

## Commission Meets in Orwell

The Tug Hill Commission met on Wednesday, May 20 in Orwell, Oswego County. Discussion items included the 2026-27 state budget, internal control documents, last month's local government conference, annual dinner arrangements, personnel policy modifications, and pending legislation for Redfield related to minimum maintenance roads. The board received a report on activities in the Salmon Rivers Council of Government from Heidi Tompkins, of which Orwell is a member. Jan Tighe, Pulaski trustee and Salmon Rivers Council of Governments chair, commission attorney Lee Wilbanks, and retired commission staffer Paul Baxter were also in attendance. The next commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17, at 10:00 a.m. in Ava, Oneida County.

## Camden High School Students Return to Florence Settlement

On May 14, students from Camden High School's Advanced Placement history classes embarked on a research trip to Florence Hill State Forest. Located in Camden, Oneida County, the now-state forest land was once home to the Florence Settlement. Also known as the Florence Farming Association, the settlement was founded by abolitionist and philanthropist Gerrit Smith as a community for freed African American farmers. Land ownership was one method abolitionists advocated as an avenue for freedmen to secure financial independence and the right to vote in New York State.

Last year, students from Camden High School helped break ground in the historic area for the very first time as a professionally led research venture. This year, they returned to continue exploring several sites of importance within the former settlement. Matthew Kirk and staff from Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., returned to lead the day's archeological proceedings. Organizations including the New York State Museum, the Department of Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, SUNY-ESF Adirondack Ecological Center, the Underground Railroad Education Center, and volunteers from the Camden school and area partnered with organizer and teacher Jessica Charney of Camden High School for this event. Commission staff were also invited to participate.



Participants in the Florence Settlement field trip. (Photo credit: Camden Central School District.)

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## Regional GIS Group Presentation

Tug Hill Commission staff member Patrick Brady recently participated in the Adirondack/North Country GIS Users Group Meeting held at Clarkson University on May 1. The event brought together approximately 45 GIS professionals, educators, students, planners, and representatives from academic, state government, and commercial GIS organizations. The event provided an opportunity for GIS professionals throughout the region to share projects, research, and emerging applications of geospatial technology.

During the meeting, Patrick delivered a lightning talk, *Planning Before the Boom*, which highlighted a GIS-based buildout analysis completed for a local municipality. The presentation explored how rural communities can use GIS tools and spatial analysis to proactively prepare for future growth pressures associated with large-scale economic development projects, including the proposed Micron semiconductor investment in Central New York. GIS can assist municipalities in identifying development constraints, evaluating land suitability, and planning for long-term infrastructure and housing needs before rapid growth occurs. The project also illustrated how similar GIS methodologies can support planning efforts related to renewable energy, industrial development, and regional population shifts.

# Salmon Rivers COG Meeting: Wednesday, May 27



The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) summer meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 27, at 6:30 p.m. at the Amboy Town Office Building, 822 State Route 69, Williamstown. The meeting agenda will include an update on the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor Sewer (SOCRIS) project and a discussion of a new intermunicipal agreement (IMA) to add the town of Sandy Creek. Additional topics include the Tug Hill Special Areas Planning Accord draft, fiscal agent status, annual dues, and the potential addition of another associate circuit rider. These discussions reflect SRCG's continued focus on regional collaboration, infrastructure, and shared municipal services.

# North Shore COG Meeting: Thursday, May 28



The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) will hold its summer meeting on Thursday, May 28th at 6:30 p.m. at the Cleveland Village Hall, 2 Clay St, Cleveland. 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 the Tug Hill Special Areas Planning Accord, the potential additional associate circuit rider, and annual dues. Member municipalities are encouraged to attend and participate in this important regional planning and collaboration meeting.

# RACOG Meeting: Thursday May 28



The River Area Council of Governments' (RACOG) next board meeting will be on May 28 at 6:00 p.m. at the Castorland Fire Hall, 5187 NY-410, Castorland. The board will review the draft strategic plan at this meeting and consider its potential adoption. The strategic plan focuses on the direction RACOG would like to take over the next five to ten years. It includes background on RACOG's formation, its purpose, mission, vision, goals, objectives, strategies and tactics, and drivers and risks. Each RACOG member is encouraged to attend and provide feedback on the strategic plan.

A Lowville Academy student who attended the Local Government Conference back in April will be in attendance with her student council to talk about her conference experience. Additionally, the village of Black River has requested to join RACOG, which will also be voted on.

## SAVE THE DATE!

The commission is hosting a new webinar...

**Data Centers In and Near the Region: Understanding the Industry and Planning Considerations**

Thursday, June 25 at 6:00 p.m.

Stay tuned for more info.

# State Wetlands Regulations News

Last month, the Albany County Supreme Court annulled the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's new rules, effective January 1, 2026, that were intended to implement amendments to the Freshwater Wetlands Law that the state passed in 2022. A major change with the new law and rules was that the official NYS Freshwater Wetlands Maps used previously would no longer limit DEC regulatory jurisdiction to wetlands depicted on those maps. Instead, the maps would become informational, and any wetlands that meet the applicable definition and criteria would be regulated by DEC and subject to permitting, regardless of whether they appear on the maps.

The NYSDEC website states, "DEC has thoroughly evaluated the [court] decision and its potential implications on freshwater wetlands permitting and enforcement programs in accordance with existing State law. As a result of the decision, DEC continues to uphold New York's Freshwater Wetland Act by exercising regulatory protections for freshwater wetlands that remain jurisdictional. DEC will require applications for projects that will impact previously mapped freshwater and/or wetlands of 12.4 acres or greater in size."

Determinations of the presence of regulated wetlands made between January 1, 2026 (when the new rules went into effect) and April 8, 2026 (when the court annulled them) may be reassessed by request. Individuals and municipalities are encouraged to contact their regional NYSDEC office for more information. More details are available on DEC's [website](#).



# BLACK RIVER WATERSHED CONFERENCE 2026

**JUNE 3, 2026**

**REGISTER HERE!**

**TINYURL.COM/BRWC2026**



**Scan to Register**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3**

**8:30 AM - 4:00 PM**

**Keynote Speaker**

**Zachary Labe, PhD**

Communicating Climate Science

**Soil and Water District Updates**

Lewis, Hamilton, Herkimer,  
Jefferson, & Oneida Counties

**Culvert Assessments:**

**Preparing for the Future**

Lewis County Highway

**SnapShot NY**

Joelee Tooley, Cornell University

**Deicing Salt Panel Discussion**

Town of Hague Highway Department  
Chris Navitsky, Lake George Waterkeeper  
Nichelle Swisher, Lewis County SWCD

**Cost: \$60**

Breakfast & lunch included!


Register by Friday, May 29


**Tug Hill Estate**

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Questions?

Contact Jillian Lee

 315-785-2406

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***Full agenda coming soon!***

# New York Places for Learning, Activity and Youth Socialization (NY PLAYS) Grants Due June 15

Applications are now open for funding through the **New York Places for Learning, Activity, and Youth Socialization (NY PLAYS) Initiative**, a **\$67.5 million** competitive grant program that supports the design, construction, and renovation of public playgrounds across New York State. NY PLAYS helps communities expand access to safe, welcoming outdoor spaces that promote physical activity, emotional well-being, and in-person social connection for children and families.

Applications will be accepted from May 4, 2026, through June 15, 2026. Grant awards will be announced no earlier than August 3, 2026.

Read the [NY PLAYS RFA](#) or [click here for complete information](#) from the DASNY website, and the [NY PLAYS Webinar 2-13-2026 Printed Version](#) and [recorded webinar](#) here. If your community or organization is thinking about applying, please reach out to us for more information.

Please note that registering and/or obtaining a prequalified SFS Prequalification Application (formerly known as the Grants Management Gateway Document Vault) may take several weeks. All applicants to an open competitive grant procurement or Grantee of an Economic Development grant should allow ample time to complete this process. If your organization needs to get registered and or Prequalified in SFS, please refer to the Grants Management website at the following link for more information: <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/register-your-organization-sfs>

## Clean Water Engineering Planning Grants Due June 12

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) has a round of [grants](#) available to help communities prepare to apply for financing through EFC's [Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#). The planning grants fund the development of an engineering report, which is an eligibility requirement for financing. Grants of up to \$100,000 are available for inflow and infiltration studies. Grants of up to \$50,000 are available for all other projects. An informational webinar was held, and the recording is available [here](#).

Municipalities in the Tug Hill region counties of Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego must meet a median household income of equal to or less than \$90,000, according to the [United States Census American Community Survey](#). EFC uses an online application with support documentation required. Applicants should review all requirements and submit applications early to avoid any last-minute issues. The grant application certification that is available below must be downloaded, signed by the highest elected official or the authorized representative for the applicant, and submitted via the online application.

## Assistance to Firefighters Grants Due June 22

FY 2025 Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grants are open for three project areas: operations and safety; vehicle acquisition; and regional projects. Applications are due by June 22 at 5 p.m., with detailed eligible requirements for each category available [here](#). The AFG program, delivered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), delivers resources to equip and train emergency personnel to meet recognized standards, outfit responders with compliant personal protective equipment to enhance safety, retrofit or modify facilities to address known health hazards, and acquire emergency response vehicles. Additionally, the program supports the development of health, wellness, and resiliency initiatives to prepare responders for incidents, improve operational efficiency, promote interoperability, and strengthen community resilience.

Eligible applicants are fire departments, non-affiliated EMS agencies, and state fire training academies. Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number, an Employer Identification Number (EIN), be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) and register in the [FEMO GO](#) grant system. Be aware that it can take up to four weeks for a new registration to be processed, so start the process **as soon as possible**. For more information on registering or re-registering for SAM or getting a UEI, visit [sam.gov/](https://sam.gov/).

Matching funds are required and determined by community size. In general, a match of non-federal funds of at least 15% of the grant amount is required. Exceptions are made for communities of less than 20,000 residents, which means for most Tug Hill communities the match amount is 5%. There is \$291,600,000 in funding available, and there are anticipated to be 1,800 awards. For communities of less than 100,000, the maximum grant amount is \$1,000,000. For more information on the AFG grant program, including the Notice of Funding Opportunity, visit the [FEMA website](#).

# ADA-Related Website Accessibility Deadline Extended

The Department of Justice (DOJ) recently published an Interim Final Rule (IFR) extending state and local governments' compliance deadlines for its 2024 web accessibility rule under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) from April 22, 2026, to April 26 of 2027 or 2028, depending on population. For all Tug Hill local governments, the compliance date has been pushed out to April 26, 2028. Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to ensure their services, programs, and activities are accessible to people with disabilities. Title II applies to all services, programs, or activities of state and local governments, from adoption services to zoning regulation to public education. This includes the services, programs, and activities state and local governments offer online and through mobile apps.

The IFR sets specific technical standards, known as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), that state and local governments must follow to meet their obligations under Title II for web and mobile app accessibility. The regulations apply to web content that a state or local government provides or makes available. More information at [www.ada.gov/](http://www.ada.gov/).

## NYAOT Rural Communities Council Meeting May 28

The NY Association of Towns (NYAOT) has formed a new Rural Communities Council, with the inaugural meeting next Thursday, May 28 at 6:00 p.m. The purpose of the council is to provide a dedicated space for rural towns to discuss shared challenges, identify possible solutions, and connect with other communities facing similar issues. Topics ranging from utility-scale energy projects to state agricultural districts, to the use of biosolids, limited staff capacity, infrastructure needs, funding challenges, and other issues with a particular impact on rural towns.

If interested in attending, register [here](#). Thursday's meeting will include focus on:

- Issues that may be appropriate for inclusion in NYAOT's 2027 Legislative Priorities
- Programming, training, and member resources rural members would like NYAOT to provide

## Septic System Webinar June 9

The Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center (SU-EFC) is hosting a free webinar on Tuesday, June 9 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. titled **Septic System Challenges Across Scales: Collaborative Approaches to Outreach and Management**. The panelists will be Carol Borg, Hatch-Bradley Brook Lakes Association; Mackenzie Gregg, Environmental Design & Research; Megan Webster, Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District; and Tad Gerace, Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

More than one in five households across the U.S. depend on septic systems or small community cluster systems to manage their wastewater, making effective septic system management critical to protecting water quality and public health. This session explores the role of watershed-based groups, local governments, counties, and academic institutions in improving septic system management. Using examples from New York State, panelists will share the partnerships and management strategies that they have used to strengthen outreach, support homeowners, and address shared water quality challenges. It also discusses opportunities for future collaboration to address the governance and public education barriers that persist in onsite wastewater management. This session is ideal for onsite wastewater practitioners, municipal and county officials, community leaders, and others interested in addressing septic system challenges through a collaborative approach. Register [here](#).

## Cybersecurity Topic of Syracuse Workshop

Tug Hill staff member Felicia Passino recently attended a lunch and learn workshop hosted by ACC Technical Services and at the INSPYRE Innovation Hub in Syracuse. The session focused on the evolving landscape of cybersecurity. Industry professionals from Hackett and Blackpoint discussed the rapidly changing threat environment and the importance of proactive security measures.

Key discussion points included the reality that organizations cannot completely eliminate cyber risk, but they can mitigate risk through ongoing education, layered defenses, and rapid response to detected threats. Speakers emphasized that users remain "the weakest link," making consistent cybersecurity training and awareness essential.

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