

## Empowering Local Leaders: Tug Hill Local Government Conference Marks 35 Years

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2026 Tug Hill Local Government Conference earlier this week! The annual training event was well attended again this year, with approximately 120 attendees at the Planning for Growth afternoon session, and 673 at the full day event at Turning Stone Conference Center. Most of the conference presentations are available on the commission's [website](http://www.tughill.org). Attendees were treated to presentations on a host of topics geared towards town and village board members, planning and ZBA board members, clerks, highway officials, and assessors. If you attended and did not provide feedback yet, [please click here for the survey](#), which closes on Friday, May 15. If you would like to share your ideas for future training topics, please call the commission (315) 785-2380 or email [jennifer@tughill.org](mailto:jennifer@tughill.org).



*Clockwise from top left: Attendees and exhibitors fill the room; Planning for Growth speaker Bill Fulton; Lowville students learn about local government; one of the 24 breakout sessions.*

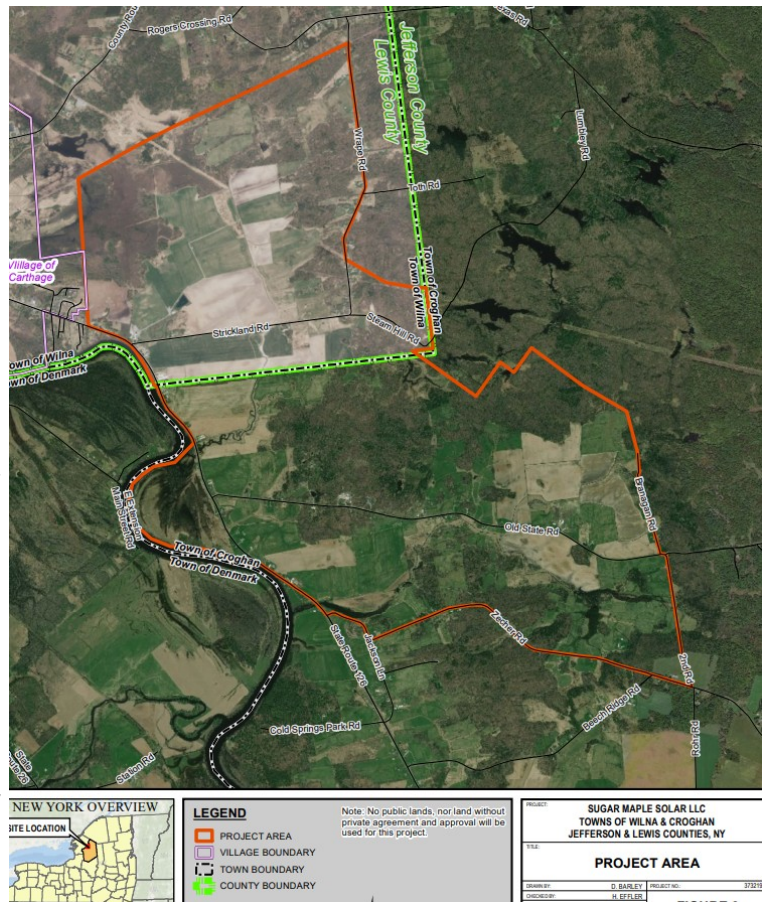
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# ORES Permit Issued for Sugar Maple Solar Project

The NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission (ORES) issued a permit this week for the 125 MW Sugar Maple Solar project in the town of Croghan, Lewis County, and the town of Wilna, Jefferson County. The facility will include solar arrays, access roads, fencing, landscaping, buried and overhead collection lines, a 20 MW battery energy storage system (BESS), and interconnection facilities. The facility will interconnect to the electrical grid via a new point of interconnection located on National Grid's existing transmission lines. According to the Department of Public Service [press release](#), the project design was revised during the application process to reduce impact in response to stakeholder input. As permitted, the project minimizes above-ground power line construction, reduces necessary tree clearing, and includes substantial landscaping to screen the facility and preserve the aesthetic value of the area. In addition, agricultural co-utilization is proposed for the entirety of the 622-acre fenced area of the project.

The project is estimated to create 434 full-time construction jobs and three full time operations positions, and will provide fiscal support of nearly \$15 million in the form of direct payments to Croghan and Wilna through a host community benefit agreement, as well as payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) and tax payments to Lewis and Jefferson counties, school districts, and local fire districts. Additionally, Sugar Maple Solar will provide \$625,000 in utility bill credits for residents of the two towns over the first ten years of operation, as required under the Public Service Commission's host community benefit program. The project is anticipated to reach commercial operation in 2029. The full set of documents related to the project are available [here](#).



## April 27 Workshop: Renewable Energy Applications

Renewable energy applications are becoming increasingly common across New York State. This in-person training on Monday, April 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Croghan Fire Hall, 6860 Fire Hall Street, Croghan, is designed to provide municipal officials, board members, and interested residents with a clear overview of how municipalities can prepare before a renewable energy application is submitted. The session, sponsored by Lewis County Planning and Community Development, will cover municipal authority and local law considerations, the roles of municipal review teams, and an overview of the renewable energy project application review process. Participants will also have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss common municipal concerns during a concluding Q&A session. Register [here](#).

## Did You Know? NYMIR Members Get Free Access to HelixIntel

Municipal officials may be interested to learn that any town or village with New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR) coverage has access to the HelixIntel maintenance management platform at no additional cost as part of its equipment breakdown coverage. Local highway departments have been putting the tool to good use to manage maintenance records for their truck fleet. Staff scan a QR code assigned to each vehicle to log service history, track repairs, upload photos, note part numbers, and leave information for the next person working on the truck. The system helps create a clear maintenance history that can be accessed instantly from a phone, tablet, or desktop.

For many smaller Tug Hill municipalities that perform most truck and equipment maintenance in-house, this type of tool can be especially valuable. In addition to improving preventive maintenance schedules and work order tracking, it also helps preserve institutional knowledge as experienced highway personnel retire or transition out of service. Rather than relying on paper files, notebooks, or the memory of one long-time employee, municipalities can maintain a centralized digital record of service needs, repairs, and replacement parts. [HelixIntel](#) can also be used for asset management, parts and inventory tracking, facility maintenance, and work order management, making it a useful option for highway garages, municipal buildings, and other local government operations.

# SWCDs and Commission Present at the 30th Annual Conference on the Adirondacks

Project specialist Jillian Lee participated in a panel discussion with Nichelle Swisher (Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District) and Katie WhitKovits (Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District), moderated by Sunita Halasz (Adirondack Council) at the 30th Annual Conference on the Adirondacks on Wednesday, April 15, in Lake Placid. The panel focused on the Black River Watershed, including the Black River Watershed Coalition, watershed-wide connections, and working together to support North Country communities. Nichelle, Katie, and Jillian spoke about the benefits of collaborating and the importance of soil and water conservation districts to the communities within the watershed.

The conference itself focused on key issues shaping the Adirondack future, which carry over into the Tug Hill region as well. Presenters spoke about a wide range of topics, including Indigenous Peoples, how the Timbuctoo Institute brings students into nature, wildlife habitats, invasive species, social and ecological sciences, carrying capacity, energy technologies, rural community opportunities and challenges, and connecting higher education research with community priorities.

The commission thanks Sunita for wanting to highlight the work going on in the watershed, and the Adirondack Research Consortium for having us and hosting a wonderful conference!



Left to right: Katie WhitKovits, Jillian Lee, Sunita Halasz, and Nichelle Swisher.



# Save the Date!



## BLACK RIVER WATERSHED CONFERENCE 2026

### WEDNESDAY JUNE 3, 2026

### TUG HILL ESTATE 40551 YANCEY RD, LOWVILLE, NY 13367

Learn about projects focused on protecting and preserving the Black River Watershed, hot topics such as water quality and deicing salt, and much more!

Call for poster session abstracts!  
Learn more here:  
[tinyurl.com/  
BRWCAbstract](https://tinyurl.com/BRWCAbstract)



## REGISTRATION COMING SOON!

Questions? Contact Jillian Lee  
 315-785-2406  [jillian@tughill.org](mailto:jillian@tughill.org)

# BUDGETING AND ACCOUNTING TRAINING FOR SMALL TOWNS WITH LAIRD PETRIE



**THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2026 9 AM TO 5 PM**  
**FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2026 8 AM TO 4 PM**

**TAILWATER LODGE**  
**52 PULASKI STREET, ALTMAR, NY**

## Cost

**\$125 per person** includes morning coffee and lunch Day 1, light breakfast and lunch Day 2, and printed materials.

## Accommodations

Tailwater Lodge has reserved 5 rooms on June 18 at \$122 per night plus tax for attendees. Contact Tailwater at (315) 298-3434 and give the agent Group Code TUG618.

## Registration

[www.tughill.org/upcoming-workshops](http://www.tughill.org/upcoming-workshops)

Credit card payments taken online, option to send check or voucher as well.

**REGISTER NOW**

Scan the QR code to register



**Spots are limited, register early!**

No refunds, must register no later than June 10, 2026.



Prior to retiring in 2021, Laird worked as a municipal auditor for the Office of the NYS Comptroller in Syracuse for 27 years, where he conducted and supervised audits of local governments and school districts in an eight-county region of Central NY. Laird served as the technical assistance coordinator and conducted numerous training sessions for both OSC staff and local officials.

Before joining OSC, Laird worked as a Tug Hill Commission circuit rider in the 1990's for a 14-town council of governments and attended town board meetings and provided training and technical assistance when requested. Since retirement Laird has provided technical assistance and training to towns and villages in a four-county area through a contract with the Tug Hill Commission.



**LAIRD PETRIE**  
MUNICIPAL CONSULTANT

# 2026 MetroCount: Reserve Your Spot

The MetroCount system collects a variety of data, including vehicle speed, vehicle class, number of vehicles on the roadway, and more. Municipalities interested in collecting traffic data on town or village-owned roads are encouraged to reach out to Chris Barboza

([chris@tughill.org](mailto:chris@tughill.org)) or Maria Covey ([maria@tughill.org](mailto:maria@tughill.org)) to reserve their spot for the 2026 MetroCount season.



JOIN US

## TUG HILL COMMISSION BOARD Meeting

**ROUTINE BUSINESS AND SALMON RIVERS COUNCIL UPDATE**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 20**  
**10:00 AM – 11:30 AM**  
**ORWELL TOWN HALL**  
**1999 COUNTY ROUTE 2, ORWELL**

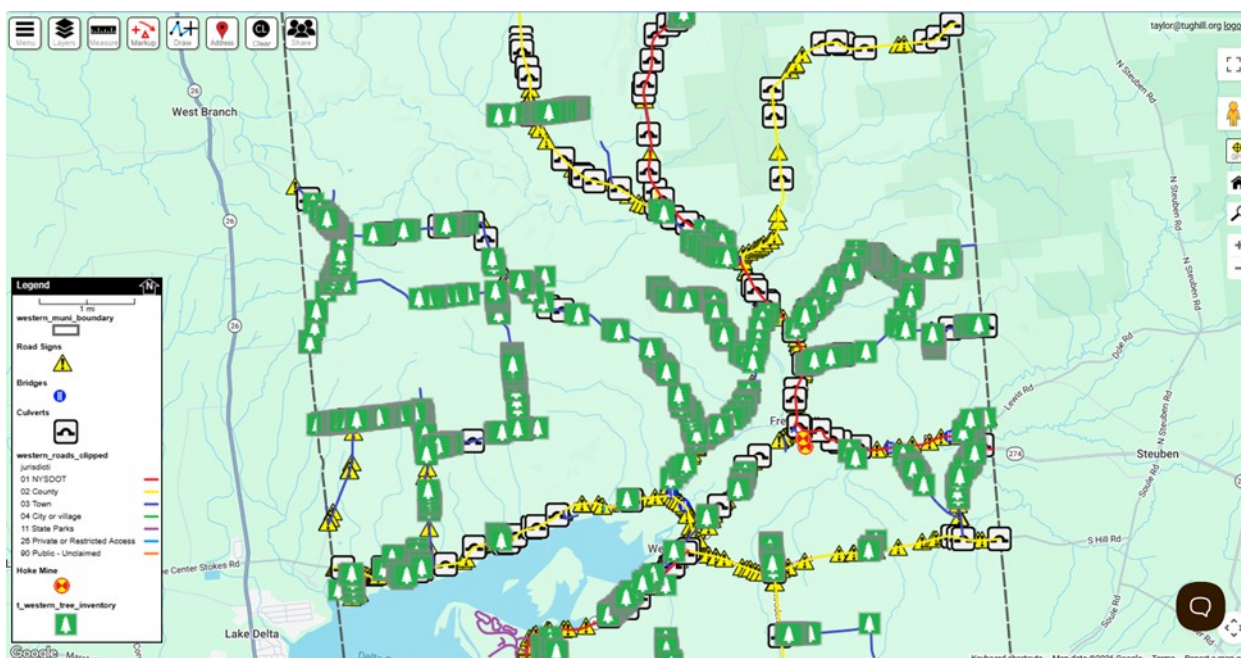
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THE PUBLIC IS WELCOME TO ATTEND

## Diamond Maps Training in Parish

On April 8, commission staff visited Parish to demonstrate the Diamond Maps software for their highway department and give staff an initial training in its functions. In many rural towns, digitally mapping and tracking assets and infrastructure from older paper maps and inventories is a difficult, if not impossible, task. In addition to the open-source software the commission uses to make its paper maps, Diamond Maps is a cloud-based GIS software designed for smaller municipalities and rural utilities. This software is used by the commission and the NOCCOG GPS project to simplify the data-gathering process, increase municipal capacity to oversee their own assets and infrastructure, and display this data in a simplified map overlay. Thus far, Diamond Maps has proved helpful in mapping water, sewer, lighting, sidewalks, road signs, tree inventories, roadways, and other important municipal assets.

Diamond Maps and other mapping assistance are free services available through the Tug Hill Commission, including personalized training and administrative support through the main commission office in Watertown. If you have any questions about mapping municipal assets, map requests, or are interested in the Diamond Maps software, reach out to project specialist Taylor McKinney at [taylor@tughill.org](mailto:taylor@tughill.org) or (315) 785-2606.



An example Diamond Maps interface in Western, showing natural resource and infrastructure assets mapped by the town.

# Green Resiliency and Green Innovation Grants Due June 12

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) is now accepting applications for \$75 million available through two competitive grant programs with a deadline of 4 p.m. on June 12. **Green Resiliency Grants** help flood-prone communities advance long-term community resilience in implementing transformative stormwater management projects that protect homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. There is \$60 million available this round. Funding is made available through the [Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022](#).

The **Green Innovation Grant Program** supports projects that utilize EPA-designated green stormwater infrastructure design and technologies. Competitive grants are awarded to projects that implement one or more of the following green practices: green stormwater infrastructure, energy efficiency, and water efficiency. There is \$15 million available this round. Funding is made available through the [Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#).

Applicants submit a single application for both programs. Eligible projects will be considered for funding under either program. This allows EFC to consider an application under the most suitable grant program based on the project scope. A webinar is scheduled at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, May 6, to share information about this round and how to apply. [Advance registration is required](#).

## ANCA Climate & Energy Conference May 7-8

The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) will host its [2026 Climate & Energy Conference on May 7-8 at the Lake Placid Conference Center](#), bringing together regional leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders to discuss practical climate and energy solutions. The two-day conference will focus on topics including climate resilience planning, equitable access to emerging technologies, and locally driven strategies for sustainable infrastructure. Registration is \$250, with financial assistance available. Municipal officials, planners, and community leaders from across the region are encouraged to attend and take part in this networking and learning opportunity. More information on the event page [here](#).



**3rd annual**  
MOHAWK VALLEY  
**NONPROFIT SYMPOSIUM**

**Collaborate. Innovate. Impact.**  
*Strengthening Nonprofits Across the Mohawk Valley*

**May 21, 2026**  
**7:30AM - 4:30PM**  
**Herkimer County**  
**Community College**

presented by  
**next** & **up^mobility** foundation  
in partnership with  
**danelipartners** **First Source**

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