

TUG HILL TIMES

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



NYS Tug Hill Commission
 tughill@tughill.org
 315-785-2380
 www.tughill.org

LEONA CHERESHNOSKI HONORED FOR 42 YEARS OF SERVICE

Leona Chereshnoski, the longest serving Tug Hill Commissioner to date with 42 years of service to the organization, was honored at the commission's annual dinner on October 8 in Adams. The evening began with music by the NYS Old Tyme Fiddlers' Association, a non-profit organization established in the mid 1970s and co-founded by Leona's mother Alice Clemens. Following a welcome by Commission Chair Gerry Ritter, Senator Mark Walczyk presented Leona with a proclamation from himself and Assemblyman Will Barclay, whose districts include the town of Lorraine where Leona lived and raised her family.

Executive director Katie Malinowski shared highlights of the commission's work over the past year, including numerous meetings and dinners with the region's five councils of governments (COGs) and other partners, where dialogue and in-person connection creates personal relationships and opportunities for collaboration. Workshops and conferences sponsored by the Tug Hill Commission ranged from history-focused outings like the Welsh Ramble, to multi-session series focused on snow, wildlife, and non-profit development. Natural resources management remains a priority in the Black River, East Branch of Fish Creek, and Little Salmon River watersheds. COG growth continued with the town of Sandy Creek and village of Black River joining Salmon Rivers and River Areas COGs, respectively, this past year. The full presentation can be view [here](#)



From left to right: Bob Quinn, Gerry Ritter, Bob Keller, Fred Munk, Jan Bogdanowicz, Leona Chereshnoski, Katie Malinowski,.

After dinner, attendees were treated to highlights of Leona's tenure at the Tug Hill Commission. After her appointment by Assembly Speaker Stanley Fink in 1983, Leona was elected vice chair of the commission in 1988 and served in that role until 2002. She was involved in recruiting and selecting key personnel, including three of the four commission executive directors, and served on several subcommittees over the years. As noted in a memo from executive director Ben Coe in 1993, Leona "earned the respect of the commission members and staff both for her intellectual capacity and her common sense." Leona was honored as a Venerable Folk of Tug Hill in 2016, a Woman of Distinction in 2018, and shared family memories and bygone days of Tug Hill in a three-part series, Letters from a Tug Hill Logger, in 2021 with son Peter and daughter Jackie. Following reminiscences of times with Leona from Bob Quinn, Jan Bogdanowicz, Loretta Lepkowski and Gerry Ritter, Leona was presented with a custom-made bird house for her enjoyment at Old Lard's Barn Bed & Breakfast during the upcoming snowy Osceola winters.

Newsletter Highlights

- Honoring Leona Chereshnoski
- North Shore and Salmon Rivers Holds Annual Dinner
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Open House
- Municipal Tools for Local Roads Management Issue Paper
- Low-Density Zoning New Issue Paper
- Providing Fire Protection in NYS Workshop October 27
- NYS Wastewater Cybersecurity Regulation Webinar November 10
- Department of Labor New Unemployment System
- State Wildlife Action Plan Updated
- Work Zone Equipment Package Applications Due December 4

NORTH SHORE AND SALMON RIVERS ANNUAL DINNER IN WEST MONROE



On Wednesday, September 30, the North Shore and Salmon Rivers Councils of Governments (COGs) held their annual joint dinner at Greenview Country Club in West Monroe. All municipalities within both COGs were represented. The evening began with opening remarks from Richard Colesante, chair of NorCOG. COG business was then led by circuit rider Heidi Tompkins, with both COGs adopting their 2027 budgets and holding elections for their 2027 officers. All current officers were re-elected. For Salmon Rivers, Jan Tighe will continue as chair, Mike Faulkner as vice chair, and Catherine Spinney as fiscal agent. For North Shore, Richard Colesante will continue as chair, Mudd Murphy as vice chair, and Vern Sundet as fiscal agent.

The evening continued with presentations from the [New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission \(NEIWPCC\)](#) and the [Oneida Lake Association \(OLA\)](#). Nick Capozza, an environmental analyst with NEIWPCC, gave an overview of the services the commission offers. With the support of Environmental Protection Agency grant funding, NEIWPCC offers a variety of free, self-paced [training](#) opportunities for wastewater operators. They also offer personalized technical assistance to select municipal treatment facilities, including wastewater process optimization, addressing collection system challenges, and identification and planning for funding capital projects.

Amy Hetherington, president of OLA, a conservation organization founded in 1945 dedicated to protecting Oneida Lake's fisheries, wildlife, and natural resources, spoke about ongoing research efforts, including recent studies raising concerns over the declining smallmouth bass population. OLA has become a hub of information on all things Oneida Lake and works collaboratively with numerous partner organizations to conduct research and encourage policies for protection of the lake. OLA collaborated with the Cornell Biological Field Station to release the [2025 Oneida Lake Profile](#), a comprehensive document that covers the lake's biology, history, and contemporary issues. The evening wrapped up with closing statements by Salmon Rivers Chair Jan Tighe, Jan thanked all member representatives for all the hard work and dedication they put into their municipalities and region.



Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Open House at Zoo New York

OCTOBER 14TH
4:30PM-5:30PM

Reconnect, meet
new friends & enjoy
an evening together
at Zoo New York

No formal registration required, just stop by,
say hello

MUNICIPAL TOOLS FOR LOCAL ROADS MANAGEMENT NEW ISSUE PAPER

The Tug Hill Commission has released a new issue paper, Municipal Tools for Local Roads Management, available for download [here](#). The paper is a significant update and consolidation of previous road related papers written by the commission. Geared toward the layperson but with numerous legal references, it relies heavily on legal memorandums between The Ayers Law Firm and the Tug Hill Commission. It does note, however, that no commission staff are attorneys, and municipalities should confer with legal counsel on specific road issues in their town or village.

After a review of two key legal principles related to local roads – home rule and “once a road, always a road,” the paper describes the historical context which in large part created the road legacy that municipalities have inherited and manage. It discusses how roads can or cannot be transferred between varying levels of government, official road maps, season limited-use roads, low-volume and minimum maintenance roads, and Highway Law 205-c and the town of Lorraine case study and how that relates to all other towns. It also includes discussion of driveway installation laws, comprehensive plans, seasonal use zoning laws, subdivision road controls, and logging on town roads. Included in the appendices are an example official road map, low volume/minimum maintenance road law template, low volume and minimum maintenance road map examples, and a plowing law template. Please contact the office or your circuit rider if you would like a hard copy of the paper mailed to you, or with any questions.

ISSUE PAPER SERIES

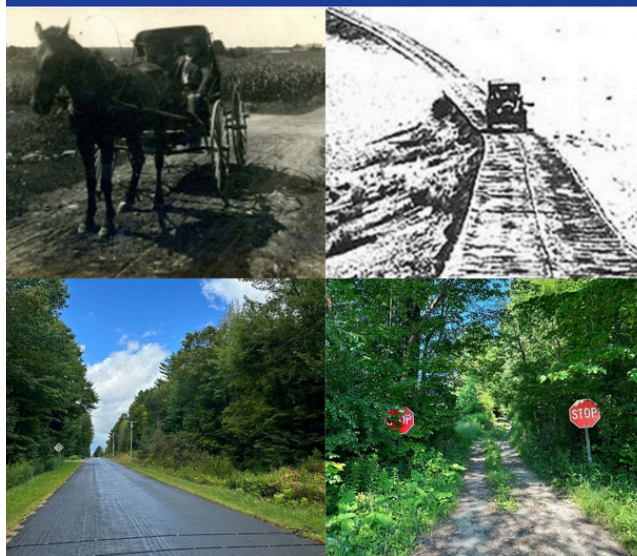
Municipal Tools for Local Roads Management

October 2026

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION



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LOW-DENSITY ZONING NEW ISSUE PAPER PUBLISHED

ISSUE PAPER SERIES

Low-Density Zoning

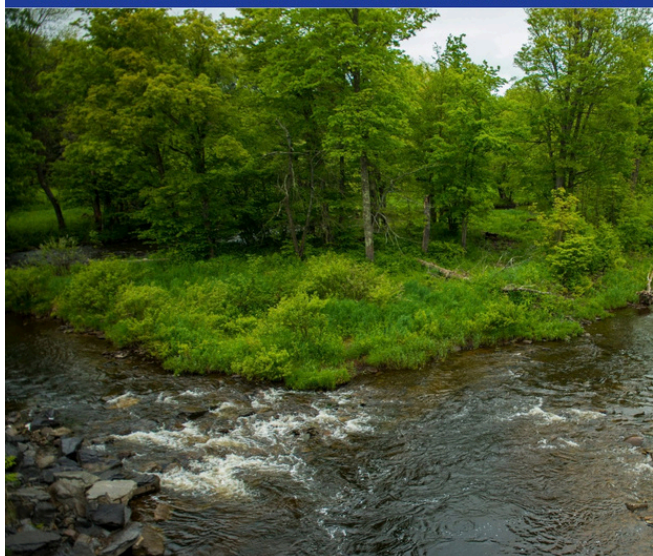
October 2026

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION



The Tug Hill Commission has released another new issue paper, Low-Density Zoning, available for download [here](#). Low-density zoning, sometimes referred to as large lot zoning, sets very large minimum lot size requirements, typically ten to 40 acres, to manage development in very rural agricultural, forested, or environmentally sensitive areas. This land use approach allows local governments to minimize the potentially harmful effects of land fragmentation in previously undeveloped areas by limiting parcelization that could degrade wildlife habitats, agricultural lands, forest lands, and other natural landscapes.

The paper includes several graphics displaying varying approaches to low-density zoning. It also provides five case studies from Tug Hill: the towns of Boylston, Lewis, Osceola, Redfield, and Turin. Each town's zoning map is displayed and a brief overview given of the different zones in the town. All of these towns, situated in or along the Tug Hill Core Forest, have used low-density zoning as a strategy to protect and preserve natural resources, contiguous forested lands, and the rural character of their communities. These areas often contain Special Areas, sensitive ecosystems, headwaters, and various wildlife and plant habitats that are significant to the region. Please contact the office or your circuit rider if you would like a hard copy of the paper mailed to you, or with any questions.



PROVIDING FIRE PROTECTION IN NYS



**Tuesday,
October 27, 2026
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

**West Monroe Fire Hall
54 County Route 11
West Monroe, 13167**

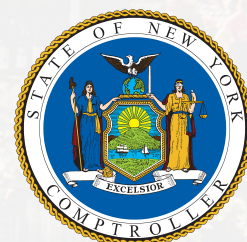
New York's system for providing fire protection is complex, and many towns and villages are working hard to maintain fire protection for their citizens balanced with fiscal responsibility. This workshop will include: a general overview of firefighting, fire protection by municipality type (city, town, village), fire districts, budgeting, and reporting requirements.

This workshop is free to attend, but pre-registration is required for planning purposes.

Presenters

Dan Acquilano, Manager of Local Training, Division of Local Government and School Accountability, Office of the State Comptroller

Katie Hodgdon,
Association Counsel, NY
Association of Towns



*Call the Tug Hill Commission at
(315) 785-2380 or email at
tughill@tughill.org with any questions.*

Register Now:



tinyurl.com/THfire2026



(315) 785-2380

NOVEMBER 10 NYS WASTEWATER CYBERSECURITY REGULATION WEBINAR

The US Environmental Protection Agency and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation are offering a training opportunity on complying with the [NYS Wastewater Cybersecurity Regulation](#), which was adopted earlier this year. This regulation requires Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) to either use an existing Emergency Response Plan (ERPs), if it meets certain requirements, or to establish, maintain, and implement new ERPs. This requirement will go into effect on March 11, 2027. Representatives and operators from POTWs, vendors and consultants, and other decision makers involved in developing, implementing, or certifying ERPs are encouraged to attend. This webinar is free to attend, but [pre-registration](#) is required. For any questions, please contact Chelsea Hintz at hintz.chelsea@epa.gov.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR NEW UNEMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

The NYS Department of Labor (DOL) is updating their current unemployment insurance system starting at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 2. The upgraded system will be called “Unemployment Services,” and is designed to be a user-friendly and efficient way for customers and businesses to move through the unemployment insurance process and get needed support. The migration of files will take between 9 and 12 business days. During that period, staff at the local career centers will only be meeting virtually with customers. Benefits will not be accessible during the blackout period, but lagged benefits will be paid once the customer certifies. For more information on the changeover, go to the DOL’s website [here](#).

STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN UPDATED

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has finalized and approved the state’s Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) for 2025-2035. The SWAP guides conservation and management actions for species identified as “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” (SGCN). This plan is a prerequisite for NY to participate in the federally funded State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program and must be updated every ten years. The purpose of SWAP is to assess the health of the state’s wildlife and habitats, identify problems facing those resources, and create actions to conserve species and areas of focus. The SGCN lists are developed from these plans and help direct funding over the course of the next decade. Out of 920 native wildlife species assessed, 570 wildlife species are identified as SGCN, 147 of which are considered “high priority,” and 269 plant species. The final documents can be downloaded from [NYSDEC’s website](#), and questions about the sent to nyswap2025@dec.ny.gov.



WORK ZONE EQUIPMENT PACKAGE APPLICATIONS DUE DECEMBER 4

NEED WORK ZONE EQUIPMENT?

Apply for the Work Zone Equipment Package Program. Selected highway and public works departments receive a package of essential work zone safety equipment.

- ✓ Work zone & flagger guides
- ✓ Safety vests & hard hats
- ✓ Roll-up signs & stands
- ✓ Stop/slow paddles
- ✓ Traffic cones



The NYS LTAP Center - Cornell Local Roads Program is now accepting applications for the 2026–2027 Work Zone Equipment Package Program. Through funding from the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC), selected New York State Highway and public works departments will receive equipment to help crews set up safer, more effective work zones. Click [here](#) for more information, and applications are due December 4. Apply for a Work Zone Equipment Package [here](#).

NYS Tug Hill Commission
317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601
Phone: 315-785-2380
tughill@tughill.org

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