

# HEADWATERS

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## GOOD IDEAS START LOCALLY

For nearly 40 years the Tug Hill Commission has been a recognized model of achieving conservation through local collaboration. The basis of this is a non-regulatory approach that recognizes how important the Tug Hill rural character and future are to landowners and local residents. The Region's communities recognize the places they cherish and want to protect not only what they are today, but what they hold for the future.

In partnership with local leaders, citizen volunteers and numerous partnering organizations we look to the future of the Tug Hill's working landscapes to help ensure it will be important to the residents and communities for years to come. In this issue of Headwaters you will see the challenges being faced by the Region's local governments and landowners. Whether it is demands to meet the 2% property tax cap, changing forest land ownership or the new Regional Economic Development Councils, through collaboration we can inspire a local response to these challenges and opportunities facing the region.

The most important part of the Commission's model is providing information, technical assistance and training to citizens to make changes through local action. We invest in helping landowners, local governments and businesses make decisions that sustain the landscapes and the most important resource of the region – its people – to survive and thrive.

Building from the bottom up is what makes a strong foundation for the Region. As we approach our 40th anniversary in 2013 we will again ask for a reading on the

Commission and our programs with our 7th survey of local leaders to evaluate and re-calibrate our efforts. It will be the people of Tug Hill that drive the Commission into the future and we appreciate the input that you have and will give us.

On behalf of the Tug Hill Commissioners and our colleagues we thank you for working with us and providing us the support we need to start locally and help you leverage conservation on a regional basis.



**Tug Hill local elected officials meet with State representatives in Redfield.**

## Meet the Tug Hill Commission Staff

Commission staff provide support to Tug Hill councils of governments in community and economic development, land use planning, natural resource management, geographic information systems (GIS) and related fields.

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**“Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region”**

### RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Tug Hill Region is one of the most rural, remote areas of New York State, as the third largest contiguous forested area outside the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. For over 39 years the Tug Hill Commission has worked diligently to sustain and improve the rural economy and quality of life of the area. The unique partnership between the Region’s 62 towns and villages and the Commission has sustained the Region’s natural resources and rural economy and demonstrated a grassroots approach to rural economic development.

Three of the new State Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) intersect on Tug Hill – Central New York (Oswego County), Mohawk Valley (Oneida County) and

the North Country (Jefferson and Lewis Counties). While some may view this as fractionalizing Tug Hill, it is an economic reality that the Region’s communities have lived with for decades. Tug Hill is a unique geologic and natural resource area recognized by the New York State Legislature, but economically it, like other rural areas of the State, has binding ties to the economies and communities that surround it. So goes the economies of Syracuse, Utica-Rome, Oswego, Watertown, and Fort Drum, so goes a portion of the Tug Hill economy. We have learned that stewardship of the Region depends upon our ability to effectively communicate regional needs to State and Federal government, non-profit organizations and our local towns and villages. Unlike other significant resource regions such as the Adirondacks and Catskills whose effectiveness has relied on regulation and

acquisition, Tug Hill has depended upon an approach of collaboration and cooperation between the State and local governments. This partnership has produced significant regional and statewide benefits without the litigious and regulatory contentions in other areas.

To accomplish this we have been part of many existing local, State and federally sponsored strategies and plans that reflect priorities and projects identified through significant effort. As the REDC’s have developed their respective new regional strategies the Commission has worked to make connections so that those strategies could become part of the foundation as to how they affect the Tug Hill Region. Over the past year and a half Commission staff have worked with all three REDC’s to ensure that their strategies and priorities benefit the Tug Hill Region. By

advancing regional priorities from McConnellsville to Watertown, Lyons Falls to Albion we have helped rural communities make their voices heard.

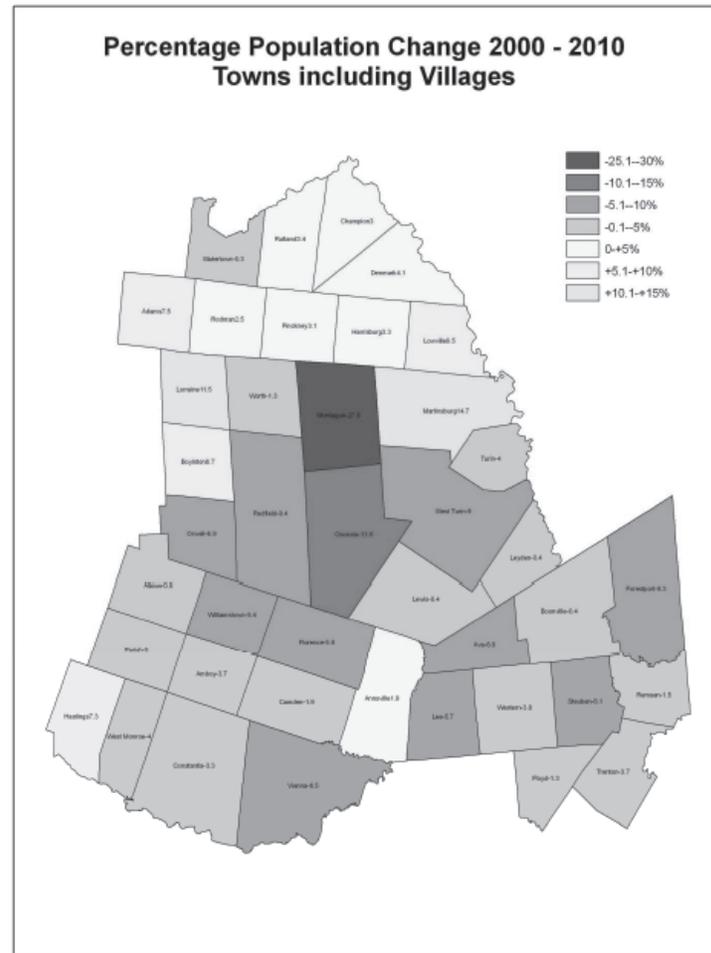
The Commission has worked through Council committees to advance priorities along Scenic Byways and Blueway Trails, developed white papers on the forest economy and participated in energy planning under the Cleaner Greener Communities initiative. This has required a commitment of Commission staff resources but has positioned the Region to benefit from implementation of the Council strategies. We also hope the North Country Council will communicate with the Mohawk Valley and the Central New York Regional Councils on how regional strategies and priorities cross over their regional boundaries and affect and advance the

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
continued on page 8.**

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND LAND USE TRENDS IN THE TUG HILL REGION

The Tug Hill Region's population remained remarkably stable during the first decade of the 21st century, coming in at 103,955. During this period, the population declined by just 343 persons, or 0.3%. While the total population changed little, Tug Hill towns gained and lost population, in a pattern that reflects their distance from a growing Fort Drum. Twenty-eight towns (mostly in the southern portion of the hill) lost residents while 13 towns (mostly in the northern portion) gained. When broken into counties, most Oswego and Oneida County towns lost, most Jefferson County towns gained, and Lewis County towns were about evenly split. The largest five towns are Hastings (9,450), Lee (6,486), Vienna (5,440), Adams (5,143), and Lowville (4,982). The smallest town is Montague (78). Towns with the largest percentage gains were Martinsburg and Lorraine. Towns with the largest population percentage losses were Montague and Osceola.

Twenty-one percent of Tug Hill residents lived in incorporated villages in 2010. Combined village population dropped 1.3% between 2000 and 2010. Six villages grew while 15 lost residents. Unlike the towns, there is no discernable geographic pattern to gains and losses. The largest five villages in the Region are Lowville (3,470), Camden (2,231), Boonville (2,072), West Carthage (2,012), and Central Square (1,848). The



smallest village is Turin (232). Villages with the largest percentage gains were Altmar (scheduled to dissolve in 2013) and Castorland. Villages with the largest percentage losses were Constableville and Sylvan Beach.

Perhaps the most interesting trend highlighted by the latest census is the aging of the Tug Hill Region. The population aged between 2000 and 2010 with the median of all the town median ages increasing from 36.5 to 40.9. The median age for New York State as a whole is 38.0. Every town showed an increase in median age, with the exception of Montague. Williamstown has the youngest median age at 35.0 and Osceola has the oldest at 48.8.

The number of housing units in the Region grew from 47,160 to 49,584 (a 5%

increase) between 2000 and 2010. New York State as a whole added 6% to its housing unit total. All towns added units with the exception of Boylston, Constantia, Lewis, Montague, West Turin, and Worth. Hastings reported the most housing units (3,909) and Harrisburg the least (239).

Tug Hill continues to stand apart from the State in the way land is used. The majority of the tax parcels in the 41 Tug Hill towns are assessed as residential (60%). The next highest land use categories are vacant (24%), followed by agriculture (4.3%) and forest (4.3%). Compared to New York State as a whole, Tug Hill has more parcels classified as agriculture, vacant, recreation, community service, and forest.

## ABOUT HEADWATERS

*Headwaters* is the annual newsletter report of the New York State Tug Hill Commission.

The Tug Hill Commission is a state funded, regional agency overseen by a board of nine unpaid commissioners - two each from Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego counties, and one at-large.

Commissioners are appointed for five year terms: three each by the Governor, State Senate and State Assembly. The Commission has an administrative link to New York State's Department of State.

### Chairman

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## RACOG NOTES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Local officials from the Towns of Champion and Wilna and the Villages of Carthage and West Carthage continue to develop the Black River Waterfront as part of ongoing downtown revitalization initiatives. Currently, West Carthage is implementing recommendations outlined in the "Destination Blueway: Waterfront Plan for the Villages of Carthage and West Carthage" to enhance the existing picnic and boat launch area. Complementary to the project, Carthage completed enhancements to the Guyot Island portion of Long Falls Park.

The Town of Wilna acquired the "Crown Cleaners of Watertown, Inc. Superfund Site" in the Village of Herrings to develop a downtown waterfront recreation park in June 2012. The Environmental Protection Agency anticipates building demolition, ground water cleanup and the remediation of contaminants from the 9.2 acre site to occur during 2013. In anticipation, local officials plan to submit a request for funding through the 2013 Consolidated Funding Application process to contract for professional services to document the shared vision of the community to guide future development on the site.

Located adjacent to the Fort Drum Military Installation, members of RACOG are advancing land-use regulations to guide development of housing and business within the area. The Town of Champion & Villages of Carthage and West Carthage were awarded funding through the 2012 CFA process to construct

affordable housing & infrastructure using principles of smart growth.

## CTHC BACK ON BOARD

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council has succeeded in hiring a circuit rider to replace Jane Jones who retired in April 2011. Angie Kimball, a Town of Redfield resident and town justice, is now filling the vacancy. Long time Council secretary Howard Leitner has retired from the executive board after several decades of service to the Council.

The Council has continued their special area protection program under the Tug Hill Reserve Act. The Town of West Turin was recently the first to adopt a newly revised special area map based on updated guidelines approved by the Council. The Council has also embarked on the low-volume road mapping project which has been so successful with the NOCCOG towns. The Town of Pinckney was recently the first CTHC town to adopt an official map under this program.

The towns of Pinckney, Harrisburg and Montague finalized the first court consolidation in NY State. The towns of Pinckney, Montague, Osceola, Turin and Florence also have a joint zoning board of appeals hosted by the council, and has recently initiated an update of their intermunicipal agreement. The joint ZBA has reviewed eight appeals over the past year. The Town of Lorraine, one of three remaining CTHC towns without zoning has appointed a zoning commission to make a recommendation on a new zoning law for the town.

## NOCCOG CHANGES

Northern Oneida County towns and villages experienced a year filled with changes. NOCCOG learned that it would not receive any fiscal support from Oneida County again for 2012, a difficult decision for the County and NOCCOG appreciates past County support. As in 2011, the communities rallied by all adopting resolutions of support to request the continuance of funding for NOCCOG by Oneida County. NOCCOG recently learned that it will receive \$5,000 in funding from Oneida County in 2013 through an amendment to the budget adopted by the Oneida County Legislature.

With the existing fund balance, fiscal support from the Staying Connected, Wildlife Connectivity Project, and holding the line on expenses, services were maintained through 2011 and 2012. At the 2011 Annual Meeting, members voted unanimously to increase annual dues from \$550 to \$1,000 for 2012. Dues will also remain at \$1,000 for 2013. The Executive Board and the staff greatly appreciated this vote of confidence and support from NOCCOG communities in budget years that has been difficult for all.

The NOCCOG Inter Municipal Agreement was renewed at the 2011 meeting and all town supervisor and village mayors have signed the IMA. John Doiron was elected chairman, replacing long time chairman Bob Sauer who will now serve as a director. Mr. Dorion was re-elected chairman for 2013 at the 2012 Annual Meeting along with Arnie Talgo as vice-chairman, Mark Scheideman as fiscal officer, Mark Trnchik and Bob Sauer as directors.

NOCCOG has provided numerous opportunities for training for local officials recently, partnering on many of these training sessions with the Tug Hill Commission and the Local Government Education Committee of Oneida and Herkimer Counties. These trainings included seminars on the Emerald Ash Borer, the 2% Tax Levy Limit, One for the Road – A Primer on Local Roads, Health Insurance for Municipalities, GIS Mapping, Conflict Resolution – the Relationship Between the Town Board and the Highway Department, Code Violations and Property Maintenance, and Duties of Elected Town Officials. Staff from the Tug Hill Commission was also able to provide some direct training for Planning Board and ZBA members.

NOCCOG conducted its bi-annual salary survey for elected and appointed town and village officials in 2011 and will again in 2013. This survey is always in demand and serves as a guide for NOCCOG municipalities during budget preparation time.

NOCCOG circuit rider Gerry Ritter attended the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council meetings and served on the public participation outreach committee for the council. She is also participating in the USDA Rural Development Stronger Economies Together (SET) project for communities along the NYS Route 28 corridor in northern Oneida, Herkimer and Hamilton Counties. The purpose of SET is to strengthen the capacity building of communities in rural areas by implementing a plan for economic development.

## NORTH SHORE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS UPDATE

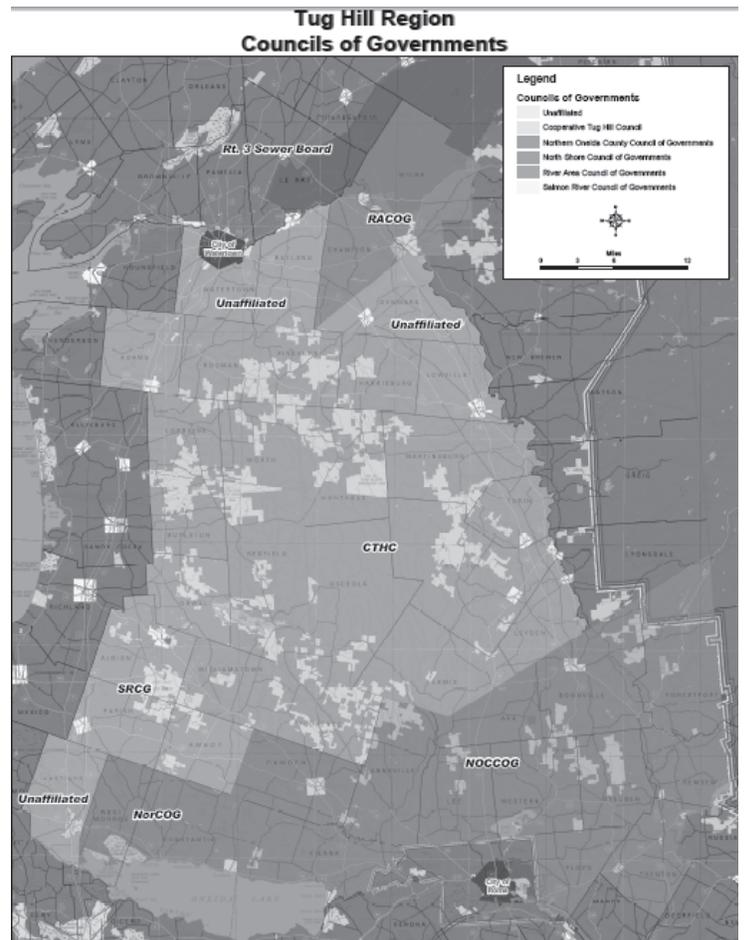
The Village of Central Square is in the process of updating the Village's comprehensive plan. The new senior citizen housing, Waterworks Landing, a \$6.2 million, 32 unit complex on County Route 12 has been completed.

Construction of the Town of Constantia and Town of West Monroe joint water district is nearing completion, and the Town of Constantia is investigating the feasibility of extending the water system east to Bernhards Bay and the boundary with the Village of Cleveland.

The Town of West Monroe has updated their 2009 zoning local law pertaining to placement of recreational camping vehicles, and clarification of area and dimensional requirements, and the planning board has made recommendations to the town board regarding signs. The Town of Constantia is reviewing its land development regulations for updates.

## SALMON RIVERS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS UPDATE

The Altmar-Parish-Williamstown school system expanded their central campus, and has discontinued use of the individual elementary schools. Williamstown Elementary School has already been closed in 2008, and Altmar and Parish Elementary Schools closed in September 2012.



The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG) acted to provide assistance to the school system and the communities as they prepared to make the transition in the use of the school buildings as smooth as possible. The Village of Parish, acting as fiscal agent for SRCG, hired consultants who prepared studies to evaluate the feasible re-uses of the buildings through examination of the physical structures, researched market potentials, and conducted public meetings in the communities to identify future new uses preferred by area citizens. Funding for the studies was in part from the local communities and in part from state funding provided through the local legislative delegation. Parish Elementary School has been sold to an Oswego County company, Biospherix, which was looking

to expand while still remaining within Oswego County. Altmar Elementary School has been sold to Genesee LLC. Williamstown Elementary remains unsold at the time of this writing.

The Village of Altmar is in the process of village dissolution as a result of a citizen-initiated petition of referendum. The initial referendum to dissolve the village took place in August 2011. A study to develop a plan to implement dissolution followed and was ratified by a subsequent citizen-initiated petition for referendum which took place in November 2011.

The Village of Altmar is scheduled to cease as an independent incorporated entity on May 31, 2013. Some functions will be assumed by

**SRCOG UPDATE**  
continued on page 8.

## HARDEN & GUTCHESS FORESTLANDS SOLD

Harden Furniture restructured in 2011 and sold most of its land holdings, approximately 9500 acres, to Georgia based company Timberland Investment Resources (TIR), a private Timber Investment Management Organization (TIMO). Harden, founded in 1844 and run by the 5th generation of the family, continues to manufacture furniture at its facility in McConnellsville. TIR has contracted with Forecon out of Cortland to manage their new forestlands. TIR continues to lease to various hunting clubs on Tug Hill in Oswego and Oneida Counties. TIR refers to their holdings on Tug Hill as Marcy LLC.

Gutchess Lumber also divested itself of its almost 28,000 acres of land in all four Tug Hill counties. The purchaser of the properties was Woodwise LLC out of Western NY, who refers to their Tug Hill properties as Salmon River Timberlands LLC. They also continue to lease to hunting club and to work with the snowmobile clubs to maintain trails on the property.

At a December 2011 meeting hosted by the Commission for interested towns, sportsmen and residents, attendees expressed a desire for continued private ownership of industrial forestlands on Tug Hill. Keeping forestlands providing raw material for the forest industry, providing hunting and fishing opportunities for sportsmen, and paying local taxes are all benefits that attendees expressed were important to maintain.

TIR and Woodwise, along

with Molpus Timberland Investment, are two of three remaining industrial forest landowners on Tug Hill, owning approximately 67,000 acres combined. The largest landowner on Tug Hill overall is the State of NY with approximately 160,000 acres.

## TUG HILL SAGES - CLASS OF 2012

It was with great pleasure that the Tug Hill Commission honored six new Tug Hill Sages at its Annual Meeting/Dinner on May 31st at the Delta Lake Inn. "Tug Hill Sages" were first designated by the Commission in 1983. Sages are people who have lived a life close to Tug Hill and its traditions. Most Sages have been loggers, sawyers, fiddlers, conservationists, maple syrup producers, or have other similar ties to things Tug Hill. The following residents of Tug Hill were inducted into the Class of 2012 Tug Hill Sages:

Irvine "Dutch" Buchal of Copenhagen, who has served as Trustee of St Peter and Paul's Church in New Boston and operated a dairy farm, logging business, maple sugar business, saw mill and is the curator of the Deer River Museum in Copenhagen. He is active with Flywheels and Pulleys, New York State Old Tyme Fiddlers' Association and loves showing off his Lynn tractor and steam engines. Dutch has a real sense of community, he always looks for the good in people and enjoys helping out his new Amish neighbors.

Bonnie and Don Colton of Lowville were original founders of THRIFT (Tug Hill Resources Investment for Tomorrow). They have a great interest in



**Tug Hill Sages at Annual Dinner. In picture, from left: Warren Mathis, Harold Petrie, Bonnie Colton, Arlene Moore, Don Colton, Bob Sauer, Irvine Buchal, Francis Yerdon, Chet Kwasniewski**

Tug Hill and have worked tirelessly to get others interested in the Region as well.

Chet Kwasniewski of West Leyden has a vast knowledge of the Tug Hill forest industry and loves to share his memories of the logging camps, driving dams, sawmills, contractors and logging roads from his early days. He and his brother started J&C Lumber Company in West Leyden in the 1950's. Chet purchased and ran the West Leyden Hotel for 7 years and served as Town Justice for 23 years.

Arlene Moore of Lorraine has been an active member of her Tug Hill community her entire life. She helped run the Moore's Store in Lorraine for many years, which was the hub of the town. Arlene is a member of the Lorraine United Methodist Church where she has served as the organist for 66 years and she has served as the town's Historian since 2001.

Francis Yerdon of Redfield was actively involved in the effort to introduce land use planning in the original "nine towns" in the heart of Tug Hill

in the early 1970's. He has been an active member of the Redfield Fire Department, the Redfield Fish & Game Club, the Stave Mill Club, the Oswego County Sportsmen's Federation, and the Oswego County Sportsmen's Foundation. Fran is an avid hunter, trapper, fisherman and recreationalist, who is always eager to share his advice and knowledge of the Tug Hill region.

With the designation of six new Sages, the Commission has recognized a total of 32 individuals over the past 30 years. The next Class of Sages will be designated in 2016.

## 2012 LGC SCHEDULE CHANGES

The 2012 Local Government Conference (LGC) saw a record number of attendees with over 700 local officials, exhibitors, sponsors and speakers in attendance. A keynote by Brigadier General Kenneth R. Dahl from Fort Drum kicked off the day of sessions geared toward town and village board members, planning and zoning board members, clerks,

highway superintendents and assessors. This year's conference had an extra seven sessions to make a total of 30 sessions available to participants.

A big change was made this year in the schedule. The LGC Committee decided to move the keynote to an earlier time in the morning and shorten it to half an hour. This made room for an additional fourth concurrent set of sessions in the morning. One reason for the schedule change was to address the long lines at lunch. In past years, the keynote was just before lunch, which meant that 600 plus attendees were in line at the same time. Changing the schedule around so that eight different sessions were getting out at different times just before lunch alleviated a large group of attendees

in line all at once. The new schedule seemed to help the lunch line and added more sessions for local officials to attend. Ninety percent of the survey respondents thought the shorter keynote was excellent/good and 92% thought the addition of a 4th concurrent set of sessions was excellent/good.

End-of-conference survey results showed a 96% very helpful/helpful rating for the conference overall, with over 245 participants filling out the survey. Most all sessions were rated excellent or good and the keynote received an overwhelming 97% excellent/good rating on the survey.

The Commission has begun to make plans for the 24th LGC by setting the date for March 28, 2013. The schedule will be the same as

this year and we hope to have as many local officials attend.

## HIGH DEMAND FOR TRAINING

The Commission continues to see a high demand for the training events it helps sponsor around the Region. In 2012, over 1400 people attended one of 24 training sessions that the Commission helped organize. Session topics included Erosion & Sediment Control, Tax Levy (Tax Cap), Open Meetings Law and FOIL, and Zoning Board of Appeals issues. The keystone training event for most local officials continues to be the annual Local Government Conference held at Jefferson Community College every year at the end of March.

If your community or

organizations has an idea or need for specific training sessions, please contact your local circuit rider or Phil Street at the Commission offices. Time and location of events are tailored to allow the most to attend in that specific geographic area.

## TOWN ROAD MAPPING PROJECT

Many Tug Hill towns are unsure of where their roads are. Abandonments have occurred over the years which have not been recorded, or the records have become lost. The NYSDOT inventories are difficult to keep up-to-date over the years, and errors have sometimes compounded through various administrations. The NYSDOT

**TOWN ROADS**  
continued on page 8.

## COMMISSION PROGRAMS AND FUNDING

The Tug Hill Commission's budget for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, was about \$1.0 million. Most of this funding came from the Commission's annual state appropriation. A small amount came from grants and revenues, such as registration from the Local Government Conference. Commission funding has remained unchanged and level with the previous year's funding for three years in a row.

Commission expenses equal its funding, with 84% of Commission expenditures going to staff salaries. The balance covers operational costs such as postage, office equipment, car expenses, etc.

The Commission employs 14 staff, including four full-time circuit riders for Tug Hill councils of governments (COGs). The COGs use revenues from member communities to help fund part-time circuit riders and other costs.

One way to gauge the value of the Commission's budget is to look at what it brings back to the region. Historically, the Commission helps secure more money for Tug Hill local governments every year than the Commission's annual appropriation. Another way to gauge value is by what gets done in Tug Hill communities.

Annually, the Commission works with some 20 local communities on land use codes and comprehensive plans, and works on some 70 other projects from watershed protection to Main Street

revitalization and business development, especially in forest products, farming, tourism, and recreation.

The Commission anticipates growing demand for assistance in land use planning and natural resource protection as communities work to manage growth and development around the region.

As we continue to deal with these challenging fiscal times, staff will look for ways to deliver fiscal savings while sustaining vital services. The Commission will also work with communities in savings of their own through efficiencies and sharing of services where communities want it.





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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
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Tug Hill Region as a whole. The Tug Hill Commission together with the Region's 62 rural communities are working with each of the Regional Economic Development Councils on this important endeavor and to achieve the results envisioned by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor on behalf of all New Yorkers. Please do not hesitate to draw on the help of the Tug Hill Commission and our Circuit Riders as more local priorities flow from the region's communities. Together we can ensure that these priorities compete well in the regional economic development process.

**SRCOG UPDATE**  
**continued from page 5.**

the town, while others will be discontinued. The town has formed a village dissolution implementation committee to ease the transition of village functions and responsibilities being assumed by the town. The village fire department is in the process of becoming an incorporated not-for-profit to be able to contract to provide service to town fire prevention districts.

**TOWN ROAD MAPPING**  
**continued from page 7.**

inventory, being in a list format rather than a map format, is not conducive to easily catching errors and omissions. The county highway maps are not at a scale which makes it

possible to include small road segments or accurately map the lengths of road segments.

This project encourages towns to map their roads in a georeferenced format over aerial photography, and formally adopt a road map so that, at least at this point in time, they have an accurate baseline assessment of their road systems, obligations and liabilities.

The process is as follows:

1. THC staff will work with the NYSDOT inventory, county highway map, and any other relevant sources to make an initial sketch of the road system.
2. THC staff will sit down with the town superintendent and go over the sketch in detail and make corrections.
3. THC staff along with the highway superintendent will do a field check with GPS

equipment to verify specific points which need accurate location, such as road dead ends or changes between various road categories. The staff can also pick up any other geographic points that the superintendent needs.

4. THC staff will prepare a formal draft georeferenced map for the superintendent's review and correction.
5. The superintendent will transmit the final draft map to the town board along with a letter of transmittal certifying that the map reflects his current assessment of the road system.
6. The town board will adopt the resolution of approval of the superintendent's assessment, as well as adopt the map as the town's official road map.