

TUG HILL TIMES



Bi-weekly newsletter bringing you the latest news, trainings, and updates from in and around the Tug Hill region.

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NORCOG AND SRCG SPRING MEETINGS HELD

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) and the Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) each held spring meetings at the end of May. At the NorCOG meeting, representatives from Central Square, Cleveland, Constantia, and West Monroe discussed regional initiatives and local government updates. Austin Wheelock, executive director of Operation Oswego County, reviewed current economic development efforts, including opportunities associated with advanced nuclear energy generation, state funding support for the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor Sewer (SOCRIS) project, and the recent opening of the Daldrop's facility in Oswego County's new industrial park. The facility is the first building in the United States to feature a state-of-the-art SHELMEQ Matrix Cleanroom. Council business included a review of the first draft of the O.L.A.K.E (Oneida Lake Accord for Key Environments) Tug Hill Reserve Act Planning Accord and Oneida Lake Association news from NorCOG Chair Richard Colesante. Members received an update on the "Explore the North Shore" Community Guide, which is being developed to highlight the region's recreational opportunities, history, local businesses, and community events. The meeting concluded with municipal updates, providing an opportunity for members to share emerging local issues, discuss common challenges, and exchange ideas on topics affecting their communities.



North Shore meeting in Cleveland.

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Newsletter Highlights

- NorCOG and SRCG Spring Meetings Held
- June 23 Freshwater Wetlands Webinar
- Champion and West Carthage SWOT June 23
- Data Centers Webinar June 25
- Did You Know - SEQR and Local Laws
- June 29 Scams Training Forestport
- Lewis County Comprehensive Plan July 1 Public Workshop
- 2026 Walk, Bike & Roll New York Symposium Recap
- NOCCOG 2026 Scholarship Awards
- BESS Training for Code Officials Available
- Cornell Local Roads Program - LTAP Webinars Available

NORCOG AND SRCG SPRING MEETINGS CONTINUED

Representatives from the towns of Albion, Amboy, Orwell, Parish, Richland, and Sandy Creek, along with the villages of Parish and Pulaski, met as the Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) to conduct regular council business. Members received updates on SOCRIS and reviewed a new intermunicipal agreement reflecting the town of Sandy Creek's recent addition to the council. SRCG also reviewed the first draft of its R.I.V.E.R.S. (Regional Inventory and Visualization for Environmental Resilience and Sustainability) Planning Accord, being developed as part of the Tug Hill Reserve Act planning process. Additional business included annual dues, bookkeeping and budget updates, and the appointment of the village of Pulaski as the council's new fiscal agent. Members also approved a resolution to add another associate circuit rider on a meeting-to-meeting basis. Both councils continue to demonstrate the value of regional collaboration throughout the Tug Hill region.



Left to right: John Wood, Sandy Creek councilmember; Jackie Murphy, Parish mayor; Larry Rayder, Amboy councilmember; Jan Tighe, Pulaski trustee and SRCG chair; Holly Humphries, Amboy supervisor; Peggy Rice, Sandy Creek SRCG representative; Mike Faulkner, Albion supervisor and SRCG vicechair; Jim Condon, Orwell councilmember; Jim Bernys Parish supervisor; Ernest Wheeler, Richland SRCG representative

JUNE 23 FRESHWATER WETLANDS WEBINAR

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will host a virtual information webinar to discuss recent changes to freshwater wetland regulations on Tuesday, June 23 at 11:00 a.m. During this session, DEC will provide an overview of the jurisdictional determination process, including practical examples of when a request for jurisdictional determination is required. Additionally, DEC will outline the freshwater wetland general permits available. DEC encourages all attendees to submit questions during the registration process to ensure that the agency addresses concerns and interests effectively. After the webinar, a recording of the event will be made available on the [Freshwater Wetland Jurisdictional Determination web page](#) for those unable to attend. Register for the webinar [here](#).

CHAMPION AND WEST CARTHAGE SWOT JUNE 23

The town of Champion and the village of West Carthage's Comprehensive Plan Committee is holding a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) session for the public on Tuesday, June 23 at 6:00 p.m. as part of the comprehensive plan update. The SWOT will take place at the Champion Municipal Building at 10 North Broad Street, Carthage. A SWOT is a type of visioning exercise which helps gather thoughts and opinions about a community's future. All comments will be compiled into a summary for the comprehensive plan committee to review. Any relevant questions or concerns heard at the SWOT will be incorporated into a community survey to be sent out later this year.



DATA CENTERS AND THE TUG HILL REGION: Understanding Industry Activity and Planning Considerations for Your Community

Free Webinar Thursday, June 25, 6 – 7:30 p.m., including Q & A

TOPICS

- ✓ Introduction/Overview of Data Centers
- ✓ Why Rural Communities are Seeing More Data Center Interest
- ✓ Evolution of Data Centers
- ✓ Land Use Tools and Regulations
- ✓ Expansion and Growth of the Industry
- ✓ Types and Scale of Facilities
- ✓ Community Preparedness

SPEAKERS

-  Jim Damichis, Senior Vice President Camoin Associates
-  Alex Tranmer, CEcD, Director of Industry and Workforce, Camoin Associates
-  Sarah Kirk, Director of Real Estate, Camoin Associates
-  Matthew Johnson, Planning Director, Tug Hill Commission

Please Register by June 23



<https://tinyurl.com/WebinarDataCenters>



DID YOU KNOW – SEQR AND LOCAL LAWS

A common technical assistance question asked of commission staff is whether review under the [State Environmental Quality Review Act \(SEQR\)](#) is required for various local law adoptions. SEQR actions include the “adoption of agency rules, regulations and procedures, including local laws, codes, ordinances, executive orders and resolutions that may affect the environment”. Based on experience and past conversations with staff at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, it is always best to err on the side of caution and either 1) document in the minutes that the board has decided that adoption is not an action that may affect the environment, or 2) prepare parts 1, 2, and 3 of the short environmental assessment form (EAF) and, if after a hard look there does not seem to be an environmental impact, issue a negative declaration.

While it may appear that some administrative local laws (for example, a law overriding the 2% tax cap) are unlikely to have an environmental impact, and therefore are not an action under SEQR, those are decisions the municipality (or the lead agency) would need to make (likely with legal counsel) and document the record as such. In the example case of overriding the 2% tax cap, a municipality could answer question 1 of Part 1 on the short EAF as “Yes”, and by doing so could proceed to complete Parts 2 and 3. While this may seem like overkill – it should not take a lot of additional time and better documents the SEQR decision if ever questioned.

JUNE 29 SCAMS TRAINING FORESTPORT

Join the Oneida County Town Clerks Association and the [NYS Division of Consumer Protection](#) on Monday, June 29, noon, at the Forestport Town Hall, as they present a training on scams and internet scams. For more information or to register, contact Forestport Town Clerk Tracy Terry, townclerk@townofforestport.gov or 315-272-2890. Lunch will be provided.

LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN JULY 1 PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Lewis County is updating its 2009 comprehensive plan with support from a 2024–2025 NYS Department of State Smart Growth grant. The plan will guide future growth and development across the county, addressing key topics such as economic development, housing, and environmental sustainability. Community input is essential, and residents are encouraged to participate through surveys and public engagement opportunities.

The first public workshop is being held on Wednesday, July 1 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Theater, 5428 Shady Ave, Lowville. The workshop will feature a presentation highlighting current conditions and trends in Lewis County, including housing, jobs, healthcare, agriculture, recreation, and more. Following the presentation, participants will be invited to share their thoughts on what makes Lewis County a great place to live, work, and visit, as well as the challenges and opportunities to consider.

More information is available on the project [website](#), including information about focus areas, steering committee members, and the project schedule. Those interested in receiving periodic updates about the plan can also sign up for direct emails.

2026 WALK, BIKE & ROLL NEW YORK SYMPOSIUM RECAP

A major focus of the 2026 Walk, Bike & Roll New York Symposium was the growing role of trails as economic development infrastructure. Attended by RACOG circuit rider Mickey Dietrich, several sessions had relevant information to the Tug Hill region. One session focused on the Greenway Trails network and the [Statewide Greenway Trails Plan](#), which is evaluating existing, planned, and proposed trails. The effort is focused on improving regional connectivity, expanding trail access in underserved areas, and identifying opportunities for future trail development. Communities are encouraged to review trail information through [an interactive online GIS map](#) and provide updates as part of the planning process. Currently, the Tug Hill region is not connected to the network, but there was interest from Parks & Trails New York in looking for ways to connect. There will be a second stakeholder meeting in the fall, with a draft Greenway Trails Plan Update anticipated later in the year.

The release of the [Empire State Trail Economic Impact Study](#) on June 9, 2026 was also highlighted. The study found that the 750-mile Empire State Trail generates approximately \$1.87 billion in annual economic output, supports nearly 9,680 jobs, attracts 9.75 million visits annually, and produces an estimated \$206 million in annual tax revenue. Researchers also found that properties located near the trail command an average of a 14.3 percent premium, demonstrating the broader economic and community benefits associated with trail investments.

Another session discussed Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD), an approach that uses zoning, land-use planning, overlay districts, and development incentives to encourage businesses and amenities that support trail users to locate near trail corridors.

Communities can use TrOD strategies to attract lodging, restaurants, retail shops, bicycle services, and other trail-supportive businesses that enhance both the visitor experience and local economic development.



NOCCOG 2026 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments board of directors is very pleased to announce the winners of the 2026 NOCCOG scholarships. Each winner will receive \$500 after the completion of their first college semester. This year's awardees are - Cody Piersall, from Camden; Olivia Healt, from Adirondack; Madeline Snider, from Holland Patent; and Ethen Karis, from Remsen.



The award is given to recognize the importance of local government, as well as the unacknowledged service, commitment, and dedication of community members who are essential in the daily operation of our towns and villages. Ideally, the candidate has been involved in school or community organizations, given their time, often behind the scenes, without the desire for recognition. The award is given with the hope the recipient will someday be involved in their local government.

BESS TRAINING FOR CODE OFFICIALS AVAILABLE

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Siting Team is offering several two-hour online training webinars on battery energy storage systems (BESS). This fire code training is eligible for NYS Department of State in-service training credit for building safety inspectors and code enforcement officials, though others are welcome to attend. Multiple training dates and times are available.

During this two-hour training, participants will receive an overview of Section 1207 of the 2025 Fire Code of New York State and Section R330 of the 2025 Residential Code of New York State, providing valuable insight into the latest code requirements for energy storage technologies. Topics include battery energy storage system fundamentals, recent code updates, system protections, technology- and location-specific fire safety compliance requirements, peer review requirements, inspections, construction documents, and other key considerations for the safe design, permitting, and installation of BESS projects.

For the full list of dates and times, and to register, see www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Siting-Resources/Webinar-Series.

CORNELL LOCAL ROADS PROGRAM – LTAP WEBINARS AVAILABLE

The New York State Local Technical Assistance Program (NYS LTAP) hosted by Cornell Local Roads Program (CLRP) has webinars and online training courses available for those unable or uninterested in attending in-person training. The “Foundational Webinar” series, an ongoing series of free webinars focused on important principles of local highway operations and management is beginning a summer session run now. Each webinar offers a way to learn the basics of a particular topic and with all subjects taken together they cover the foundation of local highway issues. Many of these webinars are offered yearly or every other year to allow people to access the entire series. The current series began on June 9 and continues through August 18. The webinars are on designated Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. For information and registration links for the series or for links to previously recorded webinars, including the winter “foundational” series which ran from January through March this year and an ethics webinar from May, visit the Cornell Local Roads Program website’s [training and events](#) page.

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