore agrivoltaics—a practice that integrates solar energy development with agriculture to optimize land use. These discussions will bring together farmers, agricultural professionals, local government representatives, and community members to examine the opportunities, challenges, and needs involved in advancing agrivoltaics projects in New York.

Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, 121 2nd St., Oriskany, NY

Thursday, February 27, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

CiTi BOCES, 179 County Route 64, Mexico, NY

Register [here!](#) THC and AFT will compile insights from these discussions and share key findings with participants, as well as state and federal agencies, to help shape future agrivoltaics initiatives. These events provide an excellent opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions on sustainable land use and network with other stakeholders.



Photo courtesy AgriSolar Clearinghouse.

Finance Trainings from OSC February 26 and March 19

The New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has two upcoming finance webinars. The first is titled “Managing Your Cashflow” and will be on Wednesday, February 26 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., register [here](#). This webinar will help local officials understand various procedures to control and account for cash. They will include key information on cash control and reporting, collection and disbursement procedures and cash flow forecasting and how these activities affect cash flow models.

The second webinar is titled “NYSLRS Record of Activities – Elected and Appointed Officials” and will be on Wednesday, March 19 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., register [here](#). This webinar will explain how the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) determines service credit for elected and appointed officials. Officials, who are not in a time-keeping system, are required to keep a record of activities (ROA). The purpose of a ROA is to establish an official’s service credit in NYSLRS. During this training, OSC will go over what is required on a ROA, as well as walk through how to complete a ROA using a template available on the NYSLRS website.

2025 Municipal Bootcamp Webinar February 27

[The MRB Group and Hancock Estabrook](#) are offering free annual training to assist local governments, municipal officials, and planning and zoning board members. The next webinar, “From Big to Small: Translating Comprehensive Plans into Land Use Regulations” will be held on Thursday, February 27 from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Register [here](#).

Overall, 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.

March 5 Wetland Webinar for Municipalities

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation will host a wetlands webinar, Navigating New Waters: Understanding DEC’s Freshwater Wetland Regulations for NY Municipalities, on Wednesday, March 5, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. This webinar is designed specifically for municipalities and code enforcement officers across New York State. This session will explain the latest freshwater wetland regulations, providing attendees with essential insights into the new procedures and processes. Participants will learn how to effectively interpret and implement these regulations within their communities, ensuring compliance while promoting environmental stewardship. Equip yourself with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of freshwater wetland management and enhance your municipality’s regulatory practices. Register for the webinar [here](#).

Highlights of 2025-26 Proposed Executive Budget

Thanks to partners at NY Conference of Mayors and Association of Towns for their comprehensive budget summaries, relevant sections for Tug Hill communities included below.

- AIM Funding – Keeps AIM funding for cities (outside of NYC), villages and towns at the current year level of \$715 million.
- Temporary Municipal Assistance – Continues to fund the \$50 million in unrestricted aid for cities (outside of NYC), villages and towns.
- Transportation Funding – Maintains funding at current year levels: \$598 million for CHIPS, \$140 million for Touring Routes, \$100 million in Extreme Winter Recovery funding, \$150 million for PAVE-NY, \$200 million for BRIDGE-NY and \$100 million for Pave our Potholes.
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure Funding – Includes an additional \$500 million for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward – Includes \$100 million each for Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward. Requires municipalities to be certified Pro-Housing Communities.
- Local Construction Project Assistance through DASNY – Would authorize municipalities to utilize DASNY’s planning, design, procurement, and construction management services.
- Emergency Medical Services – Would formally declare emergency medical response and emergency medical dispatch as an “essential service.”
- Volunteer Fire Infrastructure and Response Equipment – Includes \$25 million for the V-FIRE grant program.
- Pro-Housing Communities – Would create a \$100 million Pro-Housing Supply Fund for certified Pro-Housing Communities to assist with critical infrastructure projects necessary to create new housing, such as sewer and water infrastructure upgrades.
- Local Government Acquisition of Abandoned Real Property – Includes a proposal to amend Article 19-a of the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law to expand the definition of what constitutes an abandoned residential property to include unsafe properties with code violations that have not been remedied for at least one year.
- Mandatory Cybersecurity Reporting & Training for Municipalities – Would require local governments to report cybersecurity incidents and ransom payments through a centralized mechanism, and for all state and local government employees who use computers in their daily work to complete annual cybersecurity training.
- Environmental Protection Fund – Maintains the EPF at its current year level of \$400 million.
- Unplug & Play Initiative – Includes over \$200 million in recreational grants including NYSWIMS. Also includes new programs New York Building Recreational Infrastructure for Communities, Kids and Seniors (NYBRICKS) and New York Places for Learning, Activity and Youth Socialization (NYPLAYS) to construct new playgrounds and renovate existing playgrounds.
- Vital records – Would simplify vital record handling, eliminating indices, raising birth/death certificate fees to \$45, and introducing genealogical research fees to improve processing capacity.
- Tug Hill Commission – Proposed increase in personal services to accommodate salary increases with all full-time equivalent positions filled.

Work Zone Traffic Control Workshop February 18

The NYS LTAP Center - Cornell Local Roads Program is hosting a no cost, Work Zone Traffic Control Workshop, on Tuesday, February 18, from 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Oneida County Public Works garage, 5999 Judd Road, Oriskany.



Attendees will learn how to create safe and efficient work zones for road maintenance and construction, and be shown how to identify hazards, choose the right traffic control device, flag effectively, and most importantly, keep everyone safe! This workshop is geared for highway/public works officials and crews.



There is no cost to attend, thanks to a grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) but registration is required. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.

Erosion and Sediment Control Training March 6



The Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District is hosting a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) approved Four-Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Training to help contractors and developers meet stormwater permit requirements. Under NYSDEC regulations, at least one trained contractor must be on-site daily when soil disturbance activities are taking place.

Date & Time: Thursday, March 6, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location: Gathering Barn at Old McDonald's Farm, 14369 County Route 145, Sackets Harbor

Cost: \$125 per person (walk-in: \$225, if space available)

Participants will receive a NYSDEC stormwater training certificate valid for three years.

Pre-registration is required, and a photo ID is necessary. To register, visit jeffersoncountyswcd.org or email ERE@JeffersonCountySWCD.org.

ConnectALL Digital Equity Grant Applications Open

Empire State Development's ConnectALL office is accepting applications for its \$15.5 million [Digital Equity Program Capacity Grant](#). This competitive initiative will provide two-year grants to organizations and partnerships working to bridge the digital divide through high-quality digital literacy training, device access programs, digital privacy skills development and inclusive support services.

The program is funded through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and aligns with [New York State's Digital Equity Plan](#). Proposals must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 24.

Contact Us

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

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