

# HEADWATERS



2015 NEWSLETTER & 2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT, ISSUE 52

NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION · DULLES STATE OFFICE BUILDING · 317 WASHINGTON STREET · WATERTOWN, NY 13601 · (315) 785-2380 · WWW.TUGHILL.ORG



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### MEET OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KATIE MALINOWSKI

#### HONORED TO SERVE

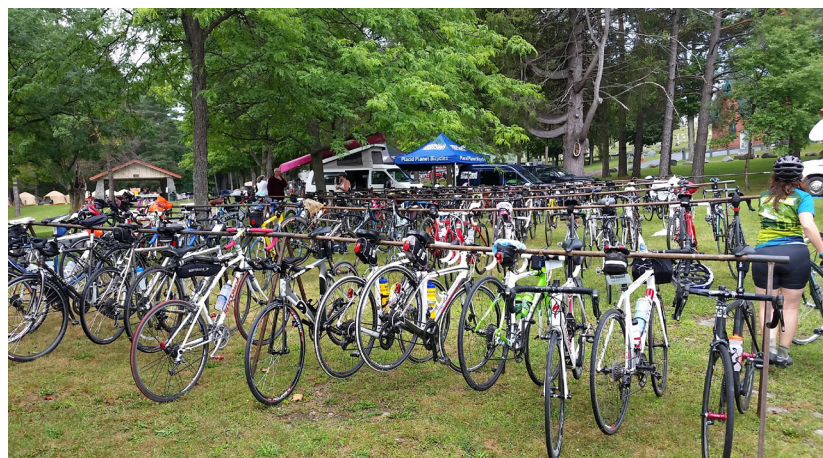
When I started my career at the commission in 1998, I would never have thought that in 2016 I would be writing a letter for Headwaters as the commission's fourth executive director. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with both Bob Quinn and John Bartow, to learn skills and knowledge from

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## Tug Hill Communities Host Bicycle Tour

The Tug Hill region was featured in an exciting new event during the summer of 2015 with the arrival of Cycle Adirondacks, a week-long road bicycle tour through the Adirondack Park and Tug Hill region, spearheaded by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The first ride of its kind in the area, Cycle Adirondacks brought about 160 cyclists on a six day tour during August 23-29, 2015. The ride commenced at Saranac Lake and included overnight stops along the way at Star Lake, Boonville, Camden, Old Forge and Long Lake. Each daily leg included about 60 to 70 miles of riding with a series of points of interest highlighted along the way.

After crossing over into Tug Hill from the Adirondack Park,



*Bike racks at Boonville's Erwin Park.*

the ride followed Route 812 down through Lewis County through Harrisville, Croghan, and Martinsburg before arriving in Boonville where an overnight camp was set up in Erwin Park. From Boonville the next

morning, riders enjoyed the terrain through West Leyden, Osceola, and Williamstown before arriving in Camden for another overnight visit in the region.

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# Meet the Staff at the NYS Tug Hill Commission

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”**



## Katie Malinowski, Executive Director, Cont.

two former executive directors to help me now as I grow into this new role. And although Ben Coe was retired by the time I came on board, he has already provided valuable insight and wisdom during this time of transition.

While the specific issues and concerns evolve over time, staying true to the mission of enabling local governments, private organizations, and individuals to shape the future of the Tug Hill region

has held the commission in good stead for almost 43 years. I am excited to continue our work with a highly-qualified staff, dedicated commissioners, engaged communities and strong county, regional and state partnerships. As always, we are here to serve Tug Hill communities by being in touch with what is happening on the ground, understanding what is happening at the state level, and working to bring the two together for mutual benefit ■

## Tug Hill Communities Host Bicycle Tour, Cont.

The following day the tour followed a route through Lee along the shore of Delta Lake into Westerville before hitting the challenging terrain of Steuben. After riding into Forestport, the route headed back into the AdirondackS where it continued until its conclusion back at Saranac Lake.

At the camps in Boonville’s Erwin Park and Camden’s Village Park, guests enjoyed meals, mu-

sic, and educational opportunities from area experts sharing details about the history and wildlife of the region. The goal of the event was to promote wildlife conservation and bring a greater appreciation of the area to everyone who participated. It built on the ongoing efforts to enhance habitat connectivity between the Tug Hill and the Adirondacks ■

Cyclists take a rest at Turin’s Snow Ridge Ski Resort.



## ABOUT HEADWATERS

Headwaters is the annual newsletter report of the NYS 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

Jan J. Bogdanowicz  
Lewis County

## VICE CHAIRMAN

Michael G. Yerdon, Sr.  
Oswego County

## SECRETARY

Thomas E. Boxberger  
Jefferson County

## MEMBERS

Leona M. Cheresnoski  
Jefferson County

Roger W. Maciejko  
Lewis County

Arnold E. Talgo  
Oneida County

Kenneth W. Vigus  
Oneida County

# Documenting the Tug Hill Way of Life

The Venerable Folks of the Tug Hill project is a unique collaboration between the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Traditional Arts of Upstate New York (TAUNY), and the Tug Hill Commission. The goal of the project is to capture information about the traditional Tug Hill culture, including living through harsh winters, traditional farming, ethnic art forms such as fiddling and quilting, forestry and logging, and hunting, fishing and trapping. Working with local artist Loretta Lepkowski, a wide variety of Tug Hill residents are being interviewed and their portraits painted to capture their personal knowledge and experiences related to their life on Tug Hill. The criteria for choosing these individuals closely follows the commission's criteria for selecting a Tug Hill Sage: "an individual who has been a part of Tug Hill life and traditions for all or most of their lives, who has a deep knowledge of Tug Hill's heritage and environment, and who has lifelong involvement in Tug Hill." Once interviews and portraits are complete, a traveling multime-

dia exhibit will be developed that will be showcased at venues around Tug Hill and beyond.

Attendees at the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust dinner in October got a sneak preview of some of the portraits. Ms. Lepkowski had completed portraits of Tug Hill Sages Ben Coe, Warren Mathis, Bob McNamara, Bob Sauer (including wife Mary Sauer), George Bibbins, Sr., and Edwin "Doc" Russell. Also, portraits of non-sages Arsa Weiman and George and Terry Cataldo have been completed. The goal is to interview and paint 20 subjects.

To date, funding for the project has been secured from the St. Lawrence Arts Council, New York State Council on the Arts, Tug Hill Commission, Iroquois Gas Community Grant Program, and Northern NY Community Foundation.

Look for opportunities to view the paintings and exhibit material throughout 2016! ■



*Pictured Above: Portrait studies on display.*

*Pictured Right: Ben Coe poses with his portrait and Bob Quinn.*



## Tug Hill Region Says Goodbye to Sages in 2015

Bonnie Colton, 84, nominated as a Tug Hill Sage in 2012, passed away at her home in Lowville on June 26, 2015. Harold Petrie, 89, nominated as a Tug Hill Sage in 1993, was a lifelong resident of Parish, NY, passed away on June 16, 2015, due to multiple complications from paraplegia.

A Tug Hill Sage is an individual who has been a part of Tug Hill life and traditions for all or most of his/her life, who has deep knowledge of Tug Hill's heritage and environment, and who has life-long involvement in Tug Hill. Harold and Bonnie are the definition of a Tug Hill Sage and their knowledge of and inspiration to the Tug Hill region will be sorely missed.

**For more information on Tug Hill Sages, see [tughill.org/about/tug-hill-sages](http://tughill.org/about/tug-hill-sages) ■**



# COGREPORTS

COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS REPORTS

## The Cooperative Tug Hill Council

The Cooperative Tug Hill Council (CTHC) towns have continued to work on their special area protection program under the Tug Hill Reserve Act. 2015 saw the approval of an additional three special area maps by the council, bringing the total of approved maps to ten. Four other CTHC town special area maps are underway. The council's towns also continue to work to finish their highway mapping project, with one unapproved map scheduled to be complete in early 2016. Several towns continue to classify their roads with the possibility of

completing minimum maintenance road designations.

The joint zoning board of appeals continues to operate in the towns of Florence, Montague, Osceola, Pinckney and Turin, hearing two cases in 2015. While this year there was a full board of representatives, Janice Hodkinson, long time representative from Pinckney, left the board at the end of 2015 due to a move out of town. We wish her the best of luck and look forward to working with her successor.

Court issues continued to be a hot topic, with the town of Lewis successfully electing a justice in the November election, following the approval of a state law in September which relaxed the residency requirement for their town justice position. Due to the timing of the passage of the law, it was too late for a candidate to file a petition to appear on the November ballot, but the position was filled by a write-in candidate. The current justice from Osceola, Bill Currier, is also now filling that position for Lewis. Lorraine and Worth are

currently involved in a study of their options for a possible court consolidation as well.

Several CTHC towns received Justice Court Assistance Program (JCAP) grants in 2015 to assist in physical improvements or equipment purchases for their justice courts. Lewis has purchased a building in their town, and with the help of a JCAP grant as well as a NYS Archives grant, they hope to begin renovations soon to create a new and badly needed municipal building ■

## Northern Oneida County Council of Governments Annual Report 2015

This year began with the official hire of new full-time Municipal Advisor Jennifer Armstrong of Taberg. Working closely with the NOCCOG executive board, Tug Hill staff, and Associate Advisors Sue Martin and Harlan Moonen, Jennifer has been working her way through the county familiarizing herself with each community.

In 2015 Oneida County once again provided financial sup-

port for NOCCOG in the amount of \$5,000. NOCCOG's county legislators continue to offer their support and maintain county funding. Looking forward to 2016, NOCCOG is slated for \$5,000 in the county executive's budget.

Alicia Dicks, Co-Chair of the MV500 group, attended NOCCOG's annual dinner, presenting Mohawk Valley's submission for Upstate Revitalization

Initiative funding. Although the region was not one of the three regions awarded \$500 million as part of the Governor's initiative, several projects in NOCCOG communities were awarded Regional Economic Development Council funds.

NOCCOG staff, working with the Local Government Education Committee of Oneida and Herkimer counties, provided training on issues ranging

from newly elected officials, drones, regional economic development and the Upstate Revitalization Initiative. In addition, commission staff held two planning board and ZBA training sessions. The bi-annual salary survey was also completed to provide boards with a general overview of the salary trends for elected and appointed positions within neighboring municipalities ■

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# North Shore Council of Governments

In May 2015, the village of Cleveland hosted a meeting of North Shore towns and villages from Hastings and Central Square to Sylvan Beach and Cleveland, inviting organizations on the federal, state, regional, county and local level to a discussion on Oneida Lake and its tourism and economic potential and issues related to lake access. As a result of the meeting, towns, villages, Oswego County and state agencies renewed efforts to work together to maximize the potential of Oneida Lake as a tourism resource and source of economic activity for the North Shore region.

In December 2015, Oswego County released a task force report on community health and poverty reduction in the county, which ranks high in challenges to public health and economic distress. Individual task forces will begin activity in 2016 as the county reaches out for broader community involvement to address the issues identified by the report. The Community Health and Poverty Reduction Task Force is chaired by

Roy Reehil, county legislator for District #5, which includes Constantia and Cleveland in the Tug Hill region. Legislator Reehil is also chair of the county legislature's Economic Development and Planning Committee.

Cleveland Elementary School, closed by the Central Square Central School District in 2014 as a cost-cutting measure, is still on the market. Community leaders have proposed repurposing Cleveland Elementary as a charter school and are exploring the feasibility of such an undertaking.

The town of Constantia continues to pursue expansion of public water into the eastern portion of town, while the village of Cleveland is examining options for renovations and improvements to its village water system.

The town of West Monroe began its official town road mapping process in conjunction with the Tug Hill Commission ■

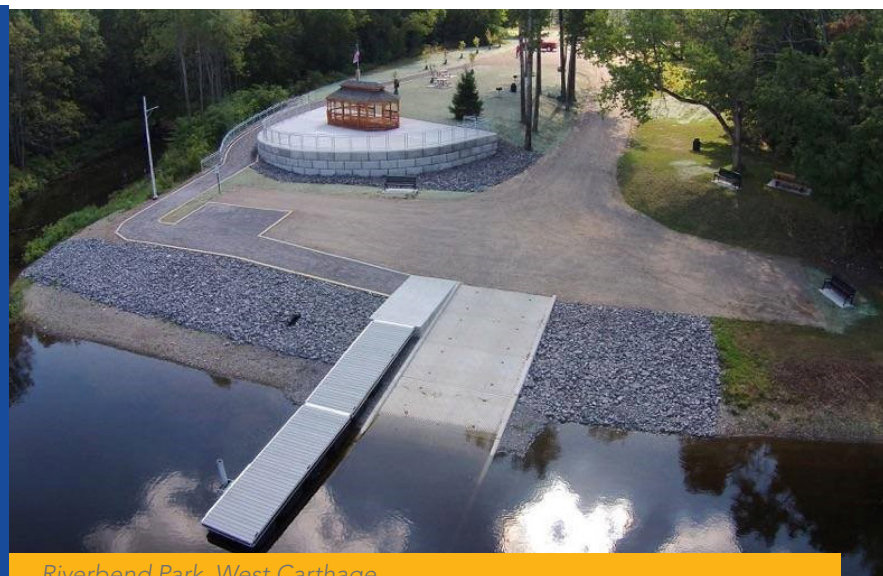
# Salmon Rivers Council of Governments

The town of Albion took steps toward exploring the feasibility of public water for the town, pursuing grant funding for preliminary engineering and cost estimates necessary for creating a water district should the project prove feasible and have public support.

Parish made progress toward high speed internet townwide as New Visions began stringing cable, with the system anticipated to go live in early

2016. The town and village continue to explore options for bringing public water to Parish.

The towns of Amboy, Orwell, and Parish began the official town road mapping program in conjunction with the Tug Hill Commission, first undertaken by the town of Albion in the Oswego County part of the Tug Hill region ■



Riverbend Park, West Carthage

# River Area Council of Governments

With assistance from Senator Schumer's office, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was successful in securing over \$3.2 million to remediate contaminants from the Crown Cleaners of Watertown Superfund Site, Inc. in the town of Wilna. Acquired by the town in 2012 to guide future development of the 9.2-acre Black River water-

front property as an outdoor recreational facility, EPA work crews removed vegetation, demolished three old abandoned industrial buildings, and removed contaminated soil and debris during the 2015 construction year.

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# Second Village Dissolves

The village of Prospect, located within the town of Trenton in Oneida County, dissolved on December 31, 2015. The 290-resident village had begun a board-initiated dissolution in 2014, precipitated by significant debt incurred by two worker's compensation claims. Officials in Prospect and Trenton worked feverishly, often in uncharted territory, through the process of preparing for the dissolution. With the aid of Tug Hill staff, both municipalities were able to apply for grant funding to help offset expenses.

Prospect is the second village in the region to dissolve in recent years, the first being Altmar in the Oswego County town of Albion. The Altmar dissolution was elector-initiated, and took effect on June 1, 2013.

Currently the village of Herrings in the Jefferson County town of Wilna is in the process of an elector-initiated dissolution study. Tug Hill and DOS staff are assisting the dissolution study committee, which is made up of village and town officials and residents ■



# Grant Funds Secured

Commission staff assisted in five successful grant applications through this year's Consolidated Funding Application process. The village of Camden secured \$380,800 through the NYS Office of Housing and Community Renewal (OCR) for façade renovations and other improvements in the village's downtown business district. Additionally, \$160,300 was awarded to Camden through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to fund the construction of a walking path along the west branch of Fish Creek linking the downtown business district to Forest Park, a popular recreation spot. It was the village's second attempt at acquiring funding through the CFA process for both projects.

Two snowmobile clubs on Tug Hill will receive funding to purchase new grooming equipment from the Recreational Trails Pro-

gram, administered by OPRHP. Working with commission staff, Barnes Corners Sno Pals secured \$200,000 and Pulaski-Boylston Snowmobile Club secured \$168,040 that will allow them to continue grooming a combined total of over 210 miles of snowmobile trails in the high snowfall area that is Tug Hill.

Additionally, the town of Albion was awarded a water system planning grant of \$47,500 through OCR to study the potential for public water in portions of the town. The town plans to undertake a staged approach to include a feasibility assessment, a preliminary engineering report, an income survey, and an environmental/SEQR analysis. If favorable, the development of a public water system could help the town pursue economic development opportunities which build on the conversion of the former elementary school into the Tailwater Lodge ■



Snowmobiler enjoying a well-groomed trail.



Trail marker placed on a 6' post. Tug Hill trails see significant snowfall.



Camden's downtown.

# Training Available

A high priority of the commission is training planning and zoning officials. In addition to the day-long annual Local Government Conference held in Watertown, the staff has made available two hour evening training sessions around Tug Hill upon request. These training sessions can be done as multi-community or more focused individual-community events, depending on local needs. Commission training can be requested for roles and responsibilities of officials, comprehensive planning, State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR), subdivision review process, site plan and special permit review process, and zoning board of appeals operations. Training packets used for these sessions can be accessed by the public on the commission website at [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org) ■



## Commission Funding Stable

The Tug Hill Commission's budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year remained constant from the previous four years at around \$1 million. Almost all of the commission's funding comes from its annual state appropriation, with a small amount of revenue generated by the Local Government Conference. Approximately 85% of the budget is spent on staff salaries, with the balance covering commission operating expenses. Those expenses include travel, equipment, training, and software.

The commission employed 14 people, four of whom are circuit riders for the region's five councils of governments. The other 10 staff provide program and administrative support out of the commission's Watertown office. Commission staff provide support in the topical areas of planning, community development, natural resources and GIS.

In 2015-16, commission staff helped partner communities and organizations secure almost \$1.2 million in grant funds, trained more than 1,400 local officials in 17 different training venues, started working on 30 new projects across the region, maintained progress on an additional 50 projects, and answered technical assistance questions too numerous to count.

On a regional level, the commission worked with state agency partners on a variety of statewide priorities and initiatives. These included shared services, municipal dissolutions, watershed programs, and forestry issues ■

## Tug Hill Protected Lands

In November 2015, the Tug Hill Commission released the Land Ownership and Protected Lands in the Tug Hill Region issue paper. Protected lands or lands kept relatively natural serve many important purposes, including protecting open space and water quality, recreation, wildlife habitat, and forest management. The paper describes and quantifies protected lands on Tug Hill.

Protected lands can be either privately or publicly owned. Protection can be provided in the form of fee ownership or through a conservation easement, held by public agencies like the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) or private not-for-profits like Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT). They may have varying degrees of protection, from classified as "forest preserve" which is publicly owned, forever wild and accessible for recreation, to land owned privately by an individual with protection from development via a conservation easement.

Of the 1.38 million acres in the Tug Hill region, 18% of those acres are considered "protected." Over 65% of protected land in the Tug Hill region is owned by New York State, mainly the DEC and the NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

Easements make up 24% of the protected land on Tug Hill. The DEC holds 47,734 of these easement acres and THTLT holds 12,292. Counties, municipalities, the federal government, public utilities and educational institutions own just over 8% of the remaining protected land on Tug Hill.

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## NYS TUG HILL COMMISSION

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## River Area Council of Governments, Cont.

Formed in 2005, the Joint Zoning Board of Appeals (J-ZBA) expanded to include the village of West Carthage as a new member in 2015. The five member board is now comprised of a representative from each of the four RACOG communities with one rotating member. During 2015, the J-ZBA held nine meetings to review 14 use and area variances and one interpretation.

The village of West Carthage held a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 25th to celebrate the completion of the 2.1-acre South Main Street Trailhead project. Renamed the River Bend Park and serving as a destination to local residents and visitors, it is part of a regional effort to enhance opportunities to attract sustainable development through the tourism

industry. The site features a new pre-cast cement boat launch and dock with handicapped accessibility, vehicular parking, open air gazebo and walkways.

The Joint Water Pollution Control Facility, managed by the villages of Carthage and West Carthage with assistance from the Development Authority of the North Country, worked with GHD, an engineering firm, to design plant upgrades to the aging facility. With the designs completed in 2015, construction efforts will begin soon. Additionally, an appointed committee drafted a new policy and procedure guidelines for operations and maintenance at the Twin Village Swim Pool for the 2015 season ■

## Tug Hill Protected Lands, Cont

Private not-for-profits (such as The Nature Conservancy) own a total of 7% of the protected land (19,110 acres) on Tug Hill, but most of these acres are covered by a DEC easement. Not-for-profit lands without a DEC easement total 4,742 acres, or 2% of the protected land on Tug Hill.

For comparison purposes, the Tug Hill, which is the third-largest forested region in the state behind the Adiron-

dacks and Catskills, is mostly privately owned with over 80% of its land in private ownership. The Adirondacks and Catskills are both slightly over 50% privately owned. Only about 15% of Tug Hill land is state owned, while the Adirondacks and Catskills are both slightly over 40% state owned. This is important information for land use planning, silvicultural operations or wildlife habitat conservation ■

