315-785-2380 / 2570 315-785-2574 (fax)

Dulles State Office Building
317 Washington Street
Watertown, New York 13601-3782

e-mail: tughill@tughill.org website: www.tughill.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 7, 2025

CONTACT: Katie Malinowski, Executive Director
(315) 778-4193, katie@tughill.org

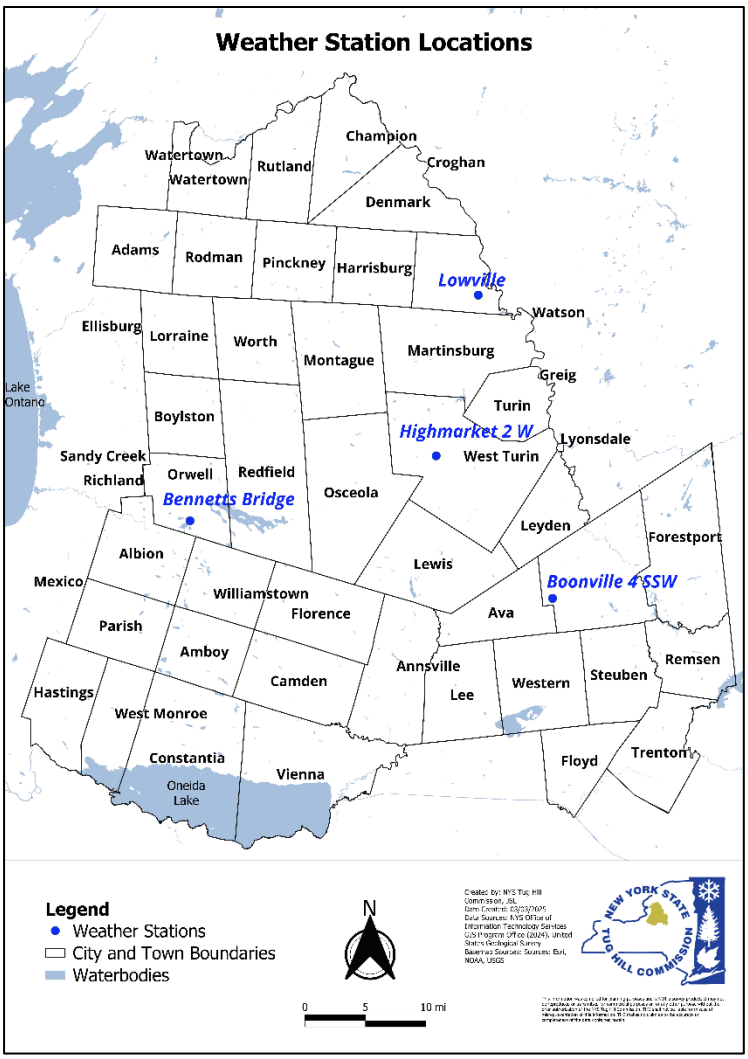
The Tug Hill Commission Releases New Issue Paper:
How Winter is Changing in the Tug Hill Region

WATERTOWN, NEW YORK – The Tug Hill Commission recently completed a new issue paper, "How Winter is Changing in the Tug Hill Region," as the region is experiencing notable changes in its winter seasons. The Tug Hill region is historically known for its heavy snowfall patterns and prime winter conditions for outdoor recreation. More recently, communities in the region have experienced a wide array of changing winter conditions. Winter events are often postponed or canceled, and winter recreation has been unreliable at times because of snowfall uncertainty. This winter season has felt like a more "normal" winter, but last season received far less snowfall.

The paper seeks to inform readers about changes in Tug Hill winters by presenting data analysis from four stations located around the Tug Hill region: Bennetts Bridge, Boonville, Highmarket, and Lowville. Average maximum (high) and minimum (low) air temperatures and snowfall data were examined over a 50-year period. The paper is designed to educate readers about the differences between weather and climate, understand climate data and where it comes from, learn about the importance of climate normals, learn about how winter is changing in the Tug Hill region, discuss why these changes are occurring, and discuss what this all means for the communities in the region.

Key results from data analysis show that winters are changing in the Tug Hill region. The data indicate that air temperatures are increasing. Additionally, Bennetts Bridge and Boonville have a decreasing trend, or reduction, in snowfall, and Highmarket and Lowville have little to no change.

This paper can be useful for a variety of groups, including those focused on recreation, planning, emergency services, and the environment, to help understand the history of winter seasons and what the future may entail. Future research on winter seasons could include analyses of snowpack and the number of days above and below freezing. Additionally, studying spring and summer temperatures and rainfall patterns—including intensity, frequency, and dry periods—would help assess climate trends in the Tug Hill region. Developing a model to better understand past changes in climate and forecast future conditions would also help understand how lake-effect snow is affected by climate change and support future planning efforts.



The Tug Hill Commission gratefully acknowledges the following people for their time, expertise, and support in reviewing this issue paper: Dr. Melissa Godek, Associate Professor of Meteorology and Climatology, SUNY Oneonta, Dr. Scott Steiger, Professor of Meteorology, Director LESPaRC, SUNY Oswego, Dr. Natalie Umphlett, Climatologist, Cornell University, and Emily Fell, Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator; Great Lakes Program and NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University.

###

The New York State Tug Hill Commission is a non-regulatory state agency charged with helping local governments, organizations, and citizens shape the future of the region, especially its environment and economy. The commission uses a grassroots approach to build local capacity and provide technical assistance in land use planning, community development, and natural resource management.