



July 25, 2014

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Tug Hill Times

Tug Hill Times is published semimonthly by the Tug Hill Commission for its board members, staff and associates, and the local representatives of the region's communities.

New Property Tax Freeze Credit Guidance

In 2015, local governments (municipal governments including counties, school districts, villages, towns, fire districts and other special) will be further encouraged to generate long-term tax relief through the sharing of municipal services; consolidating, or merging; and demonstrating operational efficiency as the Property Tax Freeze Credit takes effect. Compliance will benefit qualified homeowners through a "Freeze Credit" (i.e. rebate).

The Freeze Credit is a two-year program that credits STAR exemption qualified homeowners for the amount of the actual increase in their tax bill or the previous year's tax bill multiplied by an inflation factor on taxes imposed by all taxing jurisdictions that comply with the eligibility requirements. The first year, the homeowner is eligible only if taxing jurisdictions limit their increase in tax levy to the set tax cap (2% or adjusted for inflation). The second year, taxing entities must both fall within the cap and develop and implement a Government Efficiency Plan.

Homeowners whose tax bills go down, stay the same, or increase less than the inflation factor will receive a credit equal to the previous year's tax bill multiplied by the inflation factor. Eligible homeowners do not need to do anything to receive the credit.

To view the guide, which includes calculation details and exceptions, please visit: <http://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/press/2014/ptfc/pub1030.pdf>.

The Commission is working to schedule a workshop on this topic in late August or September.

NYS Woodsmen Field Days

The 67th Annual NYS Woodsmen Field Days will be held in Boonville, August 14-17 at the Boonville Oneida County Fairgrounds. Events include a parade, fire-works, an expanded display of forest industry exhibits and crafters, forestry seminars, equipment auction, 10K foot race, canoe & kayak race, tug of war & greased pole competition, beard contest and the highlight of the event - the lumberjack and lumberjill competitions throughout the weekend. The Village of Boonville is also hosting many community wide events.

Returning this year will be the 2nd annual power carve open chain saw carving competition.

Several new attractions added this year will be the appearance of Page Wildlife Center Birds of Prey show, the Utica Zoo mobile, free health screenings for skin cancer, blood pressure reading and hearing tests, and a new line of rustic souvenirs and decorating accessories. The Indian River Olde Time Lumberjack Show will be offering daily demonstrations of burling (log rolling in water), two-man crosscut sawing, axe throwing, speed chopping, chainsaw carving, and much more.

For more information and the full schedule of events and times you can visit the website at www.starinfo.com/woodsmen.

Lowville Nearing Completion of Zoning Work

The Village of Lowville Zoning Committee is wrapping up a major overhaul of its zoning law and map. The result is intended to simplify enforcement and bring the law into better compliance with the village's 2009 comprehensive plan. Revitalizing the downtown and ensuring quality development on the southern edge of the village are key components of the plan which will be implemented by the revised law. After review by the municipal attorney, the law will be unveiled to the public for comment through public hearings.

FDRLO Preparing Response to Army on Potential Cuts

Towns and villages in Jefferson and Lewis Counties have recently received a letter from the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO) requesting that they consider passing a resolution in support of Fort Drum and asking the Army to keep the base whole. The Army is in the process of analyzing force reductions across the country, to meet a goal of 420,000 soldiers from a wartime high of 570,000 soldiers. This could mean a loss of 16,000 in the population of Fort Drum, including 15,417 soldiers and 543 Army civilians. The effects on Jefferson County and the North Country are predicted to be a loss of 15% of the area's income (payroll), a 35% reduction in employment (jobs), and a loss of 33% of the population. This analysis was completed in June 2014 and is entitled "Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Army 2020 Force Structure Realignment," or SPEA. The full document can be found online here: <http://aec.army.mil/Services/Support/NEPA/Documents.aspx>

FDRLO is organizing the community response to the Army. All resolutions should be received by August 20th, so that they can be included in FDRLO's response that is due to the Army by August 25th. Adopted resolutions can be sent to the FDRLO, PO Box 775, Watertown NY 13601, or e-mailed to ndatoush@fdrl.org.

Additionally, there is an on-line petition available for individuals who would like to express their support for Fort Drum. It can be found at this website: <http://www.drum2025.com/>

State Decision on Adirondack Scenic Railroad

NYS Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Conservation announced earlier this month they would re-examine the 1996 Unit Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement that has governed the use of the 119 mile stretch of state-owned railroad track from Remsen to Lake Placid. This decision was based on interest and input received from the public.

The review of the UMP will focus on two different segments –

- The rail segment between Lake Placid and Tupper Lake is under consideration to be converted to a "recreational trail". This would most likely mean the removal of the rails and ties from the rail bed and allowing the corridor to be used for walking, hiking, bicycles and other non-motorized modes of transportation.
- The rail segment from Remsen to Tupper Lake is being reviewed for opportunities to maintain and develop the full economic potential for rail service. Rail service from Remsen to Old Forge has been conducted by the Adirondack Scenic Railroad since 1994.

An additional sub-focus of the UMP will look at the segment between Old Forge and Tupper Lake. The state will look at options to create and expand "alternative snowmobile corridors" to connect communities along the railroad corridor from Old Forge to Tupper Lake on existing state lands and conservation easements. DEC Commissioner Joe Martens stated, "These new and expanded corridors would open new recreational and tourism opportunities for those communities".

The DOT and DEC will be preparing the UMP and draft EIS which will seek to increase recreational use of the trail corridor and ensure it promotes tourism and economic growth in the surrounding communities. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on a draft scope that outlines significant issues and environmental impacts as well as serving as a guide for the preparation of the UMP and draft EIS. The public will also be given the opportunity to review and comment on the draft UMP and draft EIS when they are completed. The UMP process will provide a transparent and public means of exploring a proposed amendment to the 1996 UMP/EIS.

Trackhoe Breaking Ceremony Held at Former Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper

A “trackhoe breaking” ceremony was held on July 15th at the site of the former Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper Mill in Lyons Falls to kickoff the demolition of the remaining vacant and deteriorating buildings on site. The property had been in industrial use as far back as 1894 with the most recent owner, the Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper Co, Inc., in operation from 1985-2001. Since 2001, when the company closed its doors, the crumbling buildings on site have been making it increasingly difficult for Krueger Energy, who has owned a power plant at the site since 2008, to conduct regular business and maintenance.

The vacant mill, once the heart and soul of the community, masks a beautiful waterfall at the confluence of the Black and Moose River in the village center. The Village hopes to one day showcase its water resource and draw tourists to its downtown, hopefully igniting revitalization for its businesses and new life for its residents.

The site was identified as a transformative Priority Project in the North Country Regional Economic Development Council’s award winning strategic plan.

**Potsdam Local Government Conference
at Suny Potsdam
October 14, 2014, 2014**

For information and to register online go to: <https://secure.potsdam.edu/conf/localgov/>

Preserving Rural Character Through Conservation Subdivision Design

FREE WORKSHOP: Tuesday, August 19, 5-8:30 pm
Presenter: Author, Randall Arendt

At Skyline Lodge, 1254 Highland Park Road, Fabius, NY 13063
(a light buffet will be served)

Sponsored by Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board

This workshop will describe practical, proven, market-based techniques for protecting rural character and community-wide open space networks through “conservation design” principles in updated zoning and subdivision regulations. Examples illustrate how thousands of acres have been conserved in this manner at no public cost, and without negative impacts on landowners.

This session will help town officials, developers, and site designers accomplish complementary goals and is geared to planning boards and ZBA’s and professional land use planners who write codes and review site plans. Numerous examples will be discussed, ranging from those built at lower rural densities using individual wells and septic systems, to those created at higher densities in serviced locations. The program will show how conservation design techniques can be readily combined with “traditional neighborhood” principles to create walkable places incorporating distinctive features of the natural and cultural landscape, producing more interesting results.

To register, call (315)422-8276 (extension 212) or e-mail jgleisner@cnyrpdb.org. There is no charge for this event, but please RSVP via email or phone by Friday, August 15th. If approved by your town or village board, this session can provide three hours of training to meet the NYS Municipality Training requirement.

2014 Black River Trash Bash Fast Approaching – Volunteers Needed

Contact us at:

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The 2014 International Coastal Cleanup Day is September 20th. If you would like to organize a cleanup event, please pick a date and time within a month (August 20 - October 20) of this date. This is meant to be a Black River Watershed event, so anywhere you have legal access to be along the Black or its tributaries is appropriate. Jennifer Harvill will help you get registered and get your bags and supplies so please get back to her ASAP with your date, location and time for your group's local event! She can be reached at jennifer@tughill.org or 315-785-2380.

This year, the Development Authority of the North Country will provide trash hauling in Jefferson and Lewis Counties to their Rodman facility. Two of our regular participants the Adirondack Communities Advisory League and Lyons Falls Alive have already committed to hosting events this year on October 4th and September 20th respectively. Please consider hosting an event.

THANK YOU! Thank you for all you've done to keep the shores of our beautiful River clean!

Update on the Hawkinsville Dam

The Hudson River – Black River Regulating District and its consultant engineering firm for the project, Kleinschmidt, Associates, PA, PC (Kleinschmidt) have completed a study to evaluate and compare remediation of the Hawkinsville Dam to a dam removal alternative. Remediation or removal of the dam is necessary to bring the Hawkinsville Dam into compliance with Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Dam Safety Regulations, and to address the facilities inadequate spillway capacity.

Earlier this year, modeling of the Spillway Design Flood resulted in a recommendation to request that the DEC reduce the hazard classification assigned to Hawkinsville Dam. In a letter dated April 2, 2014, the DEC Division of Water, Bureau of Flood Protection and Dam Safety accepted Kleinschmidt's hydraulic report and recommendation to reduce the hazard classification at Hawkinsville Dam. The DEC considers Hawkinsville Dam to be a Class A – low hazard structure.

In June the consultant presented the first draft of the Hawkinsville Dam Final Study on the remediation and removal alternatives. The report states that the repair of the existing dam is less expensive (projected \$694,000) compared to the \$893,000 cost of removing the dam. Remediation would include extending the existing spillway, adding a low level outlet gate and extending an earthen berm of the east end of the spillway. Numerous local, state and federal permits need to be in place before any of the work can commence. The completed modifications will allow the dam to comply with state regulations.

Public comments on the proposed project were offered in June. The HRBRRD officials are reviewing these comments, An additional Public Comment Meeting will be held September 9, 2014. A final report from the engineering firm is expected in late September and the board will select an alternative in October.

More detailed information is available at the following website:
<http://www.hrbrdd.com/HawkinsvilleRemediationandRemovalStudy.html>

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