

# HEADWATERS

NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

2007 NEWSLETTER - 2006 ANNUAL REPORT - Issue 45

## Tug Hill Commission at 35 Years

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The Tug Hill Commission was created by state legislation in 1972. Its first meeting was held in the Spring of 1973 after the appointment of original nine commissioners by the Governor and State legislature. On Tuesday, September 25, 2007 we commence a celebration of the Commission's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary at an annual dinner at the Beeches Restaurant in Rome, NY. It will both recognize past region accomplishments and begin a process of reflection and planning. Over the next year the Commission, with our five councils of governments, will undertake several activities to evaluate our efforts and priorities for the Commission's future.

First, we will conduct two surveys: one that surveys Tug Hill residents and landowners about their perceptions, attitudes and priorities for the region; and a second this winter, as required in our enabling legislation, surveying local officials and partners on the performance of the Commission itself. Our goal in these surveys is to better understand how people of the region view what is happening on the Hill; what

priorities or concerns they have; and how well the Commission and staff are helping local officials manage and address the needs of their communities and residents.

Second, we will undertake another five year strategic planning process. This will be the fourth strategic planning process where Commissioners take input from local leaders and set priorities for the Commission's



Attendees at the 2007 Local Government Conference. The 2007 event drew the largest crowd ever.

programs and staff. It is not a plan for the region, but a plan for focusing the Commission's work on needs articulated by local officials and partners.

Third, all nine Commissioners will come up for re-appointment in July 2008 to five year terms. The Governor, Speaker of the Assembly and President Protem of the Senate each make three reappointments or new appointments of Commissioners as prescribed in our enabling legislation.

Finally, in September 2008, the Commissioners will honor another round of Tug Hill Sages at our annual dinner. Tug Hill Sages have lived a life close to Tug Hill land and traditions and have made a lifetime contribution to the region's communities. These honored individuals are ambassadors of Tug Hill's greatest resources - its

people and the traditions and values they embody.

While our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a time to celebrate and remember our past colleagues and leaders and their contributions to the region, it is also a deliberative

and defining time for the Commission and our role together in the future of the region. On behalf of myself, Commissioners and staff, thank you for all your support and input. We look forward to working in partnership with you in the coming year's efforts and celebrations.

# 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”**

## Focus on Historic Resources

A community's sense of place is often defined by its historic character. There are a number of projects underway throughout the Tug Hill region to document historic resources and preserve significant structures.

As part of a strategic planning grant from the Office for Small Cities, the town of Lorraine has contracted with a specialist to document historically significant structures in the town. This will contribute to a larger effort that has been underway for some time to document historic structures in all of the Cooperative Tug Hill Council member towns. That information, once compiled, may be incorporated into comprehensive plans and can provide the documentation to support historic interpretation or preservation activities.

Buildings listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, or located in an historic district, are eligible for restoration funds from a variety of sources. Historic significance also improves the competitiveness of grant applications. In Carthage, the historic Buckley Building—threatened for years with possible collapse—is finally being renovated and will again be a contributing property to a revived downtown. The \$2 million project is being financed by a variety of funding sources—private developer investment, local development corporation funding, and a Restore NY grant. In Adams, the presence of a downtown historic district helped to leverage a New York Main Street Grant that will be providing cash assistance to property owners wishing to stabilize their buildings or rehabilitate their facades. Historic properties owned by a municipality or non-profit organization are also eligible for 50/50 matching grants from the Environmental

Protection Fund's Historic Preservation Program. Structures receiving EPF Historic Preservation funds over the last several years include the Holland Patent train depot (renovated into village offices) and the grandstand at the Lewis County Fairgrounds.

For municipalities or non-profits who are just beginning to think about the historic preservation of a building, conducting an historic conditions report can be a good place to start. These reports are prepared by an historic architect who gives an assessment of the building's existing condition, lists the highest priority needs of the building, and gives a rough estimate for the necessary preservation tasks.

Funding for **The Buckley Building in Carthage.**

such an assessment is available from the New York State Council on the Arts. NYSCA's technical assistance program will provide \$1,500 for such an effort, but requires a \$750 local cash match. The Commission's practice has been to split the local match for such applications, recognizing the benefit these studies provide in supporting future renovation and grant writing activities.

*Continued on page 8*



## Comprehensive Planning

Commission staff have been busy over the last ten years developing and updating comprehensive plans for towns and villages in the Tug Hill region and 2007 was no exception. This year saw the completion of plans for Vienna, Central Square, Holland Patent, and Cleveland and the start of a

process is the communication and discussion that occurs. Working on a comprehensive plan is a great opportunity for members of a community to get together and talk about their town or village. Commission staff estimate that approximately 25 Tug Hill towns and villages have a comprehensive plan that was written in the last ten years.

The typical plan takes about a year and a half to complete. The process usually

a strategic plan, and a land use and development plan.

The community profile is a collection of statistics and indicators that create a snapshot of trends in the community. Data from various sources such as the US Census Bureau, the NYS Comptrollers Office, and the NYS Office of Real Property Services are highlighted.

The strategic plan section consists of goals, objectives and strategies developed to improve specific areas of concern to the community.

The areas of concern typically include historic preservation, housing, economic development, natural resources, transportation, recreation, infrastructure, and community facilities. This section is developed through a series of monthly (or biweekly) meetings with local experts in each area. These experts come from state agencies, such as DOT and DEC; county departments, such as the highway department; and village and town officials and volunteers, such as the village historian or the town recreation committee.

The land use plan and policies section describes the current pattern of physical development in the community and recommends the best way for the community to develop and grow. This part of the comprehensive plan is

*Continued on page 8*



Local leaders meet to review plan materials.

plan for the village of Barneveld and an ambitious four-town plan for Harrisburg, Pinckney, Montague and Martinsburg.

Comprehensive planning is a worthwhile exercise for several reasons. It defines a community's vision. It helps local officials prioritize decisions and investments. It provides legal defense for land use regulations and programs. It improves opportunities for grant and loan programs. And lastly, it requires public agencies active in a municipality to consider the municipality's needs and desires and their actions' impact upon them. Perhaps just as important as the written document that emerges from the planning

kicks off with a community survey followed by a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise conducted by Commission planning staff. The SWOT exercise is a great way to involve the general public in the early stages of planning. The Commission's comprehensive plan template typically consists of three sections: a community profile,

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**Tug Hill Local Government Conference**  
**Thursday, March 27, 2008**

## 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*

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Oneida County

### *Vice Chairman*

Anne C. Schuler  
Oneida County

### *Secretary*

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Oswego County

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Jefferson County

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Roger W. Maciejko  
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## CTHC Honors Retiring Executive Board Member

At the Cooperative Tug Hill Council's Annual Meeting held on April 26, 2007 at the Alpine in Constableville, NY, retiring board member Gene Norrs was presented with a plaque honoring his twenty plus years of service to the Council. Gene also served many years as Town of Lewis Planning Board Chairman. His dedication and genuine love of the "Hill" has been instrumental in the drafting and passage of the Planning Accord for Tug Hill (PATH) and the Tug Hill Reserve Act along with many local land use laws that allow for growth in Tug Hill communities yet maintain the integrity of the region. The Council has elected Ian Klingbail to fill the vacancy created when Gene retired. Ian is a Town of Lewis board member and is also the current chairman of Adirondack Communities Advisory League. He and his family reside in West Leyden.

The Council also approved the hiring of a new part-time circuit rider at its April meeting. Kay Chapman will be covering the towns of Pinckney, Rodman and Lorraine plus other town board meetings as needed, filling in for vacations etc. Kay is a resident of the Town of Rodman and has been involved in local government in various capacities over the years. The Council is pleased to have her on board.

The fall Council meeting will be held on September 27, 2007 at the Candlelight at Snow Ridge and all town representatives are

encouraged to attend. The agenda will include approval of the proposed budget and goals for 2008 and a presentation from Commission staff on updated Special Area definitions as part of the Planning Accord update. The definitions will be available for our neighboring Councils of Government to use if interested.

## RACOG News

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) continues to assist and support key projects to advance recommendations from the *Carthage/West Carthage Downtown Revitalization Initiative*. Building upon a multi-year/multi-pronged effort to interconnect existing trails to the downtown and waterfront areas, the villages of Carthage and West Carthage will develop a "Recreation Waterfront Plan" to guide future development of open space and wetland areas along the Black River, funded through the 2006 Quality Communities Program. As part of the overall effort, the village of Carthage is advancing the development of Long Falls Park with a \$112,420 Environmental Protection Fund grant.

In conjunction, the town of Champion is advancing next steps to construct a gazebo, rest facilities, benches, picnic tables, and historic playground at the "Village Green Park" as part of the NYS Plan to preserve and protect open space.

As part of the overall revitalization initiative, cooperative efforts to improve the uniformity of development controls within the four communities, through a three-phase land-use review process, is in the second phase. Assisted by staff at the Commission, the RACOG Planning Committee is working to standardize zoning and

subdivision review criteria to guide future development that will enhance opportunities to attract sustainable development.

## NorCOG Communities Pursue Infrastructure Improvements

The town of West Monroe adopted its first-ever zoning local law after a year of work by the West Monroe town board, the West Monroe zoning commission, and a special committee before that which examined the current body of local laws, ordinances and regulations. The new zoning scheme streamlines the regulatory framework, eliminates duplications and contradictions between the prior framework of local laws, ordinances and regulations, and provides flexibility for further refinement in the future to reflect the needs of a growing community.

The towns of Constantia and West Monroe continued to make progress on a joint water district, with the town of Constantia completing a feasibility study. The two towns are now in the process of lining up project financing and officially forming the water districts, based on surveys of potential water users in the proposed service area.

The village of Cleveland continues to pursue affordable options for a new village hall, and has purchased the former Tyler building on NYS Route 49. The village is formulating

plans for renovating this space into municipal offices and meeting space.

The village of Cleveland is also celebrating its sesquicentennial year in 2007 with a year-long series of events that have extended beyond municipal boundaries in recognition of Cleveland's importance as the "heart of the North Shore."

Contractors to the state Office of General Services are now shredding tons of tires located on the Pinnacle Road tire yard in the town of West Monroe. The tire remediation project is being operated under the authority of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and plans are for shredded tires to be trucked off site for use in state projects elsewhere. Participants have been learning about how to operate a project of this scope, after two spontaneous fires in the piles of shredded product in the summer of 2007. The second fire, in June 2007, involved 26 fire companies and led to a re-evaluation and revision of operating procedures and preparations for fire control at the site.

## Salmon Rivers Fosters Intermunicipal Cooperation

The Salmon Rivers Council of Governments entered into an extended dialogue with other area communities interested in the benefits of participating in a Council of Governments.

The town and village of Parish formed the Parish Economic Development Task

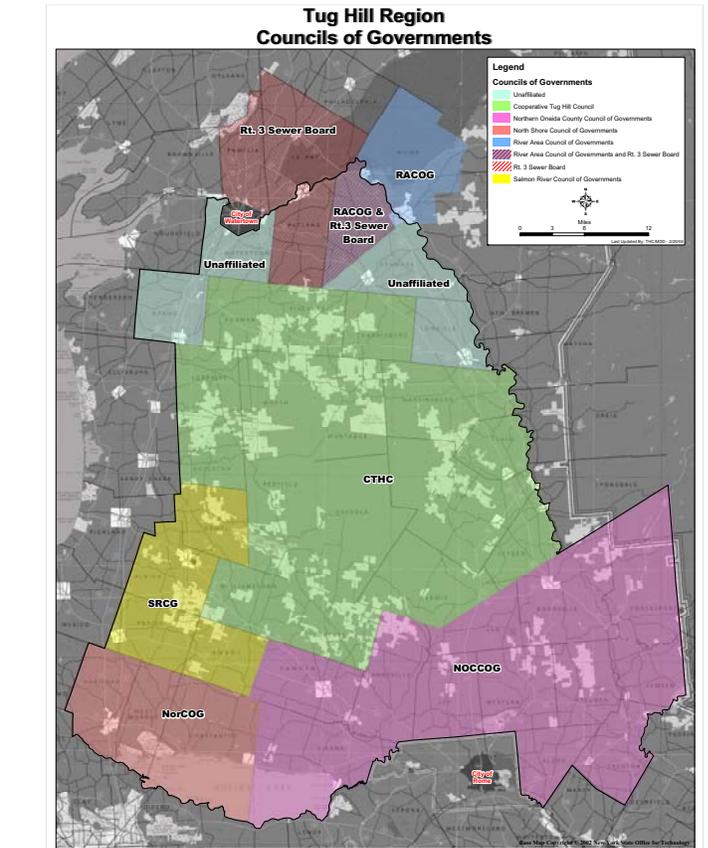
Force, which is exploring how to improve the economic climate of Parish. The task force is composed of representatives of town and village government, local and regional businesses, the Parish Chamber of Commerce and cultural resources.

The town and village of Parish was awarded nearly \$10,000 in funding from the New York State Archives Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund for the storage and retrieval of inactive records, in a grant application that they prepared with assistance from the Tug Hill Commission.

## NOCCOG Communities Plan For Future Growth

There is an old maxim, "Failure to plan is planning for failure." NOCCOG communities have taken this to heart with many developing or updating comprehensive plans, land use and zoning regulations and subdivision laws. See the page three article on Commission assistance to Tug Hill communities on comprehensive plans.

The towns of Annsville and Remsen both adopted local laws establishing planning boards, where there have been none for at least ten years. Both of these planning boards have been charged to develop subdivision regulations in response to subdivision growth. The Forestport planning board is also updating the town's subdivision law and developing standards for subdivisions with private roads. The town passed a moratorium in 2006 on



subdivisions with private roads until new standards could be adopted by the town.

Many NOCCOG communities are working on updating their comprehensive plans. Vienna adopted the town's updated plan this summer, to be the starting point for an updated zoning law. Holland Patent submitted the village's comprehensive plan for review by Oneida County Planning, and passed local laws to regulate snowmobiles and skate boards on village streets and sidewalks in response to concerns mentioned during the planning process. The town and village of Boonville formed a joint planning committee which has been meeting biweekly and received a Quality Communities grant to hire a consultant for assistance on their plan. Barneveld held two Commission-led SWOT

exercises this spring and is formulating a community survey to start updating their plan. The town of Steuben has commenced work on a town wide survey to serve as the basis of a comprehensive plan update. The Western planning board also started working on updating the town's 1970's comprehensive plan and intends to incorporate some of the plan's long range goals in a revised version of their zoning law.

Sylvan Beach is working with a consultant to review and update the village's current zoning law to be consistent with goals in their comprehensive plan and to address the challenges in the recent growth in this unique resort community. Trenton adopted twelve amendments to update its

*Continued on page 8*

## Managing Fort Drum-Related Growth

Fort Drum is unquestionably the most significant economic engine and largest employer in Northern New York. In FY2006, the base employed 17,438 soldiers and 3,712 civilians with a total annual payroll of nearly \$970,000,000. Total direct spending was calculated at \$1.2 billion (see the complete Economic Impact Statement at [www.fdrlo.org](http://www.fdrlo.org)). Since December 2003, the Fort Drum related population (military and dependents) has increased by over 17,000 people. Communities adjacent to the base and along major transportation routes to Fort Drum are experiencing unprecedented growth.

The Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO) has received federal funding to help communities manage this growth. A portion of the funds are supporting a series of planning and zoning workshops at Jefferson Community College in Watertown – which began

this past spring. The balance of the funds are being used to hire a consultant who is charged with helping communities to better understand the continued impact of Fort Drum related activities and identifying strategies to help them manage growth while preventing conflicts with base operations that could threaten its long-term presence in the North Country. A Quality Communities grant through the town of Champion will help communities to implement some of the strategies. Updates will be provided regularly as the project progresses.

## Regional Projects Boost Black River Communities

Several ongoing projects along the Black River have moved forward in the past year. The *Black River Blueway Trail Development Plan* has been completed and a second Blueway Trail application was awarded by the NYS Department of State's

Division of Coastal Resources Local Waterfront Revitalization Program through Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund. The new grant implements several of the *Blueway Plans'* recommendations for improvements along the Black River, including signage, brochures, and three specific projects – Lyons Falls Turning Basin, Town of Turin's Burdicks Crossing, and Dexter's Fish Island Project. The strength of the Blueway Trail program is that 37 communities working together can garner more funding and a greater overall impact than communities working individually.

The *Black River Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan* for the automobile route from Rome to Ogdensburg also highlights the river theme and will use the *Blueway Plan* as its basis. Work is currently underway to alter the byway to more closely follow the river from Lowville to Dexter, and to develop a byway plan for the proposed northern section, possibly to be called the Maple Traditions Scenic Byway. The Adirondack North County Association (ANCA) oversees this and other scenic byways in the region, with the Tug Hill Commission assisting in developing corridor management plans.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the *Black River Navigation Study* last October examining hazards and impediments for the 40 mile flatwater section from Lyons Falls to Carthage. The report provides different alternatives for low, medium, and high cost remediation for each of the identified navigation hazards. Tug Hill Commission is working to assist communities with

funding strategies for their removal.

Work on the *Black River Watershed Plan* should begin work this fall to look at the watershed holistically, tying many of these individual plans together and creating a strategy to conserve the natural resources upon which the many economic and cultural activities in the area depend.

Further information on these projects can be found at <http://www.tughill.org/projects.htm>.

## Tug Hill Reserve Act Special Areas

Commission staff have worked with Cooperative Tug Hill Council and Super COG representatives this year to standardize and clarify the definitions of special areas, as listed in the region's Tug Hill Reserve Act. Listed special areas are: Gulfs, Important Habitat Areas, Important Headwater Areas, Major River or Stream Corridors, Important Groundwater Areas, Core Forest, Large Contiguous Forest Areas, Important Historic Areas, and Important Scenic Areas.

COG representatives approved draft definitions this spring, and mapping of these areas using the Commission's GIS system is underway. A first round of maps will be circulated for review by COG officials this fall, along with a revised draft of the *Special Areas Guidelines Workbook*. The workbook will outline for local officials ways in which they may officially designate special areas and take actions to protect those areas in their communities.



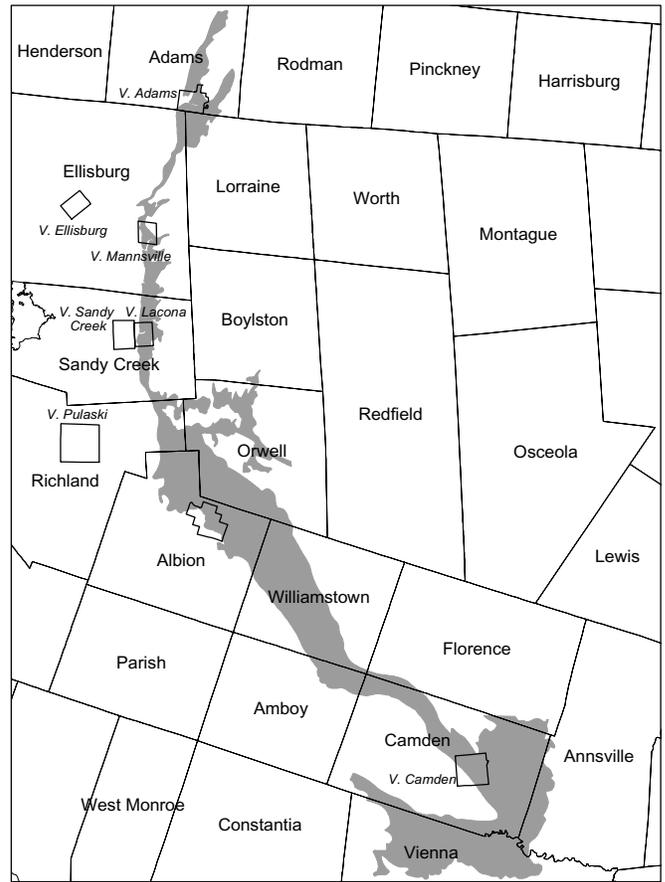
Portions of Tug Hill were declared disaster areas in February 2007 after repeated lake effect snow storms. The Parish Gymnasium is pictured above.

# USGS to Study the Tug Hill Aquifer

The Commission is working with the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), the three counties (Jefferson, Oswego, and Oneida), NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Department of Health, Cooperative Tug Hill Council, Salmon Rivers Council of Governments, and the local communities along the aquifer on a proposal to build on the aquifer work done in the late 1980's. Several activities in and around the aquifer have spurred renewed interest in understanding how the aquifer works more completely, including: designation of the aquifer's northern portion as an EPA-designated Sole Source Aquifer in 2006; changes in industrial uses in the central and southern portions of the aquifer; designation of the Sandy Creeks Watershed as an Ecosystem-based

Management demonstration watershed under the 2006 Coastal and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act; and increased need for groundwater as drinking water supplies in growing communities.

The proposal will describe how the aquifer could be modeled to help communities make more informed decisions about activities that might influence their water resources. Local residents have long known about the high quality of Tug Hill's groundwater resources. The region ordinarily receives generous amounts of precipitation in the form of snow and rain throughout the year, with spring runoff being particularly plentiful. To date, development that might impact groundwater resources has been incremental over long periods of time, punctuated by a few larger proposals, such as Schoeller Paper establishing their manufacturing facility near Pulaski in the mid-1960's, the Rodman landfill in the 1980's, and residential housing



Shaded area denotes Tug Hill aquifer.

booms due to the expansion of military battalions housed at Fort Drum, near Watertown, both in the late 1980's and currently.

# Commission Programs and Funding

Tug Hill Commission's budget for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2007, 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, again about \$1 million this past year. Eighty-four percent of Commission expenditures are for staff salaries. The balance

covers operational costs such as postage, office equipment, car expenses, etc. The Commission employs 18 staff, including four full-time circuit rider positions for Tug Hill councils of governments (COGs). COGs 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.

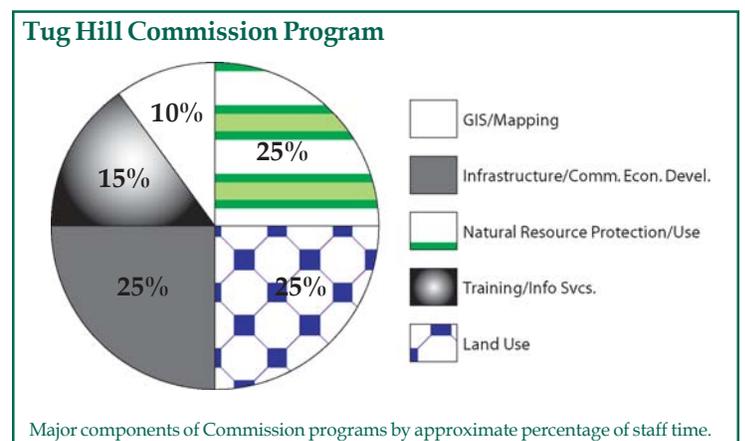
One way to gauge the value of the Commission's budget is to look at what it brings back to the region. The Commission regularly helps Tug Hill local governments

and organizations raise four to ten times the Commission's annual budget in grants in a given year.

Another way to gauge value is by what gets done in Tug Hill communities. Annually, the Commission works with some 20 local communi-

ties 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 of forest products,

*Continued on page 8*



*Historic Resources continued from page 2*

Once completed, the report can support larger grant applications to fund preservation of the building. Buildings receiving one of these assessments do not have to be on the Historic Register, but can use the information from the report to get listed on the Register. This past year, the towns of Western and Forestport had reports on their town halls completed under this program.

If your community has an historic preservation question contact your circuit rider or the Commission office for assistance.

*Comprehensive Planning continued from page 3*

intended to buttress and provide rationale for the community's land use and subdivision controls. Appendices of the plan

usually consist of a set of maps developed with the Commission's GIS (geographic information system), survey results, and other studies or documents that were used in the planning process.

Occasionally, a community will apply for and receive funding to hire a consultant to complete a portion of the plan. This approach was used by the village and town of Adams, who received funding from the Office for Small Cities to hire a consultant to take a detailed look at economic development and housing issues in the community. The village and town of Boonville, as of this writing, are in the process of hiring a consultant with money received from the NYS Quality Communities program to assist them in writing elements of their comprehensive plan.

*NOCCOG continued from page 5*

current zoning law this year, and the towns of Floyd and Lee made changes to their zoning laws. Although it does not have a formal planning board, several Remsen village board members and officers from the Remsen Development Corporation are working on a plan for future development to showcase Remsen's Welsh heritage.

NOCCOG added a new associate part-time circuit rider, Susan Martin, a resident of Barneveld. Susan is an administrator for Madison/Oneida BOCES and has a background in program development and analysis. Susan joined Harlan Moonen and Gerry Ritter in serving NOCCOG member municipalities. NOCCOG continues to thrive with the full support from all 19 member municipalities. NOCCOG's current officers

are: Robert Sauer from Camden, chairman; Mark Scheidelman from Trenton, fiscal officer; and Arnie Talgo from Steuben, vice-chairman.

*Commission Programs continued from page 7*

farming, and tourism and recreation.

The Commission anticipates a growing demand for assistance in land use planning and natural resource protection as communities struggle to manage growth and development around the region. As indicated by other articles in this newsletter, we are also seeing increased emphasis on regional projects that focus on corridors and watersheds and involve multiple partnerships.

September 2007



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