

# HEADWATERS

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

2003 NEWSLETTER - 2002 ANNUAL REPORT - Issue 41

## What's inside:

Commission's 30th Anniversary	1
New Tug Hill Regional Map	2
Ed McMahon Highlights LGC	3
Vital Partners	3
NOCCOG	4
CTHC	4
NorCOG	4
Sewer Board Grows on Scenic Road Concerns	4
SRCG	4
RACOG	5
"SuperCOG"	5
Programs and Funding	5
Tug Hill Tomorrow Rec Guide	6
Business Association Builds Region's Recreation Image	6
Tug Hill Signs	6
East Branch Fish Creek	6
Wind Farm Project	6
Tug Hill Sages	7
New Faces at Commission	7
Commission Gets Good Grades	8
Local Leaders Institute	8

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State leaders at the Tug Hill Commission 30th Anniversary dinner holding new Tug Hill regional maps. L to R: JoAnne Dicob (Governor's Office for Regional Affairs), Senator James Wright, Assemblyman William Barclay, Assemblywoman Dierdre Scozzafava, Senator Raymond Meier, and John Bartow (NYS Department of State).

## State and Local Leaders Join in Commission 30th Anniversary

State legislators, the Governor's office, the New York State Department of State, and over 150 local officials, volunteers and their families joined in celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the creation of the Tug Hill Commission in May.

State Senators James Wright and Raymond Meier, along with Assemblywoman Dierdre Scozzafava, Assemblyman William Barclay, Governor's Region Representative JoAnne Dicob, and Director of Local Government Services John Bartow each received a copy of the new Tug Hill region map as thanks for their support of the Tug Hill region and for their attendance at the anniversary celebration.

Senator Wright was featured speaker at the event. Senator Wright complimented the Commission on its grassroots, non-regulatory approach to protecting the region's environment and strengthening its economy.

Senator Meier noted the Commission's outstanding support from the local governments it serves as evidence of the correctness of its approach for the Tug Hill region.

The Tug Hill Commission was created by state legislation in 1972. Its first meeting was held in the Spring of 1973, after its initial nine board members were appointed by the Governor and State legislature. The Commission has since used 1973 as the date of the start of the Commission's work, with its 10th Anniversary celebration coming in



Senator Wright speaking at 30th Anniversary

1983, 20th in 1993, and 25th in 1998.

Towns and villages of the Tug Hill region were also presented with new regional maps at the 30th Anniversary. The Commission appointed five new "Tug Hill Sages" as part of the celebration.



# 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”**

## New Regional Map Packed With Information

A new map of the Tug Hill region is packed with information of interest to those who know the region well, and those who want to get to know it better.

The map side of the publication includes accurate information on town and village boundaries, major roads, water bodies, location of state lands, names of most state forests and wildlife management areas and more. It utilizes the very attractive, colorful New York State atlas map as the basis for its graphics.

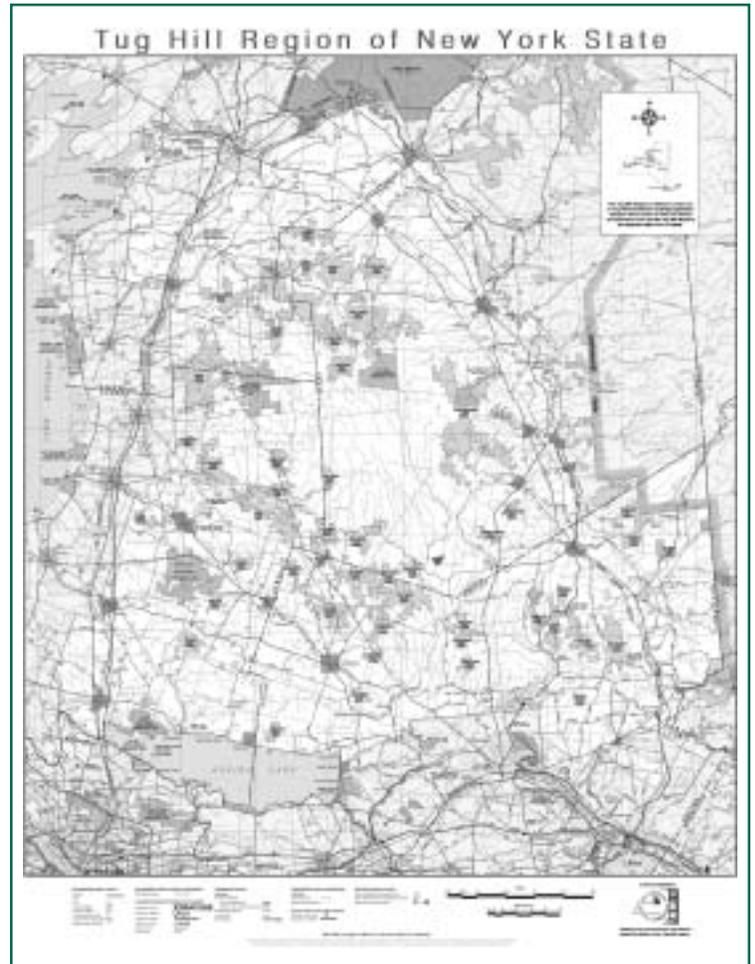
The flip side of the publication includes a beautiful, large photo of Inman Gulf, color

maps and photos, and information on the region’s forests, farms, waters and recreation opportunities.

The entire publication, including mapping, was prepared by Commission staff, in particular those involved in operating the Commission’s geographic information system.

Individual copies of the map are available through circuit riders in the Tug Hill region, and from the Commission office in Watertown. Individual copies of the map will be mailed to those requesting it, with a \$1 fee for shipping and handling, payable to the Tug Hill Commission.

Some technical limitations prevent posting the map on the Commission website, but the site does contain the previous regional map prepared by the Commission.



## Ed McMahon Highlights Local Government Conference

Ed McMahon of the Conservation Fund was keynote speaker at the Tug Hill Commission's 14th Annual Local Government Conference on March 27, 2003. His message was that communities can get what they want from developers, if they know what they want and are willing to ask for it.

He used examples of communities that have successfully negotiated with national chain stores and restaurants to get new businesses that are sited and designed to enhance rather than detract from a community's beauty, historic character or other assets.

McMahon's highly visual presentation and witty comments had the audience on his side from the beginning, and resulted in a standing ovation for the inspiration he brought to his subject matter.

The 2003 Local Government Conference was one of the most successful ever by the Commission, with over 400 local officials and presenters attending, and high marks from participants for quality of program and facilities at Jefferson Community College.

The 2004 Local Government Conference will be held on March 31, again at Jefferson Community College in Watertown.



Keynote speaker Ed McMahon at 2003 Local Government Conference.

## Vital Partners - Foundations

Each year, the Tug Hill Commission helps Tug Hill towns, villages and local organizations raise millions of dollars in grants and loans to improve their communities. Virtually every one of these projects involves the support of more than one funding source - vital partners in making things happen in a community.

Key to many are local foundations that include community projects among those things they support. One such foundation is the Northern New York Community Foundation (NNYCF), based in Watertown.

NNYCF has been key to many Tug Hill projects. From community

parcs (such as the community park in Pinckney), to historical structures (Lewis County Historical Society and Constable Hall), to safety and rescue (Constableville Fire Department), to educational materials (Tug Hill Tomorrow teachers' resource book) to land protection (helping in several of the start-up activities of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust), NNYCF has been a crucial supporter and adviser.

NNYCF provides an extra help to communities by encouraging them to think a project through to its logical conclusion, which is usually a boost in helping secure additional support.

NNYCF's executive director is Alex Velto. He knows and appreciates the Tug Hill region well. He and NNYCF can be contacted at [www.nnycf.org](http://www.nnycf.org) or 315-782-7110.

## About Headwaters

*Headwaters* is the newsletter annual 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*

Arnold E. Talgo  
Oneida County

### *Vice Chairman*

Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.  
Oswego County

### *Secretary*

Anne C. Schuler  
Oneida County

### *Members*

Leona M. Cheresnoski  
Jefferson County  
Timothy V. LeVan  
Lewis County  
Roger W. Maciejko  
Lewis County  
James M. McMahon  
Oswego County  
J. David Stone  
Jefferson County  
Kenneth W. Vigus  
Oneida County

*Executive Director*  
Robert R. Quinn

**Mark your 2004 calendar!**

**Tug Hill Local Government Conference**

**Wednesday, March 31, 2004**

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## NOCCOG Expands Indexing Work

For the second time in two years, the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments (NOCCOG) is embarking on a multi-municipal records-keeping project.

The New York State Archives Records Management Program has awarded \$47,685 to NOCCOG to create electronic indexes of vital statistics, including records of births, deaths, marriages and burials. Participating in the project will be the Towns of Annsville, Ava, Floyd, Forestport, Kirkland, Lee Steuben, Vienna, Western, Westmoreland, and the Village of Remsen. The grant application was coordinated and prepared by Tug Hill community projects specialist Nancy Plante with assistance from NOCCOG local government advisor Steve Hunter.

NOCCOG will accomplish the work for the 11 municipalities by contracting with four records clerks. All of them were involved last year when NOCCOG successfully administered a \$59,000 State Archives grant to index the municipal board minutes of 16 Oneida County municipalities.

Hunter said he believes both grant awards are due in part to the efficiency of scale in cooperative multi-municipal projects.

## CTHC Grows

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) is expanding its membership. Williamstown is on its way to being the 16th town to join CTHC.

CTHC started life nearly 30 years ago as the Cooperative Tug Hill Planning Board, with nine member towns. With 16 towns, CTHC now covers an area of over 825 square miles, with a population of less than 10,500.

With a state-registered Tug Hill Local Reserve Plan in which most CTHC towns participate, the CTHC is probably the largest area in the United States where very rural towns work together on their planning.

## NorCOG Planning and The Web

NorCOG has its new website, [www.norcog.org](http://www.norcog.org), up and running. In addition to information on north shore of Oneida Lake issues, the site hosts member community websites.

NorCOG communities have also been busy with major planning efforts this past year. Constantia has adopted a new comprehensive plan with Commission help, while Cleveland continues development of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. NorCOG has also stayed active in the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board's Oneida Lake watershed protection effort.

## Sewer Board Grows on Scenic Road Concerns

The 5-municipality Route 3 Sewer Board (a council of governments) is helping its member communities work on development policies and land use controls related to the Board's N.Y.S. Route 3 Corridor Design Initiative, and a

scenic byways study, both completed over the past few years.

To spearhead the effort, members of the Board designated the Town of Champion as the first community to initiate the effort to serve as a model for other member communities in this area east of Watertown. The Town of Champion Planning Board is currently reviewing hamlet design guidelines to apply in Great Bend.

Based on the Adirondack North Country Association's study of this same portion of Route 3, as a part of the Olympic Trail Scenic Byway project, the Sewer Board has encouraged residents in the hamlet of Felts Mills to form a "Beautification Committee." The Committee is giving special attention to general debris cleanup and enhancement of natural, scenic, historical and cultural resources to improve the quality of life of residents and attract visitors traversing the byway corridor.

Technical assistance and support to member communities of the Sewer Board on these projects is coming from the Tug Hill Commission and part-time services of a circuit rider.

## New Name and Work: SRCG

The Salmon Rivers Local Government Services Cooperative has a new name! It has adopted the shorter and clearer name of Salmon Rivers Council of Governments (SRCG). Additionally, SRCG has developed its own website, [www.salmonrivers.org](http://www.salmonrivers.org). The website contains information about the Salmon Rivers area, and hosts SRCG member municipality websites.

SRCG is active in planning, as it works with Oswego County Planning and the Commission to complete a plan for the Salmon River Greenway Corridor, and as Amboy develops a comprehensive plan with the assistance of the Commission. Amboy's first public hearing on the plan this summer met with favorable community response.

Communities Initiative, designed to encourage the coordination of land use and transportation planning. The RACOG grant will examine how to improve pedestrian linkages, multi-use trail connections, and access management along and across New York State Routes 26 and 126 in the two villages. The project will begin once DOT and RACOG agree to the details of the project.

The Tug Hill Commission and Jefferson County Planning Department will provide technical assistance and support to RACOG throughout the process.

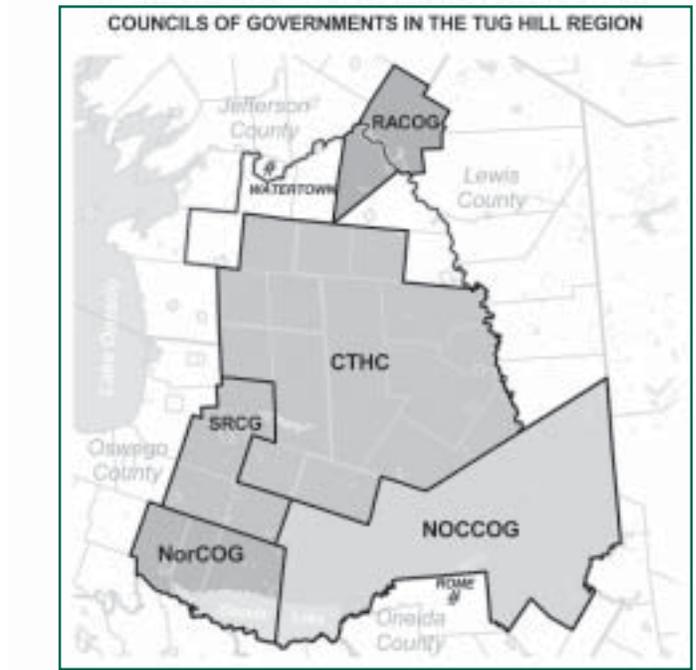
## RACOG Cooperates on Transportation

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) received a \$50,000 Technical Assistance Grant from the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation to fund the transportation element of the Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Plan for the villages of West Carthage and Carthage.

The grant program was part of the New York State Quality

## “SuperCOG” Helps Guide Commission

Years ago, the councils of governments of the Tug Hill region began to meet jointly on occasion, and soon took on the unofficial title of “SuperCOG.”



Most of Tug Hill's 62 towns and villages belong to one of five councils of governments covering the Tug Hill region.

SuperCOG is made up of the officers of each of the region's five councils of governments. In the past, they have most often come together to help design, oversee and evaluate the Tug Hill Commission's Local Leaders

Survey. SuperCOG served that function in 2002, and the results of that survey are summarized elsewhere in this *Headwaters*.

*Continued on page 8*

## Commission Programs and Funding

Tug Hill Commission's budget for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2003 was about \$1 million. Most of this funding came from the Commission's annual state appropriation. A small amount came from grants, and revenues such as registration for our Local Government Conference.

Commission expenditures equal its funding revenue, again about \$1 million this past year. Between 85% and 90% of Commission expenditures are for staff salaries. The balance covers operational costs such as postage,

office equipment, car expenses, and the like, and some small grants to Tug Hill councils of governments to help with circuit rider programs. The Commission employs 16, and helps support two full-time circuit rider positions through small grants. Councils of governments use their revenues from member communities to help fund part-time circuit riders and other costs.

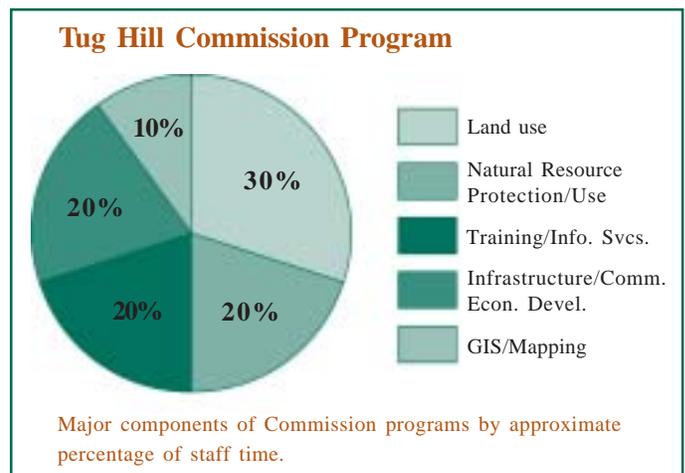
Commission funding has remained almost unchanged, except for cost of living adjustments, over most of the past decade following a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s when its funding was cut about 20% and staffing was cut from 26 to 16 (a reduction of more than 1/3).

One way to gauge the value of the Commission's budget is to look at what it brings back to the region.

The Commission usually helps Tug Hill local governments and organizations raise four to ten times the Commission annual budget in a given year.

Another way to gauge value is by what gets done in Tug Hill communities. Each year on average

the Commission works with some 20 local communities on revisions to land use codes, and works on some 70 other projects from watershed protection to Main Street revitalization and business development, especially in the areas for forest products, farming and tourism and recreation.





## Business Association Builds Region's Recreation Image

With help from the Commission, the Tug Hill Business Association received a grant from the United States Forest Service Rural Development Through Forestry program to fund a regional marketing campaign. Other project partners include the four tourism promotion agencies for Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Oswego Counties and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust.

The project includes a full-color update to the Tug Hill Recreation Guide; an electronic version of the guide available for downloading from the Internet; and a direct mail campaign using regular mail and e-mail to targeted recreation groups. An ad is also scheduled to run in the September 2003 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*. Since the region is already known for snowmobiling, and ATV use is a growing and controversial issue on Tug Hill, this marketing effort primarily targets the non-motorized activities - hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, canoeing/kayaking, and cross-country skiing. These activities still have room for growth and can help to diversify the year-round economy of the region.

Tug Hill has also been selected as the site of the 2003-2004 I LOVE NY Winter Festival. As part of this designation, Tug Hill will be highlighted in New York State's winter promotions (with a full-page ad in the state's Winter Travel Guide), on the state's website, and in a Governor's Press Release sent out to the state's media list.

Together, these activities represent the first collaboration across county lines and regional tourism boundaries to promote Tug Hill's quality outdoor recreation opportunities. Although each of the counties has individually promoted its connection to the recreational resources of Tug Hill, there has never before been a coordinated effort to promote Tug Hill as a whole region of its own.

## NorCOG Welcomes Tug Hill Signs

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG), comprised of the Oswego County communities along the North Shore of Oneida Lake, will be home to a new sign on Interstate-81 welcoming travelers to the Tug Hill region. The request for I-81 signage was initiated by the Tug Hill Business Association.

The sign is expected to be erected in 2004 along the northbound lanes, and will note that I-81 exits 32 through 42 provide access to the Tug Hill region. A similar sign is expected to go up earlier in the southbound lanes before exit 42 at Adams Center.

In supporting placement of the sign south of the Central Square exit, NorCOG confirmed that they feel themselves part of both the Oneida Lake area and the Tug Hill region.

## East Branch Land and Easement to State Soon

A little over a year ago, Governor Pataki announced that 45,000 acres of Tug Hill's East Branch of Fish Creek remote watershed would stay dedicated to forest uses (watershed

protection, logging, hunting and fishing, and recreation) forever through a conservation easement on these mostly private lands.

Today, state DEC staff are working diligently to complete the complicated transaction, with help preparing a management plan for the property coming from Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust.

The private lands affected by the deal are those of GMO Renewable Resources (about 30,000 acres in the towns of Lewis, Osceola and West Turin), and The Nature Conservancy (about 14,000 acres in Martinsburg, Montague, Osceola and West Turin). The Nature Conservancy brokered most of the transaction. More than 1,000 acres in a band along the East Branch will become state forest.

Because of delays in the complex work, public access to the area likely will be limited to snowmobile trail use this coming winter. Eventually, about half the lands will have some degree of public access, varying with the seasons.

The tax situation on the property has become very complex too, with possible litigation looming. In the near future, however, the situation should improve as the state picks up a significant portion of the taxes.

## Wind Farm Project Grows

With construction previously slated for this summer, the Flat Rock Wind Power project in the Lewis County towns of Harrisburg, Martinsburg, and Lowville is still in the permitting phase, but has grown to a planned 168 towers generating 300 megawatts of electricity. The

## New Tug Hill Tomorrow Recreation Guide

The fifth edition of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's popular Tug Hill Recreation Guide is now available. The 24-page guide features updated maps and pictures to help you find hiking, skiing, biking, canoeing and other non-motorized recreation areas in the region.

The guide is available at many travel brochure racks and chambers of commerce in and near Tug Hill. It is also available on the web at [www.VisitTugHill.com](http://www.VisitTugHill.com).

The guide is a project of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, with support from the U.S. Forest Service, the Tug Hill Commission, the Tug Hill Business Association, and the county tourist promotion agencies in Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida and Oswego counties.

project is currently seeking special permits from the towns on some zoning regulations, and is undergoing State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR), led by the Town of Martinsburg.

Flat Rock is also awaiting word from the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) on its Article VII review of the transmission line being built from the wind farm in Martinsburg to the substation in the Town of Watson, where it connects to the high voltage Niagara Mohawk transmission line. That review will take approximately six months, which pushes back the anticipated construction start date to 2004. The project was exempted from PSC Article X review by special legislation passed by NYS in 2002 that exempted wind generation facilities from the definition of "major electric generating facilities." Article X review would have caused additional delays and costs for the project.

For more information on the Tug Hill project and a look at the issues surrounding wind power generation, call the Commission toll-free at 1-888-785-2380 for a copy of its issue paper entitled "Harnessing the Wind on Tug Hill," for which revisions are currently being completed.

## Sages at Anniversary

Five new "Tug Hill Sages" were designated at the Commission's 30th Anniversary this spring.

Tug Hill Sages are people who have lived a life close to Tug Hill land and traditions. Most sages have been loggers, sawyers, fiddlers, conservationists, maple syrup producers or others with similar ties to things Tug Hill.



Tug Hill Commissioners: (L to R) Ken Vigus, Tim LeVan, Dave Stone, Jim McMahon, board secretary Anne Schuler, vice chair Mike Yerdon, Leona Cheresnoski, chair Arnie Talgo, and Roger Maciejko.



Newly designated Tug Hill Sages: (L to R) Bernie Macklen, Marilyn Pigeon accepting for John Hughes, Randy Kerr, Bob Sauer, and Warren Mathis.



Previously named Tug Hill Sages: (Front) Harold Petrie; (Back L to R) John Constable, Courtney Winn, Neil Wright, Elva Maciejko, and George Bibbins.

New sages are John Hughes (Mohawk Hill farmer), Randy Kerr (forester and fiddling champion, Lyons Falls), Bernie Macklen (snowshoe maker and historian, Worth), Warren Mathis (logger and conservationist, West Leyden), and Bob Sauer (timber buyer and conservationist, Camden).

Also joining in the celebration were previously designated sages

George Bibbins (Rodman), John Constable ("longest reigning" sage, designated in 1983, Constableville and Watertown), Elva Maciejko (Houseville), Harold Petrie (Parish), Courtney Winn (Bernhards Bay), and Neil Wright (Camden).

A total of 18 sages have been designated by the Commission over the past 20 years.

## New Faces at Commission

The past year has seen several changes on the Tug Hill Commission board.

Secretary of the board Ray Carpenter left the Commission board at the end of 2002 to devote more time to other pursuits. Ken Vigus was appointed to the board in October 2002, and David Stone assumed a board position in February 2003.

Carpenter was appointed by State Senate Majority Leader Bruno in 1995, on the advice of Senator Wright, and served as one of two members from Jefferson County. He was replaced in February 2003 by Stone, an Adams resident who works in insurance, and has also had a career in engineering and education.

Vigus was appointed by Governor Pataki, filling a long time vacancy in Oneida County. He works at Aubuchon Hardware in Boonville, is a retired professional fire fighter from Griffiss Air Force Base, and frequently hunts Tug Hill's "big woods."

Every two years, the Commission board elects its own officers. Serving for 2003-2004 as chairman of the board is Arnie Talgo of Steuben; vice chairman is Michael Yerdon, who is also supervisor of Redfield; and board secretary is Anne Schuler of Annsville.

Commission board members are appointed for five year terms by the Governor, and leaders of the State Senate and Assembly. New terms start later in 2003. All board members must be residents of the Tug Hill region.

## Local Leaders Again Give Commission Good Grades

Local leaders across the Tug Hill region once again gave the Tug Hill Commission high grades in the 2002 Tug Hill Local Leaders Survey.

Of the nearly 400 local officials who received the survey, about 200 responded - an exceptional 50% response rate. About 90% found a continuing need for the Commission, and a similar number said that their community could not otherwise afford these essential services. Eighty percent to 90% rated various Commission programs and services "good" or "excellent."

Survey results formed the basis for the Commission's 2003 *White Paper* report to the Governor and State Legislature. This every-five-year report is required by the Commission's 1998 state legislation, which is Article 37 of the state's Executive Law.

The *White Paper* was prepared with the advice of the officers of Tug Hill councils of governments, a group informally known as "SuperCOG." The *White Paper* concludes that no changes are needed in the Commission's legislation at this time; that Commission funding should be continued at about present levels; and that within existing funding the Commission hopes to bring two contract circuit rider positions on as staff positions.

Copies of *Tug Hill Local Leaders Survey Results* and the *White Paper* are available from the Commission office in Watertown, and on the Commission's website, [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org).

## Local Leaders Institute 2003-2004

The Commission's second Local Leaders Institute (LLI) is scheduled to begin September 2003. The Commission invites you to consider participating in this year's Institute and/or encouraging another interested local leader to do so.

The LLI is based on the belief that a better understanding of broader regional issues and trends will help local leaders to be more effective in their own communities. Its purpose is to enhance leadership skills by improving participants' abilities to think strategically; build partnerships; and to better balance economic and environmental issues.

The first session will consist of a full-day field trip and overview of the region on Saturday, September 27, 2003. The remaining four sessions will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. on October 29, November 19, January 28 and February 25 at various locations around the region.

Session topics include: the region's geography and resources; contributions of agriculture, forest products, recreation and tourism to its economy; regional economic trends and their implications; the role of infrastructure and telecommunications; development trends and their impact on the region's landscape and way of life; intermunicipal cooperation; and leadership.

The LLI participation fee is \$50. Applications can be downloaded by visiting [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org) or contacting the

Commission directly. All applications must be postmarked by Wednesday, September 3rd.

Congratulations to the 2002-2003 LLI graduates: Terry Buckley, supervisor - town of Champion; Paul Smith, supervisor - town of Wilna; Steve Stelmashuck, supervisor - town of Parish; Rick Novy, past president of the Carthage Area Chamber of Commerce; and Norman Wayte, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust board member.

*Continued from page 5*

SuperCOG is also the group that met in the mid-90s with Deputy Secretary of State John Hasper to discuss the administrative link that has since developed between Tug Hill and New York's Department of State.

In a part of the world where local control and "home rule" are so important, SuperCOG serves a vital role in keeping Commission programs responsive to local needs.

August 2003  
 Printed on Recycled Paper



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