

Commission Holds First Board Meeting of 2026

The Tug Hill Commission met on Wednesday, February 4 in Lowville, Lewis County, for their first board meeting of 2026. Discussion included a review of the proposed executive budget and a report on meetings to date with state senators and assembly members who represent parts of Tug Hill. The commissioners also received a presentation from staff on a new dashboard in development, to improve tracking and reporting on the Tug Hill Commission's 2025-2029 [strategic plan](#). The dashboard should be live on the commission's website within the next month.



The board also received a report on activities in the River Area Council of Governments, of which both the town and village of Lowville are members. Lowville Town Supervisor Bob Mullin was a guest at the meeting and had the opportunity to speak with the board.

The next commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, at 10:00 a.m. in Lorraine, Jefferson County.

Salmon Rivers COG Meeting February 25

The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) winter meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the Pulaski Snow Memorial Office Building, 4917 Jefferson Street, Pulaski. The meeting will include an update on the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor Sewer (SOCRIS) and review of the proposed 2026 COG calendar, as well as discussion of the town of Sandy Creek's letter of interest to join SRCG. Members will also receive updates on Salmon River flow management and a potential COG project, Little Salmon River dams, and ongoing Salmon River trails efforts. Additional agenda items include Tug Hill Special Areas, bookkeeper services, an annual dues correction, and the associate circuit rider contract. These discussions reflect SRCG's continued focus on regional collaboration, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and shared municipal services.



In This Issue

- Commission Holds First Meeting of 2026
- Salmon Rivers COG Meeting February 25
- North Shore COG Meeting February 26
- Winter Wildlife Webinar - Wolverine February 26
- Running Effective Meetings Workshop Materials Available
- River Area Council of Governments Meeting Held
- RACOG Economic Visioning Summit
- Completing Delinquent Annual Financial Reports Webinar February 18
- National Invasive Species Awareness Week February 23-27
- Can the General Fund Lend Money?
- Onondaga County Planning Symposium March 19
- Recent Public Hearings Held on Upstate Upgrade Projects
- 2026 Climate & Energy Conference May 7 & 8, Lake Placid

North Shore COG Meeting February 26

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) will hold its winter meeting on Thursday, February 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the West Monroe Town Hall, 46 County Route 11, West Monroe. The meeting will feature a review of the draft *Explore the North Shore Community Guide*, an initiative highlighting the region's communities, businesses, and recreational assets. Updates will also be provided on the status of the SOCRIS project, the Oneida Lake 9E watershed initiative, and coordination efforts with the Oneida Lake Association. Additional discussion will include Tug Hill Special Areas, the proposed 2026 meeting calendar, final development of a NorCOG logo, the filled associate circuit rider contract, annual dues corrections, and bookkeeper services. Member municipalities are encouraged to attend and participate in this important regional planning and collaboration meeting.




Winter Wildlife Webinar Series Part 2: Wolverine, February 26

The first part of the 2026 Winter Webinar Series took place on Thursday, January 29 with Todd Bittner and Daniel Weitoish from Cornell Botanic Gardens. The presentation shared ongoing research that involves propagating ash trees referred to as “lingering ash”, which are believed to have a natural resistance to the detrimental impacts of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer. Attendees also learned about how they could assist scientists with identifying viable trees through the [TreesSnap App](#). If you missed it or would like to watch again, a recording of the webinar is available [here](#).



Part 2 of the Winter Wildlife Webinar series will take place on Thursday, February 26, at 7:00 p.m. Steve Chorma, Lead Zookeeper at Zoo New York, will be sharing information about a very unique animal, the wolverine. Webinar attendees will have a chance to win a free platinum membership to Zoo New York through a game of wolverine trivia! Registration for the webinar series can be found [here](#). Please reach out to maria@tughill.org with any questions.



What is a Lingering Ash?

- Mature, native, untreated ash trees
- Persist in healthy condition
- Vast majority of neighboring ash have been killed by EAB - 20 nearest ash dead or severely declining
- Regional 95% stand mortality
- >8" DBH
- Documentation to TSIP partner Ecological Research Institute (ERI) for verification www.monitoringash.org
- Not urban or suburban trees

Lingering white ash in the Hudson valley. The neighboring ash trees are visible in the background photo. by S. Weitoish

Running Effective Meetings Workshop Materials Available

Nonprofit Bootcamp Session #4 was held last week, with Barbara Paxton from Board Strong presenting to over 50 attendees from area non-profit organizations, as well as a few municipalities. Barbara’s presentation covered meeting facilitation, agenda planning, decision making, Robert’s Rules, and meeting minutes. The recorded webinar and slide deck can be accessed on the Tug Hill Commission’s website, tughill.org/services/training/.

The final session is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 5 in Lowville. More details will be available soon. The Nonprofit Bootcamp has been organized and hosted by Lewis County Planning, the Northern NY Community Foundation, and the Tug Hill Commission.

The Meeting Agenda



What do you want to accomplish?

Meetings are first and foremost for making decisions.

Be sure you understand what decisions have to be made at the meeting.

The purpose of the agenda is to tell people about those decisions - what they are there to accomplish and how it will be accomplished.

River Area Council of Governments Meeting Recap

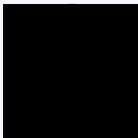
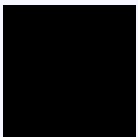
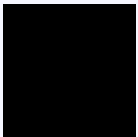
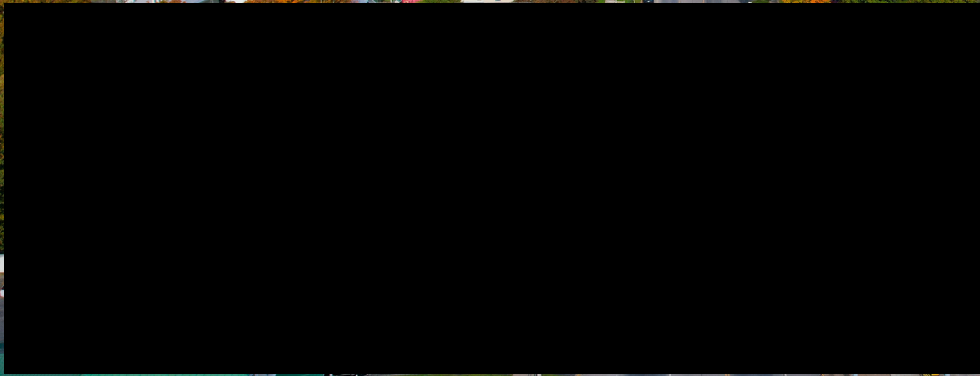
On February 5, the River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) met at the Castorland Fire Hall, where they elected officers for 2026. Heidi Lehmann, mayor of Castorland, was voted in as chair and Yvonne Boliver, town board member in Croghan, was voted in as vice chair. Additionally, with the continued growth of RACOG, the board decided to go through an interactive strategic planning exercise run by Jillian Lee and Jennifer Harvill from the NYS Tug Hill Commission. The board was very engaged, with a focus of how to share more information among the members on projects and issues. A subcommittee was formed to come up with recommendations to RACOG at their next board meeting on May 28, 2026. The subcommittee is made up of Heidi Lehmann, Bob Johnson (town of Greig), and Jake Monnat (town of Lowville).

In other RACOG news, the village of Black River recently submitted a letter to join RACOG. The board will discuss and take action on that request at their May meeting. Currently, RACOG is made up of 14 municipalities. Any questions about RACOG can be directed to Mickey Dietrich the RACOG municipal management consultant at the NYS Tug Hill Commission, at (315) 681-5023 or mickey@tughill.org.





Economic Visioning Summit



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Completing Delinquent Annual Financial Reports Webinar February 18

The NYS Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) is holding an online webinar on Wednesday, February 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., designed to help local governments navigate the challenges of completing delinquent filing of their Annual Financial Reports (AFRs). Local governments that are behind on filing their AFRs are encouraged to attend and can register [here](#).

This webinar is designed to help local government employees (counties, cities, towns, villages, fire districts, joint activities, and special purpose units) understand the necessary financial data for completing their AFR and where to obtain this data when formal accounting records are limited or unavailable. The AFR informs local officials, residents, other taxpayers, and state policymakers about the financial condition of New York's local governments, which is vital for transparency. OSC audits have found that lack of reporting is often an indicator of poor record-keeping and other troubling financial practices, which often lead to fiscal difficulties going unnoticed. Catching up on a delinquent report is not an easy task and can become increasingly time-consuming with each subsequent year the entity hasn't filed. Finance staff often contend with limited availability of accounting records and may need to rely on source documents to effectively organize the necessary information. If your local government is behind on their AFR filing, this webinar should be used in conjunction with contacting the Local Government & School Accountability's Data Management Unit and should not be used as a stand-alone resource.

If you have any questions about the webinar or experience issues with registration, NYS OSC Local Government & School Accountability is available at (518) 473-0005 or via email at Localtraining@osc.ny.gov.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week February 23-27

National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) is February 23 - 27, with the theme, "Defending Our Health by Stopping the Spread." NISAW is an international event that raises awareness of [invasive species](#), including the threats they pose, and how to prevent their spread. When not monitored or controlled, invasive species can harm our economy, environment, and human health.

The St. Lawrence – Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) is one of eight PRISMs spanning the state of New York and covering the Tug Hill region that create a network of partnerships serving as an integrative approach to invasive species management. [A couple of events they have happening are:](#)

[Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Learning Series:](#) Join guided survey trainings happening now through March in Oswego, Oneida, and Lewis Counties.

[Virtual Hike Challenge:](#) Now through March, win prizes and help report observations of hemlock woolly adelgid in the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Region.

Learn more and find out about other SLELO PRISM events [here](#).



Can the General Fund Lend Money?

Yes, the general fund can "advance" money to other departments (General Municipal Law, Section 9-a.) However, prior to the advance, all monies from that department must be exhausted, and the funds must come from the same assessment bases such as town-wide or town outside village. Further, amounts "loaned" must be repaid by the end of the same fiscal year, i.e. anticipated money coming into a department that could cover the advance prior to the end of the fiscal year. Finally, because certain specific revenues are earmarked to be used only for particular purposes, Section 9-a prohibits advances of the proceeds of obligations or other monies which are otherwise required by law to be used only for stated purposes.

Another option is to move money from unanticipated revenues or from fund balance, which requires increasing the adopted budget before the end of the fiscal year. In New York State, increasing an adopted town budget before the fiscal year ends is strictly controlled, generally requiring a public hearing and formal board resolution, as the adopted budget is a legally binding document. Budgetary adjustments or appropriations typically follow procedures similar to initial adoption, often requiring surplus funds or emergency funding mechanisms. See Town Law Article 8, Sections 106-112.

Onondaga County Planning Symposium, March 19

Registration is open for the 36th Annual Planning Symposium, sponsored by the Onondaga County Planning Federation. Scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. on Thursday, March 19 at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, the courses can be used to fulfill annual training requirements for planning and zoning board members. Early registration is \$85 per person, if received prior to February 13, and \$100 if received after. All registrations must be received by March 6. More information, including the full program, sessions, presenter biographies, can be found [here](#).

Recent Public Hearings Held on Upstate Upgrade Projects

National Grid filed paperwork with the Public Service Commission last year for several transmission projects, commonly referred to as the “Upstate Upgrade.” The project application is available to view on the [PSC website](#). As part of the permitting process, public hearings have been and continue to be held on the project, where National Grid provides information and the public is given the opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback, or make a public statement for the record. The most recent public information hearings regarding the two lines located in Tug Hill were held online on January 9 (Beaver River-Porter) and January 13 (Black River-Clay).

The [Black River-Clay line](#) plans reconstruct approximately 60.9 miles of 115kV transmission line servicing Jefferson, Oswego, and Onondaga counties. Tug Hill municipalities along that line are the towns of Hastings, Parish, Albion, Orwell and Boylston, and the village of Central Square in Oswego County, and the village of Black River and towns of Lorraine, Worth, Rodman, Rutland and LeRay in Jefferson County. The [Beaver River-Porter line](#) plans reconstruct 60.32 miles of 115kV transmission line servicing Lewis and Oneida Counties. The Beaver River-Porter line travels through the villages of Croghan, Lowville, Turin, Boonville, and Holland Patent and the towns of Boonville, Croghan, Floyd, Leyden, Lowville, Marcy, Martinsburg, New Bremen, Steuben, Trenton, Turin, Watson, and West Turin. Additionally, the Black River-Beaver River line, South Oswego-Tar Hill line, and Coffeen projects are taking place in many Tug Hill communities.

The permitting process may include further opportunities for public involvement and comment from permitting through construction. To contact National Grid with a question or comment, you may reach them at 800-390-6634 or UpstateUpgradeCNY@nationalgrid.com. Interested people who wish to participate as parties in this case may file for party status through the PSC [website](#).

2026 Climate & Energy Conference May 7 and 8, Lake Placid

Join ANCA and partners for the 2026 Climate & Energy Conference, “Grassroots to Grid: Bridging Innovation & Community Values,” at the Lake Placid Conference Center to explore relevant climate and energy solutions that align with community values.

The early bird rate is \$200 if registered by March 12. More information at www.adirondack.org/events/2026-climate-energy-conference/.

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