

# NYS Tug Hill Commission

## Local Leaders Survey - 2013

371 survey's mailed out on October 10, 2013/152 surveys returned for a return rate of 41%.

### Section 1. Local Leader Profile

Your responses to this survey are strictly confidential, unless you choose to share your name at the end. Please give us the following information to help us match responses by geographic area and your involvement in local matter.

**1. In what town or village do you live?**                      70% *Town*                                      30% *Village*

3	Adams(T)	1	Boylston	2	Florence	9	Lowville(V)	3	Redfield	2	Watertown
3	Adams(V)	2	Camden(T)	1	Floyd	1	Lyons Falls(V)	2	Remsen(T)	0	Western
1	Albion	1	Camden(V)	2	Forestport	4	Martinsburg	2	Remsen(V)	3	West Carthage(V)
2	Annsville	1	Castorland(V)	2	Harrisburg	1	Montague	2	Rodman	4	West Monroe
4	Amboy	2	Central Square(V)	1	Hastings	2	Orwell	1	Rutland	2	West Turin
3	Ava	3	Champion	1	Holland Patent(V)	2	Osceola	2	Steuben	2	Williamstown
2	Barneveld(V)	1	Cleveland(V)	2	Lee	3	Parish(T)	0	Sylvan Beach(V)	1	Worth
2	Black River(V)	0	Constableville(V)	3	Lewis	4	Parish(V)	4	Trenton	21	Do not live in TH region
5	Boonville(T)	4	Constantia	1	Leyden	2	Pinckney	3	Turin(T)		
1	Boonville(V)	0	Copenhagen(V)	4	Lorraine	1	Port Leyden(V)	0	Turin(V)		
		1	Denmark	0	Lowville(T)	1	Prospect(V)	4	Vienna		

**In what county do you live?**

22% Jefferson    26% Lewis            27% Oneida            24% Oswego            1% Other

**2. Which of the following organizations or groups are you currently a member? (Please check all that apply.)**

31%	town board	17%	council of governments	3%	school/other district board(s)
14%	village board	12%	other town/village official	17%	economic dev group/chamber of commerce
20%	town clerk	7%	county legislator	13%	farm or forestry organization
11%	village clerk	9%	county governmental agency	6%	fire company/rescue squad
32%	planning board	12%	environmental/historical/land trust org	17%	other
22%	zoning board of appeals	17%	hunting or fishing club		
15%	highway/public works superintendent	8%	outdoor recreation club		

**Other**

Attorney  
 THRIFT  
 NYS Assoc of City & Village Clerks, NC Assoc of Clerks/Treasurers & NYS Municipal Finance Officers  
 Snowmobile Clubs  
 Town Superintendent's Association  
 Soil & Water Conservation District  
 Tax Collector  
 Church  
 Oneida County Clerks, NYS Clerks, Floyd grange  
 Village Treasurer, Grants Administrator  
 State Government  
 Thousand Island Soccer Club, Clayton UMC Trustee & NYS Dec – Forestry Program  
 Center for Community Studies at JCC  
 Lowville Business Association, Village of Lowville Rezoning Committee  
 Panther Lake Association Director

**3. How often have you worked with Tug Hill Commission staff (or circuit riders) in the last five years? (Please check only one.)**

54% *Frequently*                      43% *Occasionally*                      3% *Not at all*

## Section 2. Program Effectiveness and Importance

The Commission's mission is "helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region." Its legislative charge calls for enhancing the region's environment and economy through work with local governments and organizations. In light of this, please rank the Commission's programs for IMPORTANCE (in Question 4) and EFFECTIVENESS (in Question 5).

### 4. How would you rate the *IMPORTANCE* of the following Tug Hill Commission programs to the future of the Tug Hill region? (Please check only one for each category.) (E=Essential, I=Important, NI=Not Important, DK=Don't Know)

	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Helping communities protect the environment	50%	48%	1%	1%
Educational programs to increase local citizens' & children's understanding of natural/cultural resources	35%	58%	3%	4%
Workshops to increase local officials' skills including annual Local Government Conference	72%	26%	1%	1%
Land use planning assistance to towns and villages	57%	40%	0%	1%
Helping communities find money for water, sewer, housing, and similar grants and loans	57%	36%	2%	3%
Helping communities find money for parks, recreation, downtown revitalization	40%	51%	4%	4%
Helping recreation trail development (skiing, ATV's, snowmobiles, scenic highways, etc.)	27%	59%	9%	4%
Technical assistance to chambers of commerce and similar groups	20%	60%	6%	14%
Technical assistance to farmers and farm businesses	26%	51%	7%	15%
Technical assistance to forest landowners and forest products businesses	26%	53%	6%	14%
Helping towns and villages in solving day-to-day legal, accounting, computer, and similar problems	43%	35%	13%	8%
Support to groups of communities working together, especially local councils of governments (Cooperative Tug Hill Council, Northern Oneida County COG, North Shore COG, River Area COG and Salmon River COG)	57%	39%	2%	0%
Circuit rider attendance at municipal board meetings	34%	53%	7%	5%

### 5. How would you rate the *EFFECTIVENESS* of the following programs of the Tug Hill Commission? (Please check only one for each category.) (E=Excellent, G=Good, F=Fair, P=Poor, NEI=Not Enough Info to Rate)

	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Not Enough Info</i>
Helping communities protect the environment	33%	47%	8%	0%	10%
Educational programs to increase local citizens' & children's understanding of natural/cultural resources	21%	44%	13%	2%	17%
Workshops to increase local officials' skills including annual Local Government Conference	68%	24%	3%	1%	2%
Land use planning assistance to towns and villages	53%	34%	5%	1%	6%
Helping communities find money for water, sewer, housing, and similar grants and loans	32%	40%	11%	1%	13%
Helping communities find money for parks, recreation, downtown revitalization	27%	43%	12%	1%	15%
Helping recreation trail development (skiing, ATV's, snowmobiles, scenic highways, etc.)	22%	41%	18%	1%	13%
Technical assistance to chambers of commerce and similar groups	18%	31%	10%	0%	39%
Technical assistance to farmers and farm businesses	13%	31%	8%	0%	43%
Technical assistance to forest landowners and forest products businesses	18%	32%	9%	0%	8%
Helping towns and villages in solving day-to-day legal, accounting, computer, & similar problems	34%	30%	11%	1%	24%
Support to groups of communities working together, especially local councils of governments (Cooperative Tug Hill Council, Northern Oneida County COG, North Shore COG, River Area COG and Salmon River COG)	42%	36%	7%	0%	11%
Circuit rider attendance at municipal board meetings	47%	30%	7%	1%	14%

### 6. How would you rate the Tug Hill Commission on the following characteristics? (Please check only one for each characteristic) (E=Excellent, G=Good, F=Fair, P=Poor, DK=Don't Know)

	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Cooperation	78%	18%	1%	0%	1%
Expertise	66%	28%	2%	0%	2%
Promptness	57%	34%	5%	0%	3%
Innovativeness	45%	38%	5%	0%	9%
Objectivity	56%	33%	6%	1%	3%
Understanding area needs	62%	30%	4%	0%	2%

### Section 3. Commission Role

The Tug Hill Commission provides for the future of the region through help to local governments and organizations. It is a provider of information, expertise, and service. It does not regulate. It does not set policy for the region. Please let us know how you feel about this in answering the following questions. (Please check the **one** answer that best represents your opinion.)

**7. Should the Tug Hill Commission continue its mission? (Mission – Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region.)**

77%	<i>Extremely important</i>	21%	<i>Somewhat important</i>	0%	<i>Important</i>	0%	<i>Not important</i>	1%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**8. How important do you feel local control is to your community?**

78%	<i>Almost always</i>	14%	<i>Sometimes</i>	8%	<i>Often</i>	0%	<i>Almost never</i>	0%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**9. Does the Tug Hill Commission work to enhance local control?**

65%	<i>Extremely important</i>	17%	<i>Somewhat important</i>	6%	<i>Important</i>	1%	<i>Not important</i>	10%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**10. How important do you think intermunicipal cooperation and planning are to the Tug Hill Region?**

76%	<i>Almost always</i>	15%	<i>Sometimes</i>	7%	<i>Often</i>	1%	<i>Almost never</i>	1%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**11. Does the Tug Hill Commission work effectively to support cooperation and planning?**

79%	<i>Strongly agree</i>	8%	<i>Agree</i>	9%	<i>Disagree</i>	0%	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**12. “The Tug Hill Commission provides service which local governments need and cannot afford by themselves.”**

61%	<i>Strongly agree</i>	32%	<i>Agree</i>	2%	<i>Disagree</i>	0%	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5%	<i>Don't know</i>
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**13) Are there any concerns in your community which you feel the Tug Hill Commission should be addressing, but is not now? If Yes, what concerns are they?**

- Not at this time.
- UN Agenda 21 = BAD
- Wide use of existing town and country roads for ATV traffic. This seems to be trying to use the snowmobile model but I feel the environmental and physical impact is very different and the Commission could help bring that point to light.
- More recreation and trail systems, ATV, Snowmobile, bicycling, hiking, skiing, more roads open to recreation.
- Planning and funding assistance to improve residential sanitary sewerage and water supply for the hamlet of Lorraine.
- Help town and villages create fire districts to keep the compensation costs to a minimum.
- I think even more emphasis on shared services among communities is important.
- Environmental & DEC liaison
- Route 12 & 28 tourism and tourist center like that is on Route 81 and 87 or you find all the way to Florida.
- We have concerns in our community but haven't reached out to the THC so maybe we will in the near future to see if they can assist, regarding town/village agreements.
- Money, where to get grant money for salt barn.
- I would like in time to reevaluate the town's long range plan. Assist communities such as Adams to perhaps partner with the T.I. Parks Commission to obtain water from Lake Ontario.
- Any concerns I have aired.
- We are still waiting for guidelines on RV laws and usage.
- Concerned about schools being closed in Central Square. Race track between CS and Brewerton. Traffic circulation in the village and the need for improved sidewalks. Assistance for updates to an aging waste water treatment plant. More trees!!!

- Need a better system on directory of other member town contact info. Why not put your members on web site with supervisor/mayor contact info?
- Mapping of village streets. Upgrading utilities (helping us acquire natural gas) and consolidation.
- More involvement in coordinating and exploring ideas regarding cost effective ambulance and fire protection. Continued efforts re tax cap issues.
- Trout stream see if they would come back there's no good streams like there like when I was a kid.
- Regional planning.
- Believe you are involved with this already. Continue to provide assistance to communities on the subject of consolidation to save money and be more efficient where it makes sense.
- Protect our water.
- Not sure; only have two towns in Commission region. My town, Sandy Creek is not a member, the other town have taken advantage of the Commission and it's programs.
- Would like assistance with code revision and need resources/examples from other communities around.
- Water.
- Stronger legal expertise.

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**14) What is the MOST IMPORTANT thing that the Tug Hill Commission has done for your community or area?**

- Provide affordable planning and technical assistance to small communities that cannot afford to hire independently.
- They have been helpful with grants and Paul Baxter has been a great asset with his knowledge and research for us. He was a help to me with the property tax cap also.
- Trailing and technical assistance and grant writing and assistance with administration and coordination of multi community initiatives.
- Keeping the town informed on matter's that impact the town.
- Tug Hill, Mickey Dietrich in particular has been instrumental in the development of GIS efforts in our local area. These services would be extremely expensive if a consultant or authority were to replace the Tug Hill Commission in this work.
- Tug Hill Commission has always helped with our towns questions and needs for guidance on local and state laws. They helped us with mapping and inventory of our town highways. I have used the commission for guidance with state grants.
- GPS Road Mapping great help.
- Phil Street and his team have provided training as well as advice to our planning board.
- Not sure unless it is the support in forming RACOG and helping with planning common terms for planning purposes within the Towns of Champion and Wilna.
- I don't always know or hear about the inner workings in the area.
- Working with the village to find funding sources for water, sewer and sidewalk projects.
- Planning, budgets, computer software assistance, grant writing.
- Planning and developing town zoning law.
- Help funding for boat launch and sewer survey.
- Help in matters of ZBA.
- Awareness.
- Has helped with a survey for our comprehensive plan.
- Technical help grants.
- Providing educational and resource for boards.
- Help with grant writing and local road map.
- Helped our planning board create a new zoning and subdivision law the old one was from the late 80's early 90's. Thanks Phil Street
- Don't know was never informed.
- Helps update planning and zoning and aides with growth in attracting new business.
- Written grant applications and our village has been approved for them.
- Encouraging cooperation between neighboring towns. Long term support to THTLT.
- It has helped us develop an official map of our town. They continue to help us with advice in so many areas.
- The expertise in beginning our town park and the help in guiding us to legal matters.
- Has assisted in redoing our zoning law.
- Coordinate and help author the Black River Watershed Management Plan. The project would not have been as efficient or thorough if they had not participated in the process so heavily. Thank You!!

- The Commission has provided services we likely would have had to forgo, in gathering information necessary to developing our new land development laws and updating our comprehensive plan. Their non-biased input has been essential.
- Training.
- Helped with grants and handling the grant received.
- Stormwater issues, crown cleaner, applying for grants.
- Assistance and support to protect the Tug Hill Aquifer. Coordinating the effort with us and others and grants informational meeting, etc.
- Providing assistance in writing local laws for land use planning.
- Continued support.
- Grant writing, advice on municipal issues, legal issues everything and anything.
- Understanding town law.
- Helping/assisting us with our water and sewer projects and technical assistance on issues that concern local government.
- Assistance in rewriting village zoning law.
- The ongoing up date to the zoning law.
- Provided training to area planning and zoning officials.
- Education, I can ask any question and they always find an answer. Grants, very helpful in finding and helping to write grants.
- Planning.
- Assisted with re-zoning our village to address our current comprehensive plan. Training to ZBA and planning board.
- Helping the town with the solar grant and other grants. Training sessions for officials. We appreciate all of their input.
- Helped with grants.
- Technical assistance and training.
- Keep town & village boards informed on various issues!
- Written grants and supplied maps.
- The Commission – Matt Johnson came to numerous planning board meetings and helped to rezone our downtown area.
- They have fought to get us good PILOT payment agreements with the Nature Conservancy.
- Planning board, zoning.
- Assistance with planning and zoning since the Tug Hill Commission first began.
- Provide assistance to planning/zoning boards.
- Provided opportunity for local officials training. Worked with consolidating one village and town in our area.
- Assisted in obtaining a federal grant from the Safe Routes to school initiative.
- Coordinates and provides assistance to zoning and planning boards.
- Technical assistance.
- Just the regular help with planning, zoning, funding (grant writing), GPS units, and computer expertise makes our village government viable!
- Road mapping, provide education, grant direction.
- Circuit rider attending town board meeting and telling us everything that's going on.
- Help in planning and land use problems. Provide technical assistance with technical problems. Work on forest exemption problems, current land future.
- Mapping, comprehensive plan
- Develop partnerships in protecting the integrity of the area.
- Highway map & land use GIS, special area map, pilot negotiation.
- Consultation and information gathering for planning purposes.
- One of the most important things has been the presence of Paul Baxter. His dedication to attend nearly all board meetings, coordinate classes and provide our board with information regarding education opportunities and grants available. Excellent resource!
- Not sure.
- Assist in procuring finding grants from archives for records retention and storage.
- Helped the town post and pass dissolution of the Village of Altmar. Not that this is the most important, but I as a town supervisor received a lot of help from Tug Hill, very dependable group of people.
- Provide training and assistance to local government. Employees and officials.

- Technical and grant assistance that has been essential to Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust programs throughout the region.
- Provide support and expertise that most of the Tug Hill regions communities do not have
- Help with local zoning law draft and subdivision law draft.
- GPS
- Assisting in grant writing (and follow up). Finding answers to questions. Maintaining communications between municipalities.
- Training and assistance in land use planning is the program with which I am most familiar.
- Helped with grant writing, helped with town highway map and special area map. Has been one of the driving forces behind the minimum maintenance road law.
- Assisted with Main Street grant program.
- Advise us of funding opportunities.
- Help in Croghan village, downtown, Maple Museum and BR Dam Project.
- We are working diligently to rezone the Village of Lowville. Matt is working with us closely to get that done.
- Support planning board and ZBA.
- Provide nonbiased information and resources for towns and groups in Lewis County.
- If there is anything we need, we are offered assistance.
- Ongoing research and protection of the Tug Hill Aquifer.
- Survey mapping.
- Helped with school reuse of building.
- Our circuit rider, Paul Baxter is an invaluable source for advise, information and a confidence builder at our meetings.
- Grant assistance, both in applying for and negotiating the NYS maze regarding grants.
- Planning and development, help with updating subdivision law and 480A issue!!
- Involvement in our land development law, revision and development of comprehensive plans and examination and circuit rider involvement.
- Improve/foster cooperation.
- Work with town board and planning board on lots of things.
- Paul Baxter helps with computer programming and informational meeting and training.
- They have been an important partner with our Brownfield step 2 project. Most importantly a solid partner with the redevelopment of the Old Mill site on Center Street. They also assisted our village in writing and administering a grant for an engineer study on our sewer system.
- Helped with zoning issues however no progress has been made.
- Providing technical assistance on all matters of local, county and state government.
- Probably the most important thing is to provide local municipalities the resources and expertise to improve their decision making and governing in general. This has great benefits in future years.
- Guidance/training of elected or appointed officials.
- Board member training and guidance.
- Trains our local leaders and gives them advice and information so they can make informed decisions.
- They have provided excellent tech/resource help. Where else would these small towns look to find and implement help?
- Training workshops.
- Helped us with grants.
- Successfully updated zoning law.
- Educational programs for community leaders.
- Mapping, guidance.
- Government programs at JCC
- Provided grant writing and assistance in developing and maintenance town zoning law.
- Help with grants.
- Helped us establish our planning board, comprehensive plan and zoning.
- GIS support mainly with the JIMI project.
- Assisted in village's effort to promote the vacant Ethan Allen property.
- Supporting our community with guidance and direction with the rules, regulations and laws that we work with.
- Village master plan

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**15) Please make any other comments on what should happen to the Tug Hill Commission programs.**

- Tug Hill Commission's circuit rider is always a wealth of information and brings a pleasant one on one experience to every board meeting. It is always a great day at the Local Government Conference, because of the information we receive and the chance to compare notes with a wide range of government officials. It would be a very dark day for our region if the Tug Hill Commission were to ever disappear.
- I think it is a very viable help to many people and the local governments. It has been helpful in areas that are not always known by these people that are not on the front line.
- Try and grow when possible.
- Keep up the good work.
- Online classes to meet the mandatory training requirements would be great addition to current programs.
- I feel they do a wonderful job keeping informed of upcoming events that help our municipalities.
- Inform the local public of your mission and structure of the Commission. History accomplishments let the public know what's going on in paper or media most common people have no idea what its goals are or what it really is. Just ask a person in your community.
- State should provide better funding to THC and their programs. Use THC as a model for other areas of the state.
- Since the North Country does not fall under any regional planning council, the Tug Hill Commission has been and will continue to be essential in filling a similar role. The THC has been another arm to the district at times and many programs have benefited from their service. Our towns NEED assistance from the THC as there is no other resource to provide them guidance and advice that keeps them serving within the confines of New York State Law. I sincerely hope that funding is expanded to enhance their programs that help unite North Country Communities.
- I feel they manage their resources extremely well. Our region, I feel, has perhaps more diversity of demands than any in NY state. Our Commission, amazingly, provides support in economic, recreation, environmental and legal aspects of our community. In my community duties I would be less effective without their insight and guidance.
- Continue or expand the March workshops. Offer more regional workshops for small government.
- All Commission programs serve the region well and should be maintained.
- The THC should continue to provide technical and governmental guidance to facilitate local land use planning and protection of the environment. We need your support to evaluate essential system improvements to residential sewerage water supply issues in the hamlet.
- Keep up the great work!!
- Please continue!
- Continue to provide quality service and expertise.
- The THC is a great resource for our financially strapped areas. I would be lost without you!
- Thank you for being a knowledgeable resource to our area! Your assistance has always been helpful and MUCH appreciated! Tug Hill Commission is a much needed resource who has been helpful in creating/encouraging growth and economic development. It is too bad that certain communities don't support such changes or are not organized enough to follow through!
- They should definitely continue.
- The Tug Hill Commission via its circuit riders has always been on top of important issues and passed information to town and village board members.
- With email and Tug Hill newsletters I do not feel that the board meeting attendance is necessary, could help the gas budget too. I feel that we don't utilize your services and we really should more often. Keep up the good work helping communities in the North Country.
- I realize that planning and zoning board members are required to have training but I think the local government conference should provide more sessions that are applicable to clerks and clerk treasurers. The conference is a valuable resource for all members of local government.
- The Tug Hill Commission is a vital part of our towns ability to operate our local government effectively. They have helped us many times with their programs and expertise and we hope they will continue to do so.
- Tug Hill Commission programs are essential to the rural towns in this area. They provide expertise and experience in areas that we would otherwise not have access to them.
- I would hope nothing changes at the Commission, they do such great work. If anything I would think an increase in money to allow for more hires to assist the locals that they serve.
- Continue as you are.
- Each time I complete a survey, I relate the same comment – you all need to blow your horn! Staffing has been limited with budget cuts but I'd love to see you touch community groups (Senior citizens, scouts, and the like) to make them aware of all you have to offer. Should you publish these results, perhaps a blurb in the press release or brief program at meetings could be included.

- All the other small towns/villages across the state deserve this kind of help. It (Tug Hill Commission) saves us time, money and enables us to be so much more effective on so many levels. The money spent on THC by the state has to be more than recouped by taxpayers at local level, they pay state taxes too – so it helps all state tax payers by keeping down costs through economy of scale. A few experts helping many towns/villages.
- I am new attending meetings, you are getting a very narrow snapshot. With more experience this survey would mean more.
- They should continue to provide the essential programs that assist the Tug Hill Region.
- One of the many economic opportunities which exists in the Tug Hill Region aside from the assistance provided to local governments, is the development of recreational opportunities. I feel the Commission is missing a huge opportunity in not taking a dynamic leadership role in development of a first class snowmobile, ATV, mountain bike and hiking infrastructure system throughout the region. The Commission could bridge the gap between governments and private trail groups to expand and improve the current system. Controlled land use, increased tax revenue and a world class Mecca!
- Continue education programs for elected officials and hired employees.
- Funding should be restored to levels of over a decade ago to allow Commission to strengthen programs.
- The Tug Hill Commission is indispensable to the health and vigor of the Tug Hill region communities.
- To lose the source of networking and communication would be a heavy blow to our upstate communities. I believe we get more “bang for the buck” than most funded agency’s can provide.
- Prioritize environmental protection and sustainable development at the top.
- Nothing should happen to it. It’s a great resource for the member towns and villages.
- Planning for replacement of infrastructure.
- They should be continued and fully funded.
- THC provides a valuable resource to local residents and local government agencies, keep up the good work!
- I think the Commission has done a great job. The staff does a great job in helping the Village of Parish when asked.
- Stay the course!
- Keep up the good work and continue on.
- Keep working to facilitate cooperation and understanding among the various agencies, group and municipalities that have a role in improving the quality of life in the Tug Hill area. The way things are now, the more cooperation the better.
- The Tug Hill Commission’s programs are extremely important and should continue and their services are always readily available when called upon.
- Commission programs need to be maintained while focusing on issues related directly to Tug Hill towns and villages. Information and support for local officials is essential.
- I hope they will continue for a long time. I feel there is a strong need for their help and support.
- Thank you for the support, it’s much appreciated.