

First Two Agrivoltaic Roundtables Well-Attended

American Farmland Trust's NY-NJ regional director Linda Garrett and Tug Hill Commission executive director Katie Malinowski presented to over two dozen participants at two agrivoltaics roundtables. Held in Oneida and Oswego counties late last month, the meetings generated meaningful questions and discussion between farmers, local officials, technical assistance providers, and others interested in learning how solar can be integrated in a farmer-first approach to agriculture in the four-county Tug Hill region. Circuit riders Heidi Tompkins and John Healt also attended to help take notes and hear from attendees in each of their respective counties.



Farmers, landowners, local officials and other interested parties are welcome to join in the two final roundtables on March 26 and 27, in Lewis and Jefferson counties, respectively. Register now at www.farmland.org/nyagproundtables.

National Grid Article VII Application Submitted

National Grid has applied for a "Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need" for the reconstruction of ~60 miles of its 115kV Beaver River-Porter transmission line as well as the construction of one new substation. The transmission line runs from the new Beaver River Substation in the town of Croghan, Lewis County, to the Porter Substation in the town of Marcy, Oneida County. It traverses the towns of Croghan, Leyden, Lowville, Martinsburg, New Bremen, Turin, Watson, and West Turin, and the villages of Croghan, Lowville, and Turin, Lewis County; and the towns of Boonville, Floyd, Marcy, Steuben, and Trenton, and the villages of Boonville and Holland Patent, Oneida County, and the construction of the new Gulf Road Substation in the town of Leyden, Oneida County.

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The project is being undertaken to replace deteriorated structures, conductors, and shield wires in order to maintain reliable transmission service and to accommodate renewable energy generation. Much more information is available on National Grid's Upstate Upgrade [Beaver River-Porter webpage](#).



ORES Public Hearing on RAPID Act March 4

On Tuesday, March 4, a public hearing was held by the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission (ORES) at Jefferson Community College in Watertown to take public comments on Case 24-M-0433. This references the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS), prepared to analyze the environmental impacts of the new siting permit program for major electric transmission facilities, established by the [Renewable Action Through Project Interconnection and Deployment \(RAPID\) Act](#). Specifically, ORES proposes to repeal the current 16 NYCRR Part 1100 (Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission), and replace it with a new Part 1100 (General Procedures), Part 1101 (Major Renewable Energy Facility Siting), and Part 1102 (Major Electric Transmission Facility Siting).

Four community members spoke at the public hearing. Among many topics, comments addressed concerns over the lack of community inclusion during the siting and approval process, insufficient site studies of native and endangered species/habitat, and the desire for more stringent regulations on battery energy storage systems. Anyone looking to submit written public comments regarding the DGEIS has until Tuesday, March 18, 2025. This is possible electronically at [NYS DPS-DMM: Matter Master](#). Anyone unable to post comments electronically may mail comments to the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission, Empire State Plaza, P-1 South, J Dock, Albany, NY 12242, and reference Case 24-M-0433. All comments must be postmarked no later than March 18, 2025.

West Leyden Public Workshop March 25

Lewis County and the Adirondack Central School District invite community members to participate in a public workshop regarding the future of the West Leyden Elementary School facility. The workshop will be held on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the West Leyden Elementary Gymnasium, located at 1157 Fish Creek Road, West Leyden, NY.

The West Leyden Elementary School, set to close at the end of the 2025 school year, has been a cornerstone of the community since its construction in 1929. This nearly 45,000 square-foot facility, complete with a playground and athletic fields, presents a unique redevelopment opportunity not only for West Leyden, but for the Town of Lewis and Lewis County.

The workshop will be held in an open-house format, with attendees invited to peruse the provided materials displaying project progress to-date, including an architectural review of the existing conditions of the building, findings from the local market analysis, and a summary of results from the public survey. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and engage with project representatives to learn more about the project and the next steps. Community participation is vital to the success of this project. Residents, business owners, and all other interested parties are encouraged to attend and contribute their ideas for the future of West Leyden Elementary School.

For more information about the West Leyden Elementary School Reuse Project or to submit feedback if unable to attend the workshop, please contact Casandra Buell at casandrabuell@lewiscountyny.gov.



American Chestnut Webinar Well-Attended

On March 12, the Tug Hill Commission partnered with the American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project for part three of the 2025 Winter Wildlife Webinar series. This workshop on the American chestnut tree (*Castanea dentata*) was preceded by two other webinars, the first regarding invasive sea lamprey in the Lake Ontario and Great Lakes region and the second focused on key bat species in Tug Hill, their benefits to their environment, and the challenges these populations are facing.

Dakota Matthews, a molecular biology lab manager with the chestnut project at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), presented to nearly 80 people attending virtually via Zoom. Attendees included staff from land trusts and conservation groups, members of the American Chestnut Foundation, farmers and gardeners, students, and other interested persons from across the United States.

To learn more about the American Chestnut Research & Restoration Project, please visit the SUNY ESF webpage [here](#). A video recording of this webinar and registration information for the fourth and final installment of the Winter Wildlife Webinar series will be available soon. In the meantime, for slide decks and links to recordings of past Tug Hill Commission workshops, visit our webpage [here](#).



Historic photo of *Castanea dentata*.

New York State Annual Burn Ban Starts

The annual state ban on outdoor burning begins on March 16 and extends through May 14. With a more normal winter season this year, much of Tug Hill remains snow covered currently, but the ban dates have not changed. Open burning remains the single greatest cause of wildfires in New York.

The spring burn ban was instituted in 2009, and since then wildfires in New York have destroyed ten homes and threatened 219. There was one fatality, and 44 others were injured as a result of wildfires during this time. Even with the decreased number of wildland fires from the burn ban, DEC Forest Rangers continue to extinguish dozens of these fires every year and the mainly volunteer fire departments in the Tug Hill region have members that must leave their jobs and families to respond to wildfires caused by illegal debris fires. Please be cognizant of the dangers of spring burning and refrain from outdoor brush burning during the burn ban.

The DEC posts a [fire danger rating map](#) which is updated weekly. Currently, there is an early burn ban in effect in parts of the Hudson Valley and Long Island due to an elevated fire risk. Violators of the state's open burning regulations are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for the first offense.

For more information about NY's burn ban and information about the open burning regulations in general check out the commission's white paper on the topic [here](#), or check out the DEC's "[FIREWISE New York](#)" or "[Open Burning](#)" webpages. To report a wildfire call 1-833-NYS-RANGERS (1-833-697-7264), [contact a forest ranger](#) in your area or dial 911.

Maple Weekend 2025

It's that sugary-sweet time of the year again! New York State is one of the few places where sugar maple trees naturally thrive, making it one of the largest resources of tappable maple trees within the United States. Maple Weekend is organized and sponsored by the non-profit New York State Maple Producers Association (NYSMPA) with support from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Maple Weekend is an opportunity for the public to learn more about maple sugar-making processes and traditions and is an excellent opportunity for enjoyers of maple syrup, maple confections, and other maple food products to get a taste right from the source.

When is Maple Weekend? March 22-23 & March 29-30, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Where can I find participating farms? For an interactive map of producers participating in this event, see here: www.mapleweekend.com/producers/

Where can I find more information? To learn more about this event, please visit the NYSMPA site here: www.mapleweekend.com/



Economic Visioning Summit

April 30, 2025

Howard G. Sackett Technical Center
5836 State Highway 12, Glenfield, NY 13343

**FREE
REGISTRATION**

tinyurl.com/racogeconomicsummit2025

Agenda

08:30am -
08:50am

Introduction, Recap, & Events

08:50am -
09:20am

Transportation Initiatives
(Tug Hill Commission)

09:20am -
09:50am

Educational & Student Initiatives
(Tug Hill Commission & Jefferson
Lewis BOCES)

09:50am -
10:05am

Grants Overview
(Tug Hill Commission)

10:05am -
10:20am

Break

10:20am -
11:00am

Game Time! (Team Activity)

11:00am -
12:00pm

Local Government Updates
(Towns, Villages, & County
Planning Departments)

12:00pm -
01:00pm

Lunch

01:00pm -
02:00pm

Economic Development Updates
(Naturally Lewis & JCIDA)

Register



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NY Energy Summit April 7-9

Join state authorities, regulators and key stakeholders April 7-9 at the Albany Capital Center for a comprehensive look at the critical issues impacting the New York's clean energy landscape.



This meeting is designed to get the latest from New York policymakers, regulators, utility executives, developers, independent power producers and financiers. They will provide the best available discussion of the policies, plans, initiatives, opportunities and obstacles that will shape the Empire State's energy landscape in 2025 and beyond.

Issues to be discussed include resource valuation changes, domestic manufacturing and labor requirements, new momentum around the role of natural gas and nuclear power, and the impacts of a coming wave of power-intensive facilities—new manufacturing, data and AI centers, bit-coin miners—on grid planning. Hear how the growing tax equity and transferability markets are shaping project finance and investment, and how the risk appetites of capital providers and developers are shaping deals in the New York market.

For more information, to see the full agenda, or to register (use discount code 250417) visit the NY Energy Summit webpage, [here](#).

Environmental Bond Act Grants Due June 6

In 2022, New Yorkers approved a ballot proposition to make \$4.2 billion available for environmental and community projects. State agencies, local governments, and partners can access funding to protect water quality, help communities adapt to climate change, improve resiliency and create green jobs.

Funding is now available in three of the five categories funded by the Bond Act: the **Resilient Watersheds** grants program, **Inland Waterways and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program** implementation projects, and **Coastal Rehabilitation and Resilience** projects. Applications are due by **Friday, June 6, 2025**. A webinar on the details of these grant opportunities was held on March 12, and a recording should be available soon [here](#).

Call for Projects: Roadway Departure Safety Action Plan

New York State has announced \$90 million in funding to reduce fatalities, enhance traffic safety, and minimize crash severity from vehicle lane departures. As part of the NYS Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT's) Roadway Departure Safety Action Plan, the funding can be used to support engineering upgrades, public awareness initiatives/programs, and law enforcement efforts facilitated through the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. Of the \$90 million, \$10 million can be used by local governments to support the development of a Local Road Action Plan/Local Safety Action Plan and the necessary studies. Local road action plans identify improvements on local roads to increase traffic safety, reduce associated risks, decrease fatalities, and reduce the severity of crashes. Local road action plans can also position a community advantageously for grant funding.

Funding is available to counties, towns, and villages as well as counties that wish to sponsor one or more communities within their jurisdiction. Requested projects must meet a minimum of \$250,000 in highway safety improvement program funds. A full list of project and community eligibility requirements can be found [here](#). Full [applications](#) are due no later than June 13, 2025 to the appropriate metropolitan planning organization or NYSDOT regional planning contact. Contact Christopher Barboza at chris@tughill.org or (315)785-2389 with any questions.

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](#).