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Community-Owned Forests: Possibilities,
Experiences, and Lessons Learned (June 16-19)

2005

6-17-2005

SLIDES: Tug Hill Commission, NY

Linda Gibbs

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Tug Hill region of New York covers 2,100 square miles between Lake Ontario and the Adirondack Mountains.





An aerial photograph of a rural hamlet in Jefferson County, NY. The scene is dominated by green fields and scattered houses. A prominent road runs vertically through the center, leading to a dam on a river in the lower-left corner. The river flows from the top-left towards the bottom-left. The overall landscape is a mix of open fields, wooded areas, and small-scale residential or commercial buildings.

*The region has a
total resident
population of just
over 100,000
people.*

*Hamlet of Great Bend,
Jefferson County, NY*

2006 6 19

Tug Hill Region of New York State

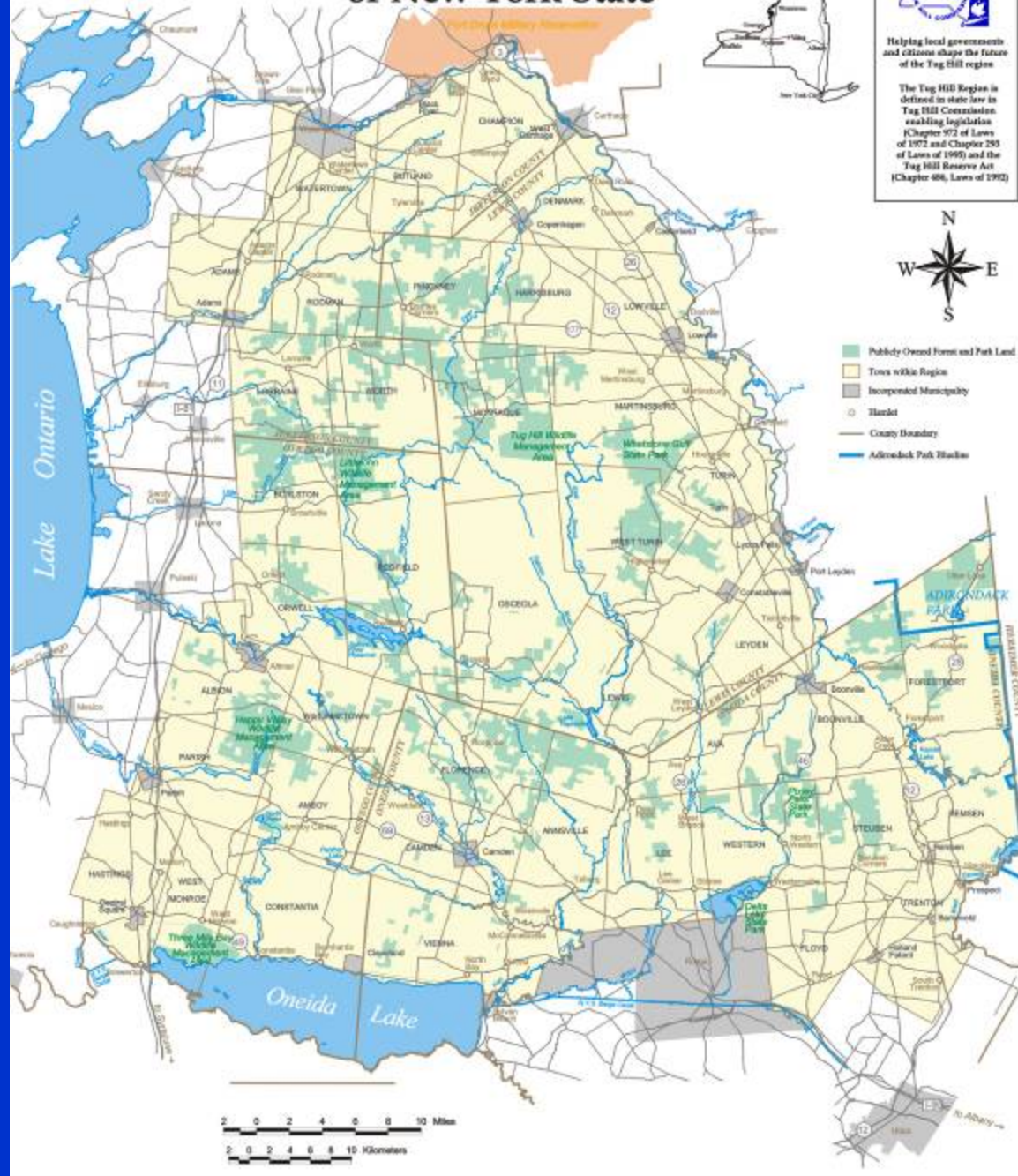


Helping local governments
and citizens shape the future
of the Tug Hill region

The Tug Hill Region is
defined in state law in
Tug Hill Commission
enabling legislation
(Chapter 972 of Laws
of 1972 and Chapter 293
of Laws of 1995) and the
Tug Hill Reserve Act
(Chapter 486, Laws of 1992)



- Publicly Owned Forest and Park Land
- Town within Region
- Incorporated Municipality
- Hamlet
- County Boundary
- Adirondack Park Boundaries



*The region
includes 62
very rural
towns and
villages.*

Sustaining the Mission

Planning, Training and Technical Assistance

90% of local leaders find Commission services essential.

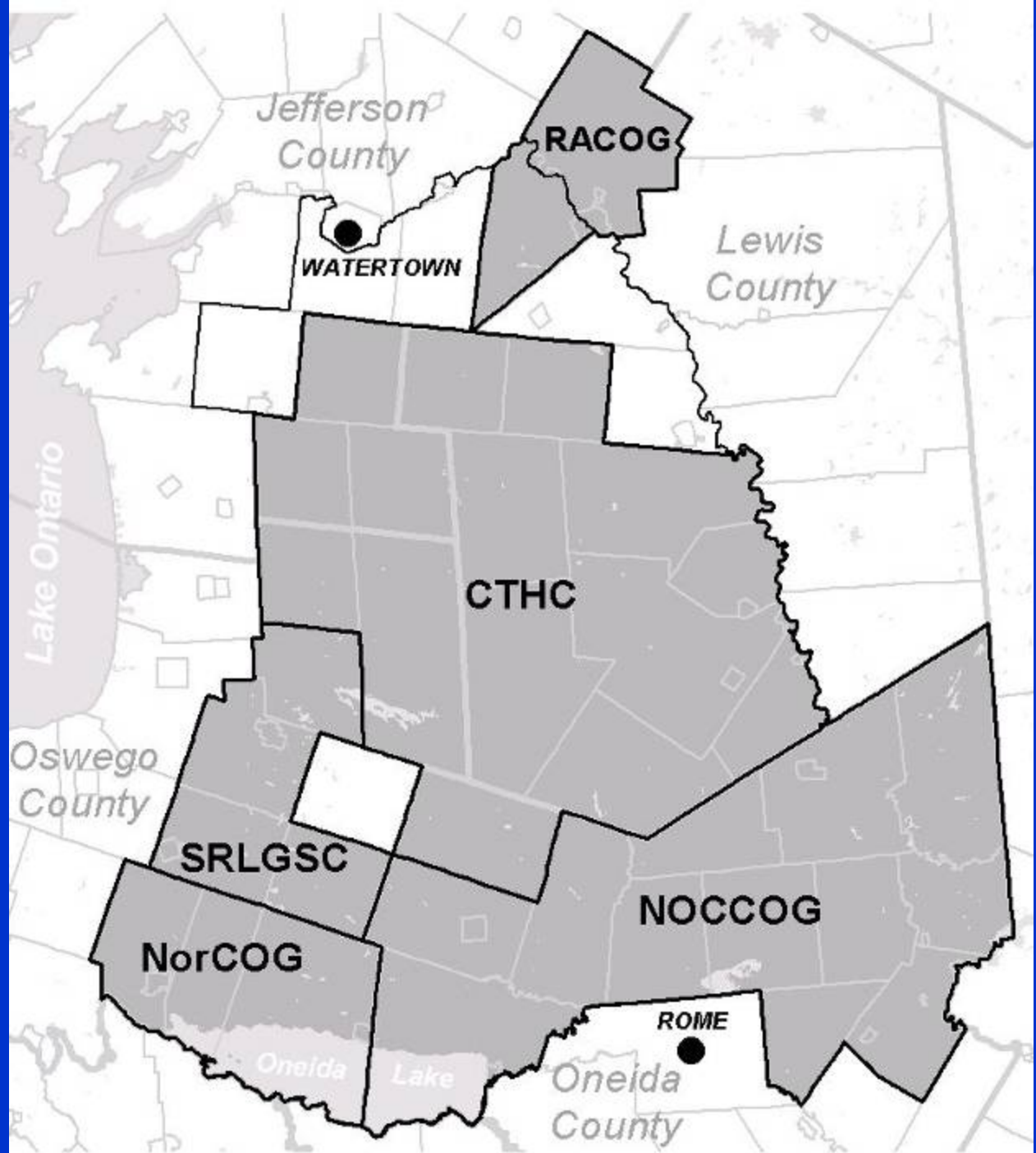
Local leaders need good information.

The region's local officials serve part-time, most are inexperienced leaders, and work with tight local budgets.

Commission efforts focus on improving local decision making, improving local efficiency and responsiveness, and improving access to resources.

*“Circuit riders”
work for each of
five Councils of
Governments,
providing staff
support to busy,
part-time local
officials.*

*The circuit rider
program is key
to responding to
opportunities
for
collaboration.*



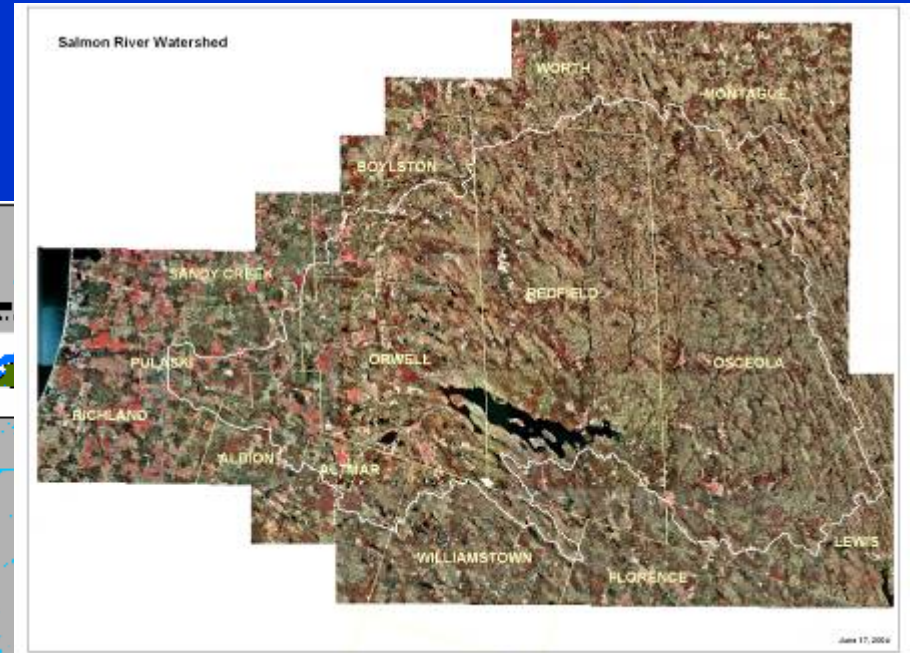
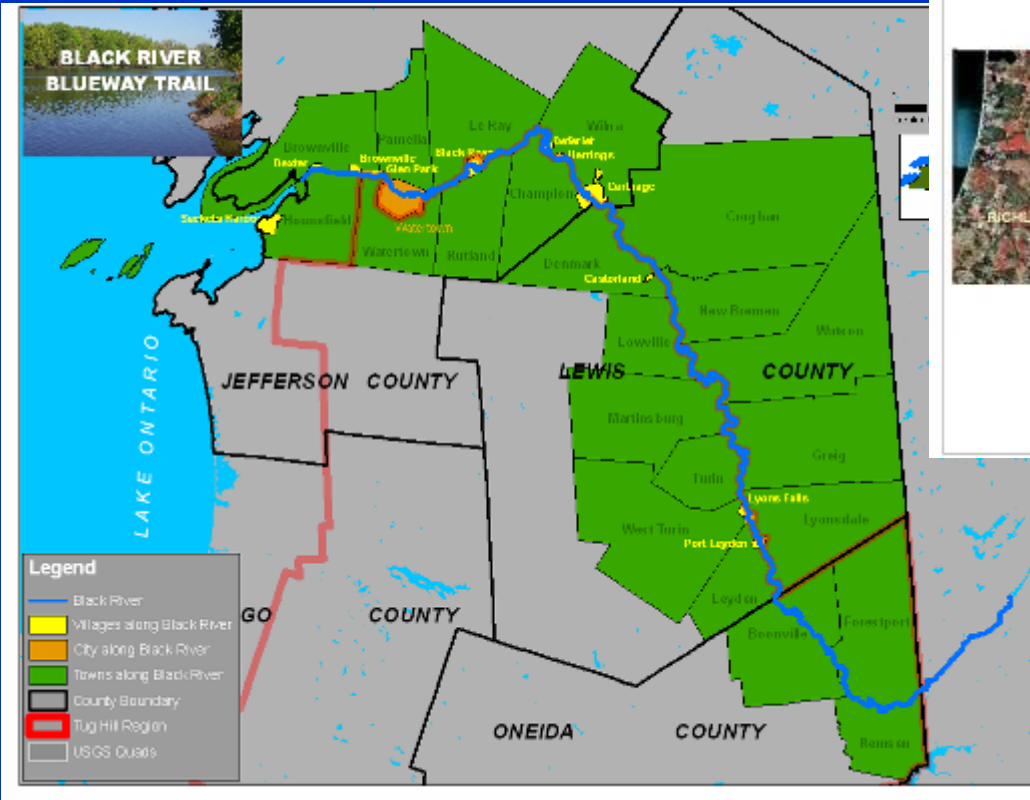
Assistance to Communities

- ❖ *Planning and technical assistance*
- ❖ *Community infrastructure and economic development*
- ❖ *Natural resources management*

Sub-regional Projects

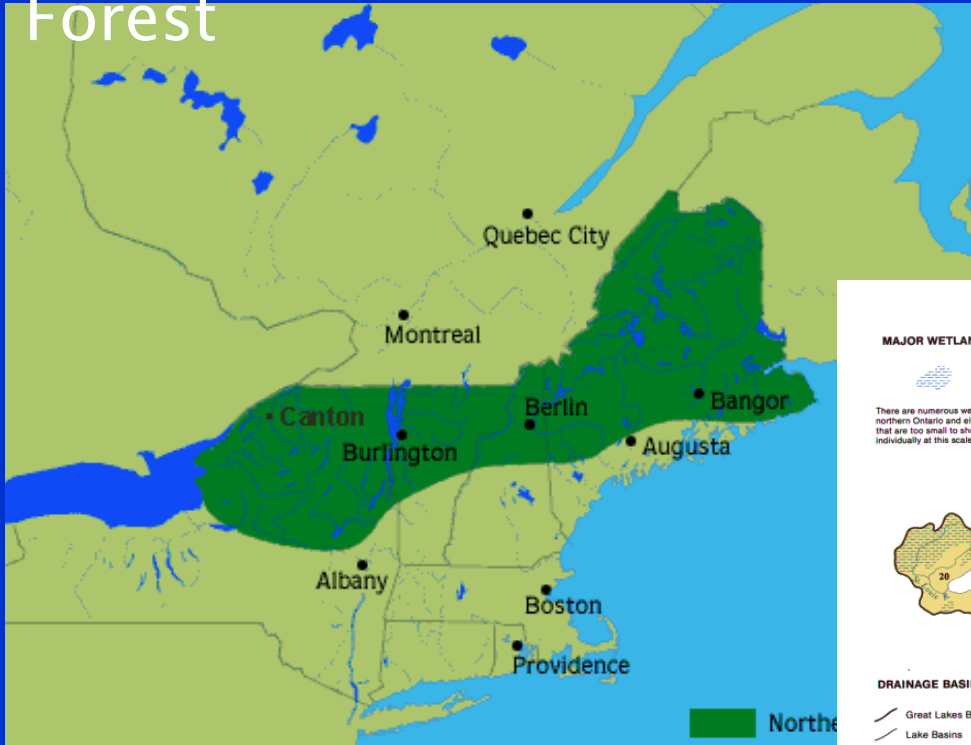
Salmon River Watershed

Black River Blueway Trail

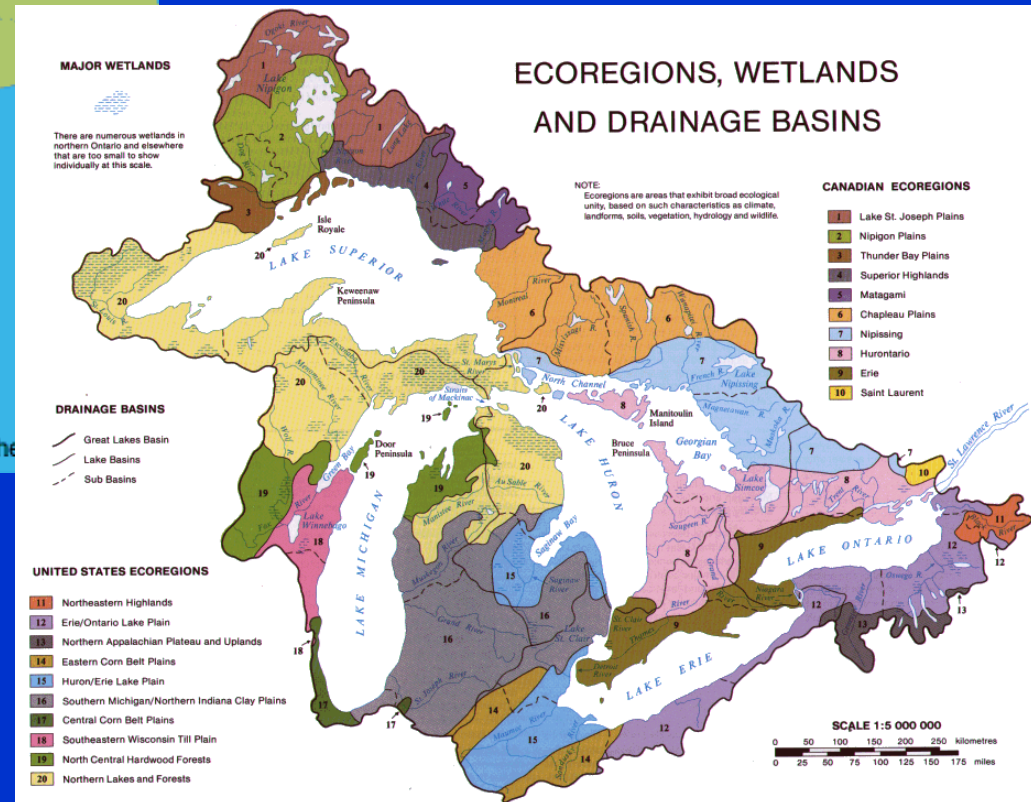


Macro Regional Efforts

Northern Forest



Great Lakes

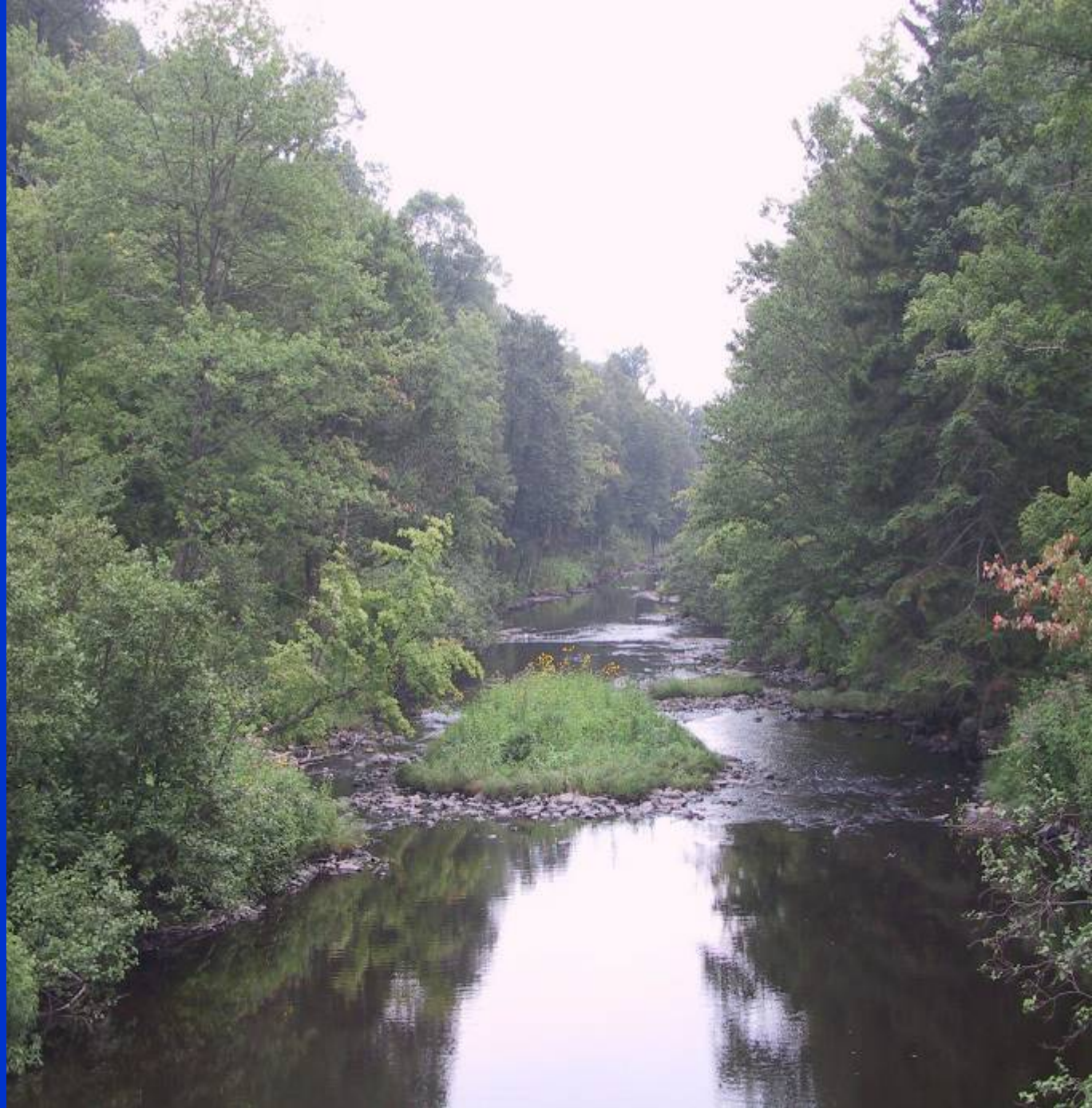


Tug Hill's Green Infrastructure – Our Natural Assets

- 200,000 Acres of State Wildlife Management Areas and Reforestation Lands
- Approximately 400,000 acres of Agricultural Districts that support working farms
- In excess of 250” of snow per year
- Sustained winds

*Inman Gulf,
Town of Rodman,
Jefferson County, NY*

*4,000 Miles of
Rivers and
Streams*



*Extensive
Wetlands*

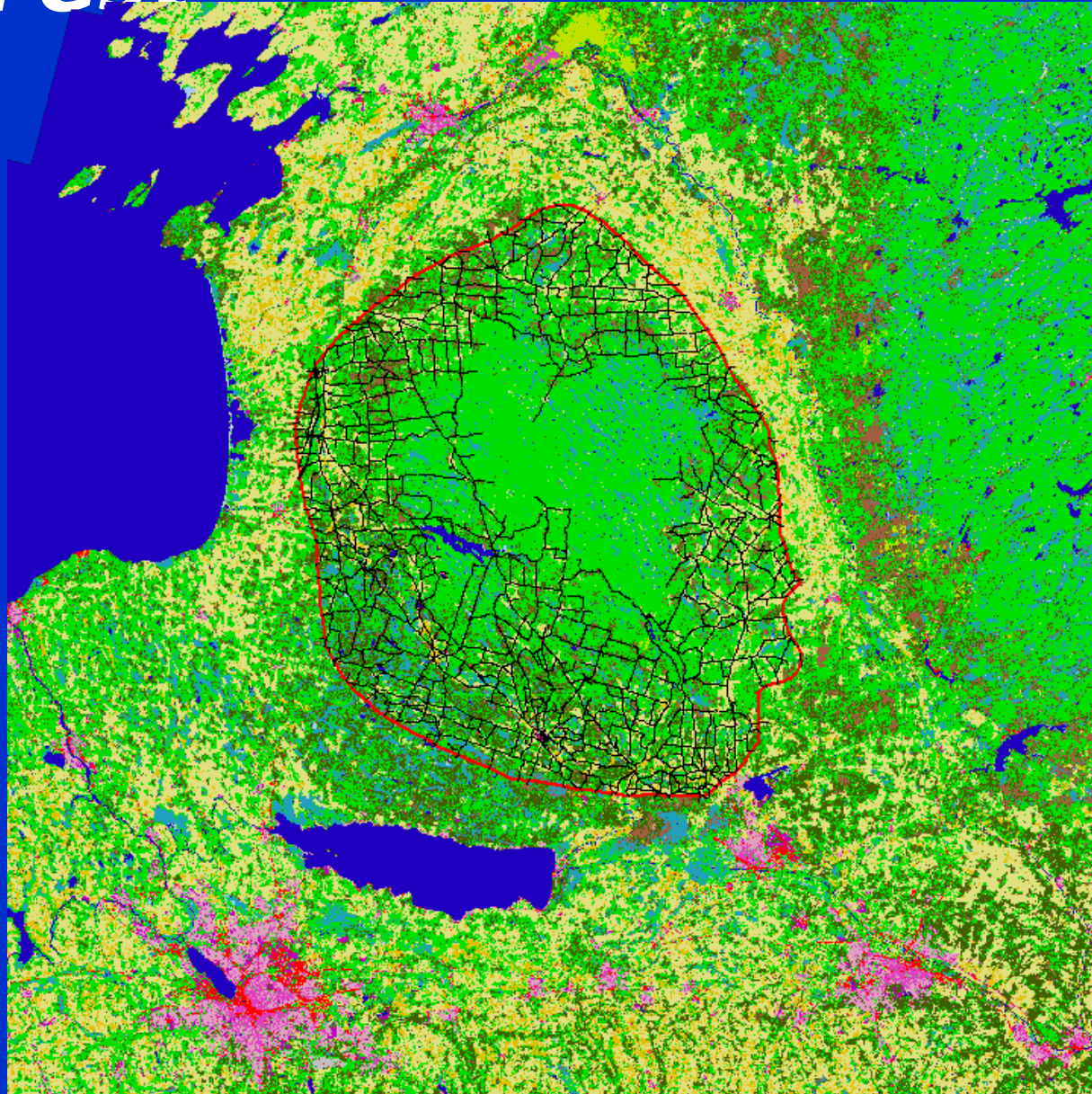


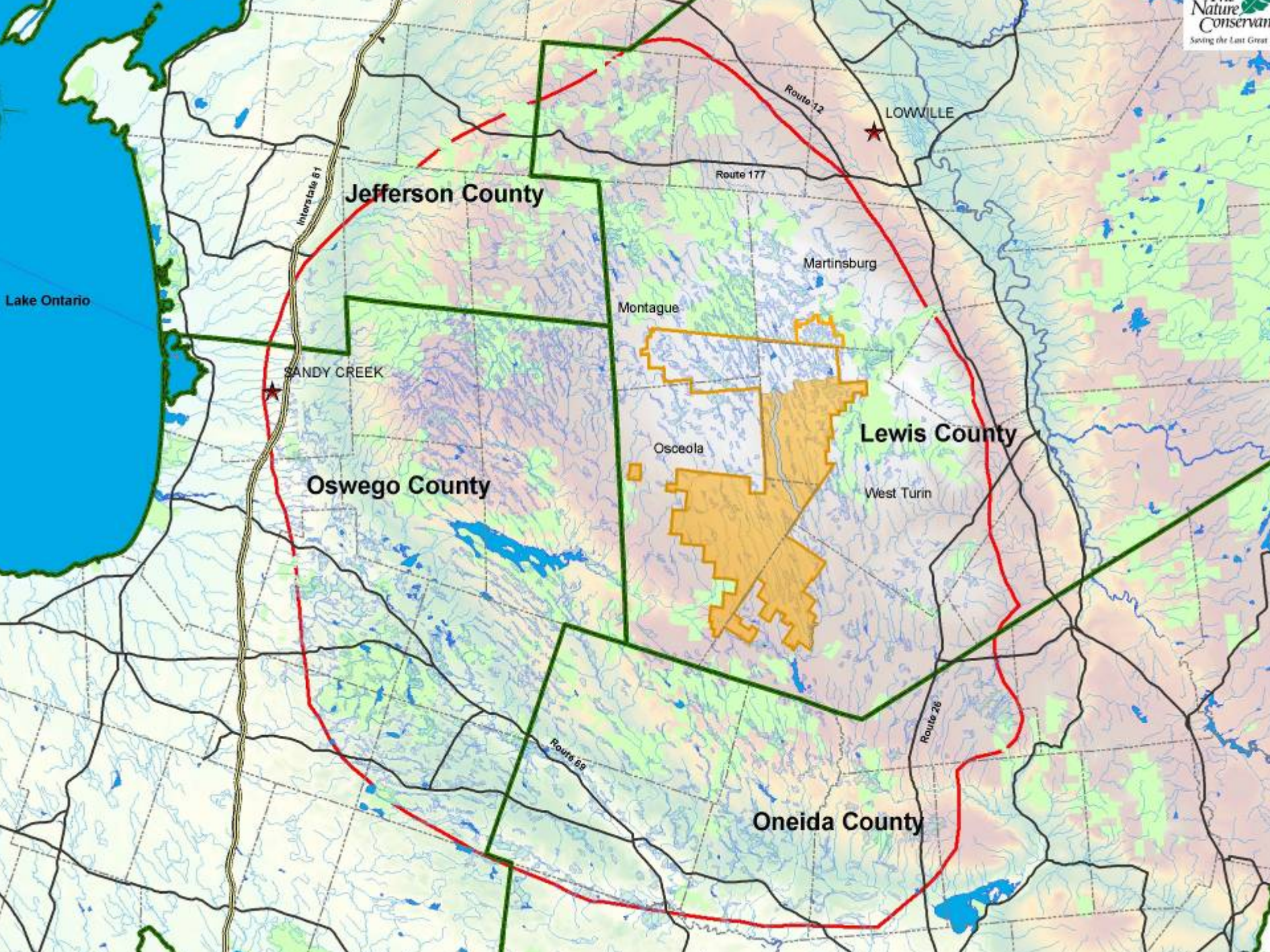
NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL REGION

HYDROLOGY



Unfragmented Core Forest





Jefferson County

SANDY CREEK

Oswego County

LOWVILLE

Martinsburg

Montague

Lewis County

Osceola

West Turin

Oneida County

Interstate 61

Route 12

Route 177

Route 59

Route 28

Lake Ontario

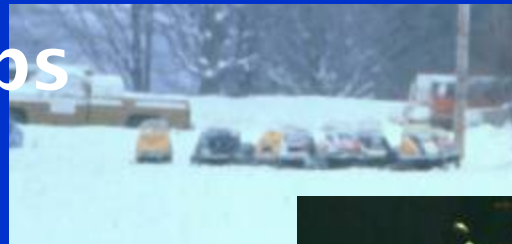
East Branch of Fish Creek Project Timeline

- ❖ 1994: Sportsmen ask Commission for help
- ❖ 44,650 acres industrial forest land
- ❖ 1995: East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group formed
- ❖ Working Group recommends using conservation easements
- ❖ 1998: State tax legislation allows make C.E.s feasible
- ❖ 2002: The Nature Conservancy purchases land, retains easements
- ❖ Traditional sporting leases, snowmobile trails, limited public access, sustainable forest management secured
- ❖ 2005: Recreation planning, education efforts underway; transfer of easements and some land to State anticipated by



East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group

- ❖ Primary landowner
- ❖ Sporting clubs
- ❖ Local Town officials
- ❖ Conservation groups
- ❖ Private landowners
- ❖ Recreation groups
- ❖ County officials
- ❖ NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation





Of Most Concern

- ❖ Local Taxes
- ❖ Hunting Lease Terms and Prices
- ❖ Public and Private Recreational Access
- ❖ Forest Health
- ❖ Community Economic & Social Vitality

Communication

November 2004

Critical Number 29

FISH CREEK UPDATE



April 2004 Public Meetings Boost Access Plan Development Process

On Wednesday, April 28th, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the NYS Tug Hill Commission facilitated two public sessions, in Lowville and Camden, on behalf of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group. The sessions were arranged in order to provide information, and solicit feedback and ideas for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as they develop an access plan that will guide activities in the East Branch of Fish Creek watershed.

Good Turnout in Lowville and Camden

About 45 people gathered in the Lowville Fire Hall from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., and about 25 people assembled at the Oneida Savings Bank, Camden from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. A brief history of the land conservation effort, and an overview of the potential access provided in the conservation easement agreements was presented. Formal comments were then solicited, after which the Tug Hill Commission facilitated an informal question-and-answer period with representatives from the NYSDEC, The Nature Conservancy, LandVest (property manager for GMO), and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust.

Lessee ATV Access, Other Issues Discussed

Public ATV access (not acquired in conservation easement agreements) was a point of discussion during both sessions. Leased and public hunting rights, continued access for adjoining landowners, facilities needed for public and handicapped access, public access enforcement and signage, and the need to monitor any

Continued... See Public Meetings Page 2

Draft Access Plan Under Development

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is currently developing a draft access plan for the East Branch of Fish Creek easement properties, and future East Branch of Fish Creek State Forest. The conservation easement agreements provide a basic framework for certain access and recreational uses on the properties.

The draft plan will be based on this framework (*see page 2, Some Recreational Uses...*), and take into account the variety of public comments received by mail and at the April 2004 meetings. The NYSDEC continues to urge individuals to submit written comments to their offices while they are composing a first draft of the plan. Additional public sessions will follow the release of the draft.



For more information about the draft access plan, or to submit comments, contact:

**Brendan Kelly, Senior Forester
NYSDEC
7327 NYS Rte. 812
Lowville, 13367**

Phone: 315-376-3521

Email: bkelly@gw.dec.state.ny.us

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FISH CREEK UPDATE

- GMO Renewable Resources retains the right to close motorized access corridors, except primary snowmobile trail corridors, to public use for reasons of safety and/or forest management activity.
- Primary snowmobile corridors are open to public snowmobile use from the first Monday after the first Sunday in December through April 30th of each year. East of the East Branch of Fish Creek State Forest, snowmobiles and motor vehicles necessary for the maintenance and grooming of snowmobile trails are the only allowed public use on the primary snowmobile corridors. Only the easement holder may close these corridors.
- GMO Renewable Resources retains the right to install gates or other barriers and otherwise prohibit motorized public access to any roads over which the public has not been granted a right of use in the easement, or which has been agreed upon in the Public Recreation Plan. New roads and trails, including their specific uses, can be made available to the public only through revision of the Public Recreation Plan.
- GMO Renewable Resources retains the right to restrict, allow, and otherwise manage ATV access on the entirety of their property in



Organization/Agency Contacts

LandVest

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The Nature Conservancy

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pcrast@tnc.org

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Brendan Kelly and/or Fred Munk, Lowville
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bkelly@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Tug Hill Commission

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lgibbs@tughill.org and/or katie@tughill.org

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Linda Garrett, Watertown, 315-779-8240
lthomson@northnet.org

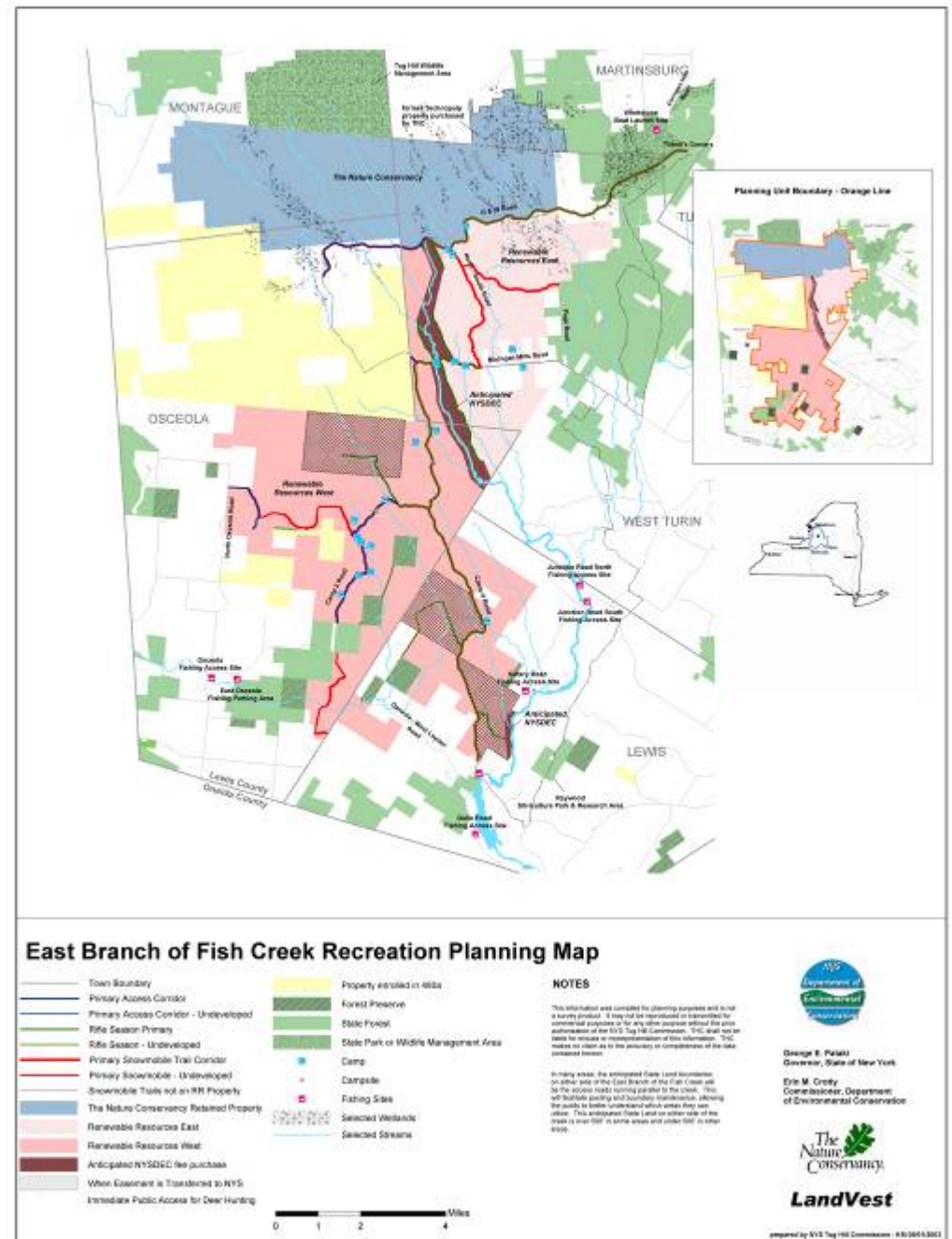
Shared Goals of the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group (From April 1997 Report)

1. To maintain a high-quality, sustainable environment for the health, safety and enjoyment of our children, our children's children, and successive generations.
2. To provide for the protection of the core forest's long-term timber productivity, water quality, and overall natural resource and habitat health, as well as traditional hunting, trapping, fishing and recreational uses.
3. To provide for resource protection in a way that avoids a shift in the property tax burden to local taxpayers, prevents a negative impact on local job availability, and sustains the economic viability of area communities.
4. To help spread the costs of protection over the many beneficiaries at the local, regional and state level.
5. To maintain mixed ownership of most of the eastern core forest, and find ways to provide for recreational access in a way that does not threaten natural resource quality or adversely affect private property rights.
6. To encourage continued private land stewardship through voluntary compliance with environmental standards and methods, such as timber harvest guidelines.



45,953 Acres

- ❖ 30,312 acres Conservation Easement
- ❖ 1,350 acres Fish Creek Fee Corridor
- ❖ 14,291 acres TNC Conservation Area



George F. Pataki
Governor, State of New York

Eric M. Cressy
Commissioner, Department
of Environmental Conservation



LandVest



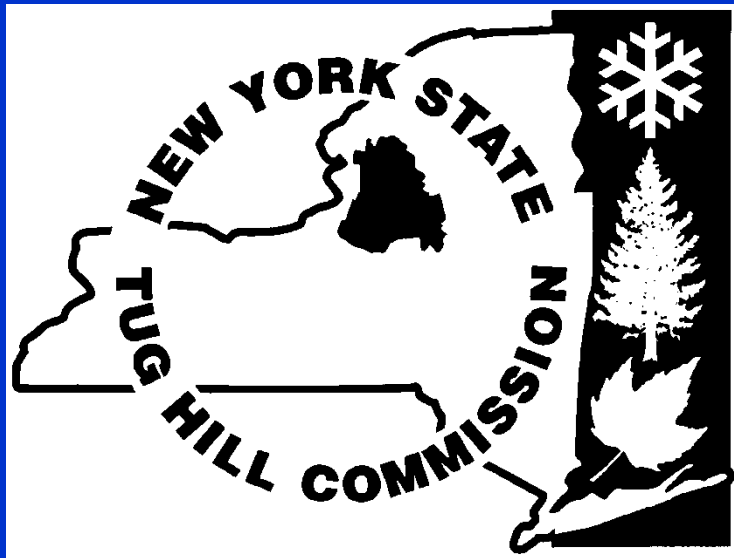


Down East
School of
Martial Arts

MARTIAL ARTS

Tug Hill Commission

*Linda Gibbs
Natural Resources Specialist*



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