

EBFC Working Group Hears Updates from Landowners

Approximately 40 people attended a meeting of the East Branch of Fish Creek (EBFC) Working Group, at the West Leyden Fire Department on October 2. The group was formed in the mid-1990 in response to the sale of the Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper lands in southern Lewis County. The group continues to meet annually to hear updates about work being done by the large landowners in and around the easement. It is a forum for discussion about projects, happenings, and a time to ask and answer questions. After attendee introductions, updates were provided by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), LandVest (for Aurora Sustainable Lands), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).



Standing room only at the West Leyden Fire Hall.



Trail camera installed on G&W Road.

NYSDEC talked about work that was completed in the last year including progress on the Tug Hill Traverse Trail and the Fall Brook Access project off the North Osceola Road. Future work includes upgrading the Beaver Meadow Brook Bridge and updating the EBFC Recreation Management Plan. TNC reported that Wagon Wheel Road at the North Branch of the Mad River crossing is closed. Also on TNC Lands, Paul Jensen, wildlife biologist and adjunct faculty at SUNY ESF, has installed four trail cams along the north side of the G&W Road. Four to six more will be installed next spring for a wildlife survey. Aurora Sustainable Lands replaced two culverts that were collapsing on Camp 2 Road. NYSDEC and Aurora also worked together to remove several beaver dams/plugged culverts on the Camp 2/Tin Shanty Road.

Find this year's complete update and more on our [East Branch of Fish Creek page](#). If you would like to be added to our email list for next year's meeting please contact Jennifer Harvill jennifer@tughill.org at the Tug Hill Commission.

Community Planning Summit Held in Syracuse

Empire State Development and the NYS Department of State hosted a community planning summit in Syracuse on Wednesday, October 22. Numerous speakers at *Empowering Central NY for Transformational Growth* discussed the expected significant increase in residential and economic development to occur in Onondaga County and surrounding counties due to Micron's chip plant development in Clay. Especially interesting was a presentation by J. Gregory Connors, who is currently president and chief executive officer at the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation, but who served as the supervisor of the town of Stillwater in Saratoga County during the early years of the Global Foundries' Luther Forest facility Fab 8 semiconductor development. He had many lessons to share with summit attendees, including:

In This Issue

- EBFC Working Group Meets
- Community Planning Summit Held
- Oneida County Emergency Fund
- Landscape Connections for Wildlife
- Northeast Snowpack Climatology Webinar
- Welsh Ramble Well Attended
- 2024-25 Snowmobile Season Report
- Drought Showing Signs of Improvement

- the importance of having an updated comprehensive plan;
- having dedicated, paid planning board and zoning board of appeals members who understand the amount of work that increased development will bring;
- the need to manage public comment at public workshops and hearings;
- and how important quality of life and welcoming communities are for companies looking for a new business location.

Breakout sessions included a discussion of strategies related to open space and agricultural resources, supporting farm operations, and enhancing rural communities, as well as how to use increased housing demand to address targeted site redevelopment, jumpstart neighborhood vitality, and meet local needs. Final review of Micron's environmental impact statement continues, with site clearing work now anticipated to begin at the end of 2025.

Oneida County Reestablishes Emergency Fund

In preparation for future emergency situations, Oneida County and the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties have established a fund that will provide financial assistance to residents impacted by such disasters. The fund is intended to provide direct financial assistance to residents in response to severe weather events.

The approved agreement renames and expands the scope of the 2024 Tornado Relief Fund, which was originally created in response to the Rome tornado, thereby establishing the Oneida County Emergency Response and Recovery Fund.

The amendment not just renames the fund but modifies the fund's purpose to respond to other unforeseen or emergent circumstances, including the two EF1 tornadoes that hit Oneida County in June 2025, and allocates an additional \$1,000,000 of county funds toward these efforts. The funding is to come from Oneida County Planning contingency accounts.



Since 2024, there have been five tornadoes in Oneida County: the July 16, 2024 EF2 tornado in Rome; an EF1 tornado that touched down in Lee Center on July 16, 2024; the EF1 tornado that hit Clark Mills on June 22, 2025; the EF1 tornado that hit Clinton on June 22, 2025; and most recently an EF0 tornado that touched down in Ava on September 4, 2025.

Landscape Connections for Wildlife Update

The [Staying Connected Initiative](#) (SCI) steering committee met earlier this month in Albany to reconnect and assess progress from the past two years, as well as refine a workplan of strategic actions for the next two years. Commission executive director Katie Malinowski serves on the steering committee, and Tug Hill is the western terminus of the binational Northern Appalachian-Acadian region of the U.S. and Canada.



Staying Connected Initiative Steering Committee.

SCI's goal is to sustain, conserve, and restore landscape connectivity across the region to mitigate the impacts of habitat fragmentation and climate change. Strategies focus on grassroots work in corridors that connect large, forested areas to remove barriers for wildlife movement. The six primary strategies are land conservation, land use planning, transportation and wildlife solutions, conservation science, engagement and capacity, and policy development.

Work in the [Tug Hill to Adirondacks](#) linkage began in 2009 with mapping and modeling that identified the southern portion of the Black River Valley as a natural funnel for wildlife—a largely forested stretch of land surrounded by agricultural and residential areas. Wide-ranging species like black bear and bobcat currently use the valley as a corridor to move between the Adirondacks and Tug Hill, and once extirpated species like moose and marten are beginning to return to the area. Over the past decade and a half, partners have worked with local communities and stakeholders on community values mapping, comprehensive plans that include language and maps related to wildlife connections, conservation easements with willing landowners, and pilot projects like the culvert shelf installed in a culvert beneath NYS Route 12 south of Boonville. For more information, contact Katie Malinowski, katie@tughill.org.

Northeast Snowpack Climatology Webinar October 30

The [Northeast Regional Climate Center](#) (NRCC) will host an upcoming free webinar reviewing October conditions and providing an overview of the forthcoming Northeast snowpack climatology. NRCC hosts a monthly webinar to address timely weather and climate impacts. The upcoming webinar will be on Thursday, October 30, at 9:30 a.m. held virtually. Register [here](#).

A Walk Through History: “Welsh Ramble” Well-Attended

In partnership with the Remsen-Steuben Historical Society, the Tug Hill Commission successfully hosted the “Welsh Ramble” on Saturday, October 4. With over 20 people in attendance, the tour group discovered the impetus for Welsh immigration in Oneida County, how the cultural interconnectivity of spirituality and community led to the growth of these bustling settlements, and various colorful characters in these lively parishes.

The tour began at the Steuben Memorial State Historic Site, once part of the original 16,000 acres of land gifted to Baron von Steuben for his efforts in the Revolutionary War. Steuben’s connection with the Welsh was post-mortem: when two of Steuben’s aides went to New York City to settle the Baron’s debts and estate, they convinced a wave of early Welsh settlers to divert from their original destination of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to purchase land in modern-day Remsen and Steuben. Motivated by the prospect of land ownership, something unprecedented for these former tenant-farmers, the Welsh began to settle in 1795. The rolling hills landscape of northern Oneida County were reminiscent of the principality of Wales, and these new settlers wrote home to encourage other waves of immigrants to follow them over.

Capel Isaf (“lower church”) and Capel Ucha (“upper church”) were some of the first churches originally established by the Welsh immigrants. Many churches formed, split, and re-established over the years, a testament to the Welsh’s passionate spirituality and, at times, bickering amongst parishioners and church leadership. Although the churches no longer stand, the cemeteries remain to mark the grounds. The land for Capel Isaf was given to the Welsh to preserve and care for Baron Steuben’s first gravesite. Capel Ucha was the mother church, or the first Welsh church established in Remsen. The grounds are where notorious parishioner Dr. Daniel Roberts is buried, who some allege as one of the “Starr Hill Ghosts.”

The next two stops were at the Remsen Performing and Visual Arts Center and the Remsen Depot. The Arts Center, run by a non-profit, resides in renovated and restored former Welsh church to provide a welcoming space for the arts and a gathering place for the community. The Remsen Depot’s sign is a replica of the station sign found in the Welsh village of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch; the sign was donated by Welsh diplomats as a token of friendship between Wales and the village of Remsen.

Capel Enlli was established by hardy settlers from the island of Enlli and so named in honor of the settlers’ homeland. In the Middle Ages, the island of Enlli was a site for holy pilgrimage, and is the resting place of 20,000 Christian saints. The size and structure of Enlli church show the practicality of these parishioners and their strong devotion to a musical tradition, as the entrances and aisles neatly divide the pews for men and women to lend itself to a four-part harmony. All church documents were written in Welsh until 1914.

The tour reached its conclusion at the Stone Meeting House, formerly Capel Cerrig, in the village of Remsen. In present day, the Stone Meeting House is the home of the Remsen-Steuben Historical Society and one of the largest repositories of Welsh archives in the country, including genealogical information.

The commission would like to extend its gratitude to the Remsen-Steuben Historical Society for partnering with us on this event and Jean Kreager for her expertise and passion on the subject.



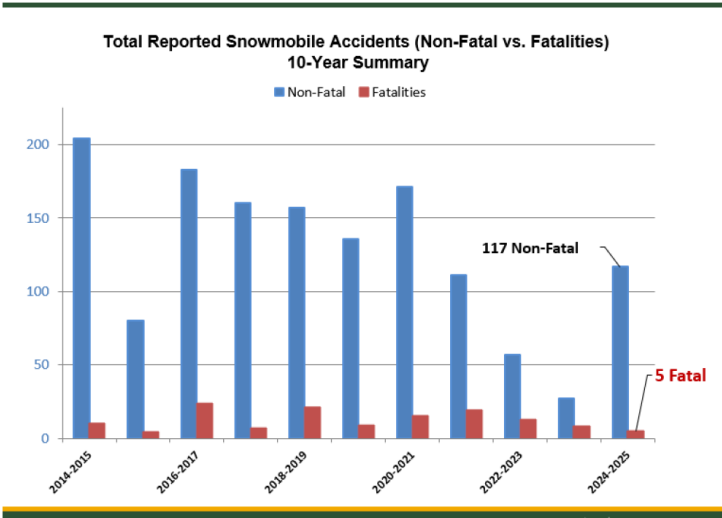
2024-25 Snowmobile Season Report Available

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), who develops, maintains, and oversees the statewide snowmobile program, has published the [2024-25 NYS Snowmobile Season Report](#). Some excerpts:

- Based on information received from the Department of Motor Vehicles, 104,380 snowmobiles were registered during the 2024-25 season, a 31% increase compared to the 2023-2024 season.
- \$7,603,887 was collected in registration fees during the 2024-25 season, compared to \$3,976,630 in the 2023-2024 season.
- The following show statewide registrations and snowmobile accidents:

2024-2025 Registration Breakdown	Totals*	Percentage
In State:	85,255	82%
Out of State:	18,671	18%
Renewal Registrants:	82,237	79%
First-Time Registrants:	22,143	21%
Club Member:	83,414	80%
Non Club Member:	20,512	20%

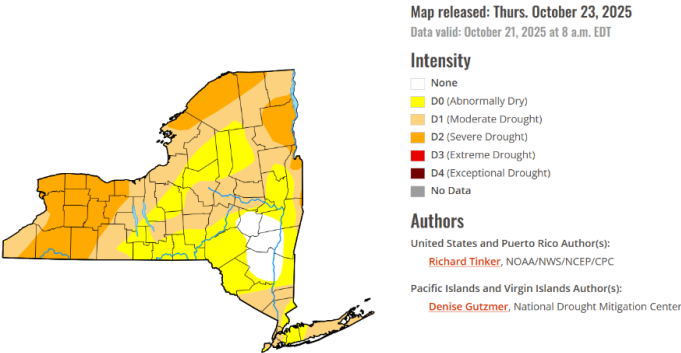
*Totals include registered snowmobiles exempt from reg. fees



Details on accidents by cause and location are available in the [2024-25 Accident and Fatality Report](#).

Drought Showing Signs of Improvement

After a prolonged dry spell across much of the state, including parts Tug Hill, recent precipitation is beginning to ease the drought pressures. According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor weekly map](#), a significant



portion of the New York remains classified as being in drought.

While portions of the state remain classified in “Moderate” to “Severe Drought” categories, the recent moisture has helped replenish soils, streams,

and local water supplies that were showing stress through late summer.

In the Tug Hill area, rainfall over the past several weeks has ranged from two to four inches, depending on location, which has boosted streamflow and improved soil moisture. Farmers and landowners are already noticing greener pastures, reduced fire risk, and less strain on wells and surface water sources. [The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation \(DEC\)](#) still lists several regions under drought “watch” or “warning” status, but the overall trend is moving in the right direction. Consistent rainfall throughout the fall will be key to fully restoring groundwater and long-term hydrologic conditions before winter sets in. For now, residents are encouraged to stay mindful of water use, as full recovery can take time even after several good rain events. The recent precipitation, however, is a welcome step toward returning the Tug Hill region’s landscapes, farms, and waterways to healthier conditions heading into the colder months.

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