

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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RACOG MEETING HIGHLIGHTS COUNTY UPDATES AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) held its dinner meeting on October 21 at Tug Hill Estates, bringing together municipal officials and regional partners to discuss county developments, regional challenges, and ongoing collaborative initiatives. The evening featured presentations by Lewis County manager Tim Hunt and Jefferson County deputy administrator Dylan Soper, with updates on activities, priorities, and developments within their respective counties. During social hour, attendees participated in a priority-setting exercise to identify the most pressing issues facing their communities. The top three concerns identified were unfunded mandates, an aging population and youth out-migration, and employment opportunities. This will help guide future RACOG discussions and collaborative efforts. During the business meeting, RACOG highlighted progress toward implementing its strategic plan adopted in May 2026, which includes an updated monthly reporting system emphasizing municipal needs, issues, and projects, along with a project closeout summary to document accomplishments. RACOG website improvements were also discussed, including a public dashboard to track strategic plan objectives and strengthen information sharing among member municipalities.



RACOG also unveiled its updated Regional Traffic Safety Report, providing information on regional crash patterns and transportation safety concerns to assist communities with future planning. Youth engagement was another highlight, with a local high school student attending who had participated in the Tug Hill Commission's Local Government Conference this past spring and is registered for RACOG's upcoming Civic Service Student Activity Program. Additional business included approval of the formation of an executive committee, discussion of 2027 membership fees and approval of funding lunches for participating students. The meeting emphasized the importance of communication and cooperation among municipalities and county governments in addressing shared challenges and strengthening the region.

“ATV RECREATION: CONSIDERATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES” SUMMARY AVAILABLE

Due to ongoing interest in all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and requests for technical assistance in many Tug Hill municipalities, the commission recently developed a [two-page summary](#) focused on the legal highlights and key takeaways of the September 2025 *ATV Recreation: Considerations for Municipalities* issue paper. Please reach out to Taylor McKinney, taylor@tughill.org, with any questions.

Newsletter Highlights

- RACOG Dinner Meeting
- ATV Paper Summary Available
- Road Abandonment New Issue Paper Published
- October 27 Fire Protection Workshop
- NOCCOG at Forestport Expo
- Salmon River Fish Hatchery Open House
- Commission Website Updated
- NYS Archives Webinar November 5
- Water and Wastewater Grants Announced
- Watershed Meeting November 20
- Community Forest Grants Due December 16

ROAD ABANDONMENT NEW ISSUE PAPER PUBLISHED

The Tug Hill Commission has released its newest issue paper, *Road Abandonment*, available for download [here](#). The paper provides a detailed overview of road abandonment, qualified or total, which is a tool towns can use in specific situations to reduce the highway mileage under their jurisdiction. The process can be very complicated and is deeply rooted in case law. 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 how roads are established in New York and the importance of establishing what method created any road being considered for abandonment, details are provided about both the process and effect of both types of abandonment. 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

Road Abandonment

October 2026

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION



DULLES STATE OFFICE BUILDING - 317 WASHINGTON STREET - WATERTOWN, NY 13601 - (315) 785-2380 - WWW.TUGHILL.ORG



LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER FOR OCTOBER 27 FIRE PROTECTION WORKSHOP

The Association of Towns and Office of the State Comptroller will present “How Fire Protection is Provided in New York State” on Tuesday, October 27 at 6:00 p.m. at the West Monroe Fire Department. Registration for this free training workshop will close at noon on Monday October 26. Register at www.tinyurl.com/THfire2026, and please contact the Tug Hill Commission at (315) 785-2380 or email tughill@tughill.org with any questions.

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. Presenters will be Dan Acquilano, manager of local training with the Division of Local Government and School Accountability at the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC), and Katie Hodgdon, association counsel with the NY Association of Towns.

Dan has been with OSC since 2005, working as an auditor in the Rochester region until 2014, and now regularly presenting at local government conferences and OSC’s accounting schools. Dan is also a 26-year retired combat veteran of the US Navy, where he was a certified master trainer and a faculty advisor at the US Navy War College’s Senior Enlisted Academy. Katie has been with the Association of Towns since 2014, where she serves on the senior management team and manages their legal education program and delivers much of the programming herself. Additionally, she hosts monthly roundtables for local officials across the state. Katie received her law degree from the University at Buffalo School of Law.

NOCOCG PARTICIPATES IN FORESTPORT EXPO

The Northern Oneida County Council of Governments was proud to take part in the 4th annual Forestport Community Expo, held on September 30 at the Forestport municipal offices. The public event, which is partially sponsored by National Grid, included representatives from federal, state, and county departments, as well as from the Adirondack Central School District. Numerous other civic, health care, and community organizations participated in the annual event, which also included mammogram screenings and flu shots.



STAFF ATTENDS 27TH ANNUAL SALMON RIVER FISH HATCHERY OPEN HOUSE

Staff members Chris Barboza and Maria Covey attended the [Salmon River Fish Hatchery](#)'s 27th annual open house on Saturday, September 26. Throughout the day, visitors had the opportunity to attend a tour of the facility and get a behind-the-scenes look at the hatchery's daily operations. Various activities occurred on the grounds, such as learning how to cast a fishing rod. There were multiple conservation organizations, outdoor recreation groups, and fishing and hunting clubs with informational displays and a wealth of knowledge about the Salmon River corridor and the surrounding natural environment.



COMMISSION WEBSITE UPDATED WITH HISTORICAL REPORTS, PARTNER LINKS

The Tug Hill Commission has added a historical technical studies/reports section to its website, as well as a number of useful links. The historical documents can be found [here](#), are organized in three categories: natural resources, local government, and land use, and are arranged by year and month. Some examples include *The Tug Hill Region: Preparing for the Future – February 1976* and *Land Taxes in Tug Hill – August 1980*. The new useful links page includes four categories: state agencies, partner organizations, counties, and data. Many of the sources listed under data are from state agencies, but their specific data portals are linked. Contact the office to ask about other historical reports, or to suggest additional useful links.

Land Taxes in Tug Hill



The Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill
Watertown, New York 13601
June, 1980



NYS ARCHIVES WEBINAR NOVEMBER 5

New York State Archives has a webinar titled “Digital Imaging” scheduled for Thursday November 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Local governments, state agencies, and historical records repositories intending to create digital images of records to improve access to, preserve, or replace original records should follow industry standards and best practices to ensure long-lasting digital images that are a true representation of the original record. This webinar will provide an overview of important considerations before scanning records and requirements for replacing an original government record with a digital image.

This webinar will help determine what records are appropriate for scanning; plan steps necessary for a successful imaging project; understand the Digital Imaging Guidelines and requirements for government records; determine staff to manage projects, prepare, scan, index, verify image content, and quality control images and indexing in a new system; and understand the costs to create and maintain digital records. The training is free and people with all levels of knowledge of records management are encouraged to attend. Registration information can be found on the [workshop registration](#) page. The NYS Archives also has many recorded webinars that are available for viewing at your leisure, which are available on their [webinar](#) page. Registration for the webinar closes at 4:00 p.m. on November 4 and will be recorded for later viewing.

WATER & WASTEWATER GRANTS ANNOUNCED

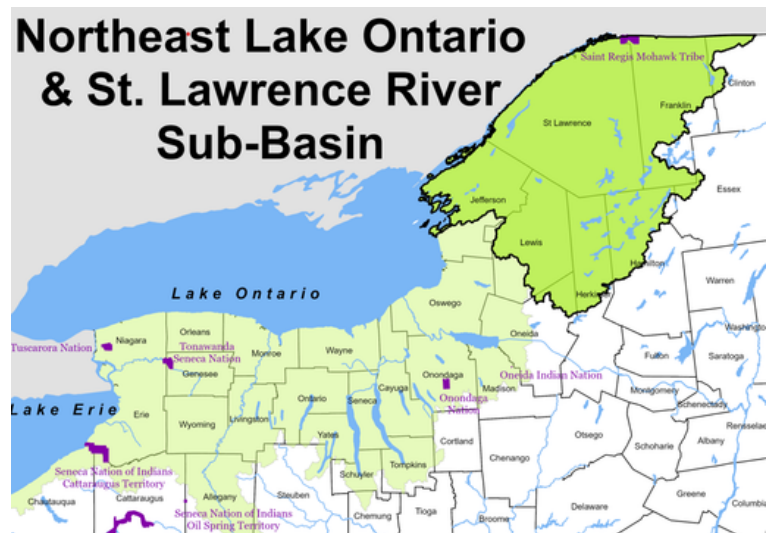
Several Tug Hill region communities will receive millions of dollars in state funding to support drinking water and wastewater infrastructure improvements through the state's 2026 Water Infrastructure Improvement (WIIA) and Intermunicipal Water Infrastructure Grant programs. Announced October 20 by the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation, Oswego County received \$25 million for the Southern Oswego County Regional Interceptor System (SOCRIS), a regional wastewater infrastructure project. Pulaski was awarded \$5 million for phase three of its water system improvements, while \$8,937,830 for wastewater infrastructure improvements in the village of Camden and \$15,697,500 for wastewater collection and treatment facilities in Trenton. Additionally, the village of Adams was awarded \$4,602,500 for water system improvements and West Carthage \$9,800,000 for joint water system improvements. For the complete list of 2026 awardees visit the EFC website [here](#).

NORTHEAST LAKE ONTARIO/ST. LAWRENCE RIVER NOVEMBER 20 MEETING

DEC's Great Lakes Program will hold a Northeast Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Sub-Basin Work Group meeting at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County in Watertown on Friday, November 20, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., with an optional tour of pollinator gardens at Thompson Park following the meeting. Tentative meeting objectives include sharing DEC Regional and Great Lakes Program updates, hearing updates from partners, discussing sub-basin toolkit progress, and discussing upcoming funding opportunities. Click [here](#) to RSVP.

Please participate in the [GLAA Work Group Survey](#) to help us facilitate collaboration with work group members and provide access to the Northeast Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Sub-Basin Work Group SharePoint, where an index of partners based on responses and other resources are available for work group members. Reviewing the materials in SharePoint in advance can help partners be better prepared for meeting discussions.

The Great Lakes Program will be hosting a Virtual Great Lakes Action Agenda Work Group Kickoff Meeting on November 5 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. to share basin-wide updates with all Great Lakes partners, more information [here](#).



COMMUNITY FOREST CONSERVATION GRANTS DUE DECEMBER 16

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is offering \$1.5 million through the fourth round of the [Community Forest Conservation Grant Program](#). The program helps municipalities purchase land or conservation easements to establish or expand community owned forests supporting the state's goal of conserving 30% of its lands and waters by 2030. Municipalities may apply for \$50,000 to \$500,000, with no local match required. Eligible properties must be at least ten contiguous acres, have forest cover on at least 75% of the property, and provide public access and community benefits such as recreation, wildlife habitat, and clean water.

DEC will host an informational webinar on Wednesday, October 21, at 10:00 a.m. to review eligibility, application requirements, and the State Financial System grants process. Register through the webinar link [here](#). The program is funded through New York State's Environmental Protection Fund. Municipalities interested in land conservation or expanding public recreational opportunities are encouraged to explore this funding opportunity.

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