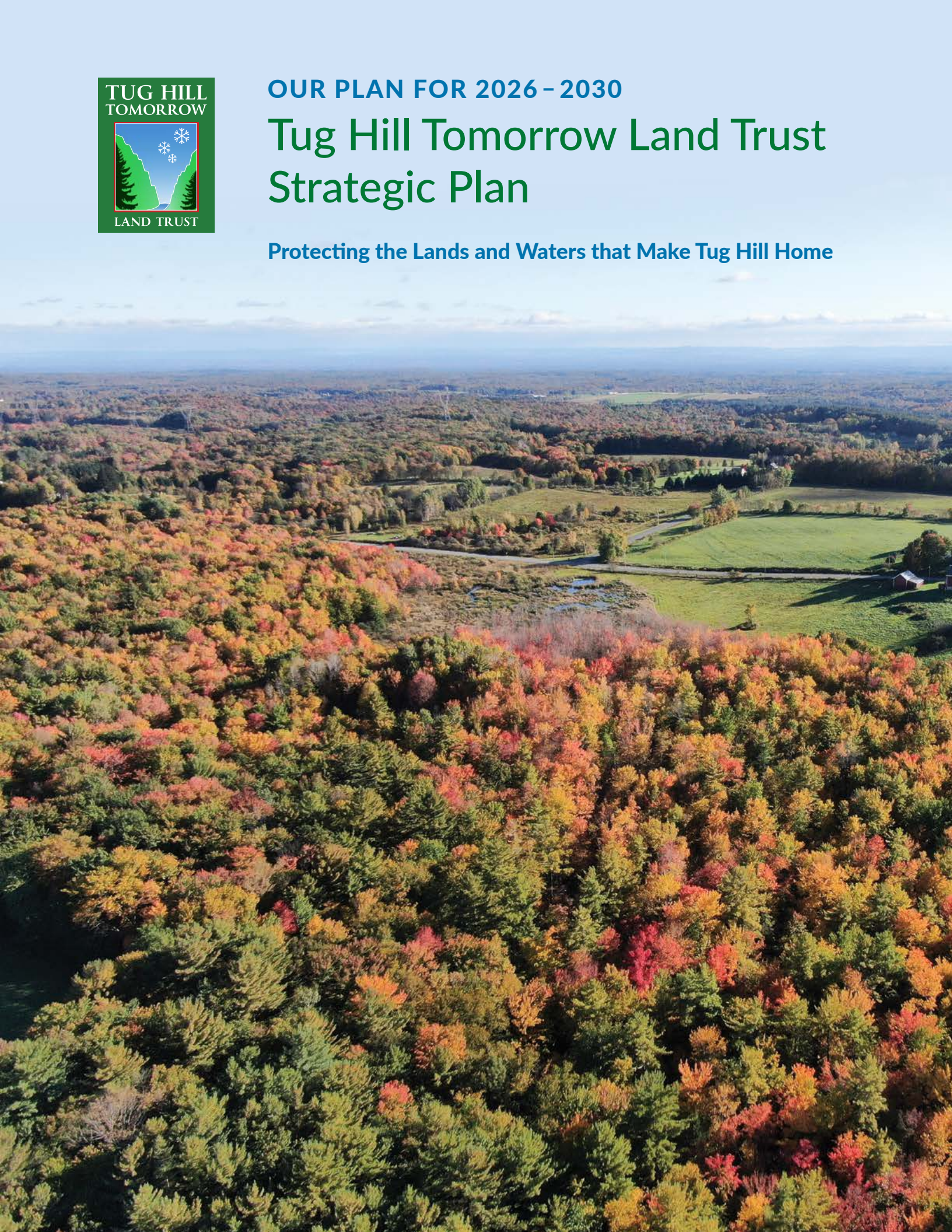
OUR PLAN FOR 2026 – 2030

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Strategic Plan

Protecting the Lands and Waters that Make Tug Hill Home





Dear Friends of Conservation,

The landscapes of Tug Hill have long been defined by their remarkable natural character and by the generations of people whose lives have been shaped by them.

The vast core forest of the Tug Hill Plateau, the working farms and open landscapes that define our rural communities, and the rivers, streams, and wetlands that sustain an extraordinary diversity of wildlife are woven into the natural and cultural heritage of our region. Together, they shape not only the character of the places we call home, but also our connection to the land and our shared responsibility to preserve its richness for generations to come.

As Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust celebrates its 35th anniversary, we find ourselves at an important moment in the organization's history, one that invites us to reflect with gratitude on the accomplishments of the past while considering, with equal care and purpose, the responsibilities and opportunities that lie ahead.

Since our founding in 1991, the Land Trust has grown through the extraordinary commitment of landowners, volunteers, supporters, conservation partners, and community leaders who have recognized that protecting the places we cherish requires not only a vision for the future, but also the patience, trust, and perseverance to make that vision a lasting reality.

Together, we have helped conserve nearly 25,000 acres of forests, farms, wetlands, and other treasured natural places, while creating opportunities for people to experience and develop meaningful connections with the lands and waters around them.

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Yet the true measure of this work extends well beyond the acres protected or the milestones achieved, residing instead in the enduring relationships we have built, the promises we have made to landowners and communities, and the knowledge that the decisions we make today will continue to shape this landscape for generations we may never know.

It is with this understanding that we present our strategic plan, a reflection of both our enduring commitment to conservation and our recognition that the years ahead will require thoughtful choices, strong partnerships, and an organization equipped to fulfill its responsibilities over the long term.

Informed by the perspectives of nearly 300 community members, alongside landowners, partners, and regional leaders who generously shared their experiences and aspirations, this plan represents a collective

vision for the future of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and for the role we can play in sustaining the natural and cultural heritage of this remarkable region.

Our direction is grounded in four closely connected commitments that will guide our efforts over the next five years:

- **Conservation:** Advancing the protection of significant lands and waters that sustain our region's forests, wildlife, farms, and communities.
- **Stewardship:** Honoring our perpetual responsibility to care for the lands and conservation easements entrusted to us with diligence and integrity.
- **Engagement and Belonging:** Strengthening the relationships that connect people to nature, to one another, and to the landscapes we share.
- **Organizational Capacity and Resilience:** Building the financial strength, leadership, and organizational capacity necessary to sustain our work for generations to come.

Together, these priorities reflect our belief that lasting conservation depends not simply upon protecting land, but upon cultivating the public trust, community relationships, and institutional strength needed to care for it, year after year and generation after generation.

As we look toward the future, we do so with an appreciation for the changing needs of our communities and the growing importance of protecting the natural resources upon which they depend. We also recognize that our greatest contribution will come not from attempting to do everything, but from remaining steadfast in our mission, deliberate in our priorities, and willing to work collaboratively wherever our efforts can make a meaningful and lasting difference.

Above all, this strategic plan is an expression of our confidence in what can be accomplished when people are united by a shared appreciation for the places they call home.

To all who have entrusted us with their land, their time, their generosity, and their belief in our mission, we extend our deepest gratitude, knowing that the future of conservation in Tug Hill will continue to be shaped by the same spirit of partnership and stewardship that has brought us to this moment.

We invite you to join us as we carry this important work forward, protecting not only the landscapes that define our region today, but also the opportunities, traditions, and sense of place they will provide for generations to come.

With gratitude and shared purpose,

Natalie Bogdanowicz

Natalie Bogdanowicz
Chair, Board of Directors

Heidi Sourwine

Heidi Sourwine
Executive Director



About Us

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust was founded in 1991 to protect the forests, farms, waters, and wildlands of New York's Tug Hill region. For 35 years, we have worked alongside landowners, communities, and conservation partners to preserve the natural resources and rural character that make this part of the state so special.

Together, we have conserved nearly 25,000 acres of land and water across six counties. About 23,000 of those acres are privately owned farms, working forests, and wildlife habitat protected through voluntary conservation agreements. We also own and care for seven Public Conservation Areas and Preserves, totaling about 1,300 acres, with more than 14 miles of trails open for the community to explore.

Our Conservation Landscape

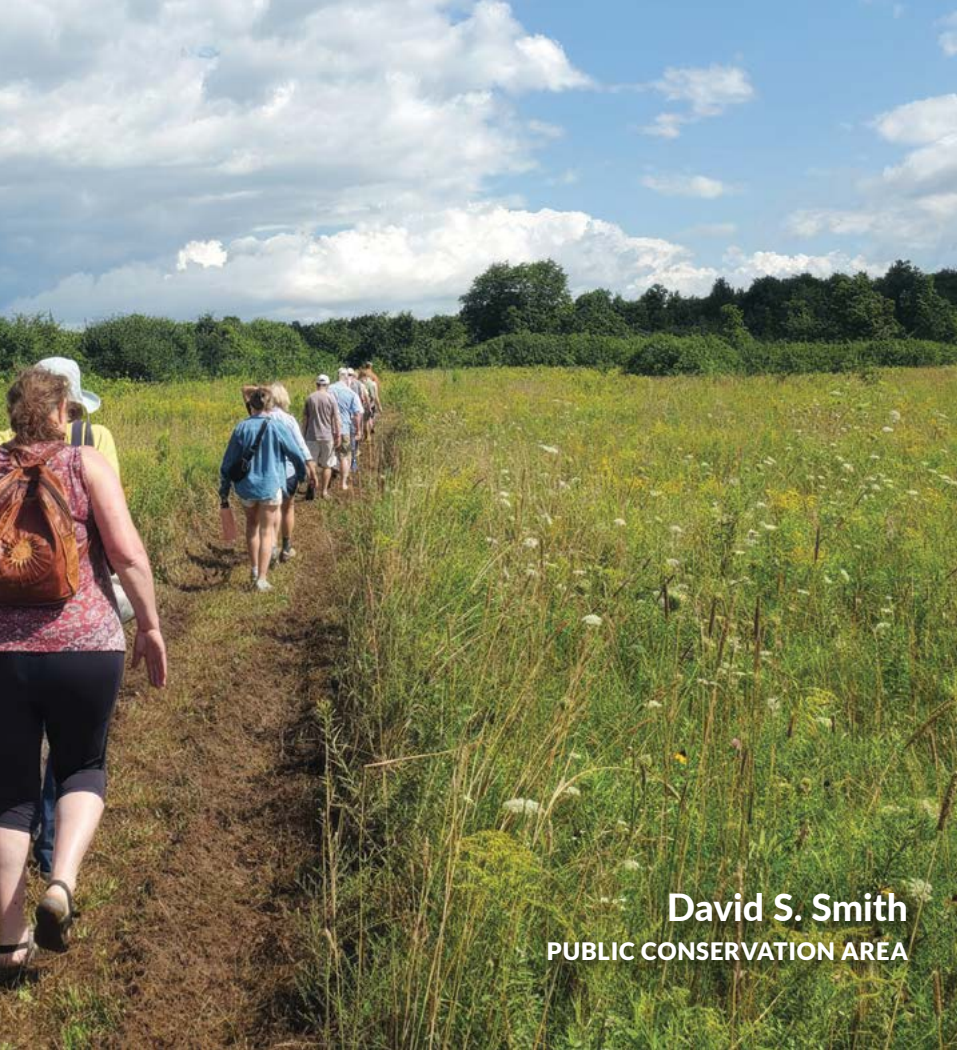
Our work centers on the Tug Hill region, a roughly 2,100-square-mile landscape spanning 41 towns and 18 villages across Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and Oneida counties.

Tug Hill is the third-largest forested landscape in New York, home to a largely unbroken core forest, cold-water streams, working farms, and the headwaters of major rivers and creeks. About 100,000 people live here, most of them in villages around the region's edge.

Beyond the plateau, we protect farmland and open space around Fort Drum, where a long-standing partnership with the U.S. Army and state and federal agencies conserves working lands that support both military readiness and healthy natural resources.

We also work to strengthen the wildlife corridor between Tug Hill and the Adirondacks, helping animals move between these large forests as the climate changes, and to conserve working farms throughout our broader service area.

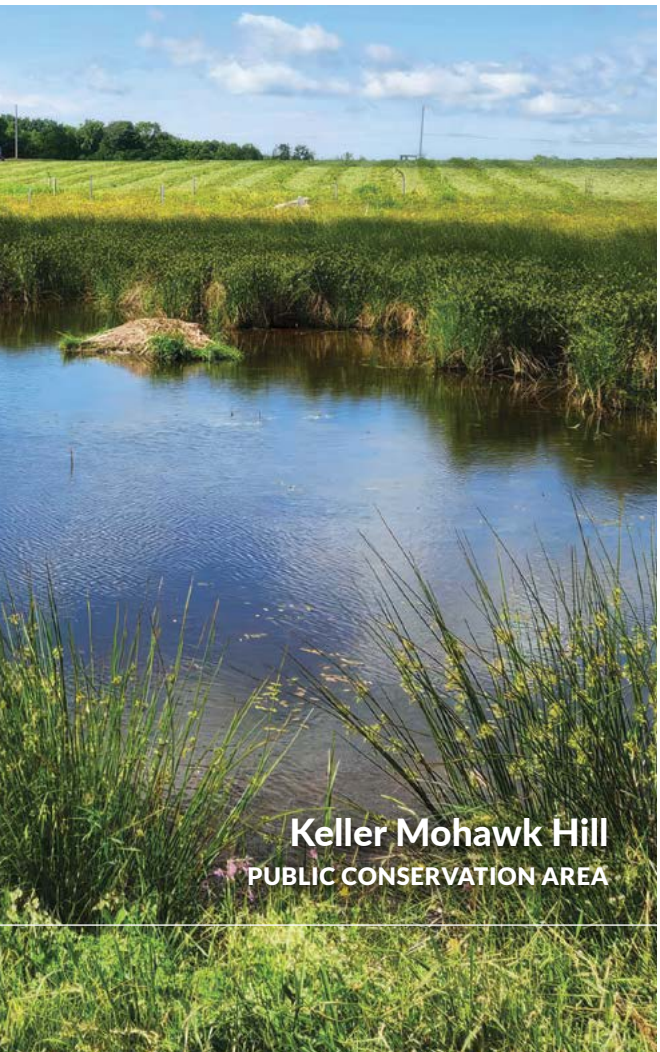




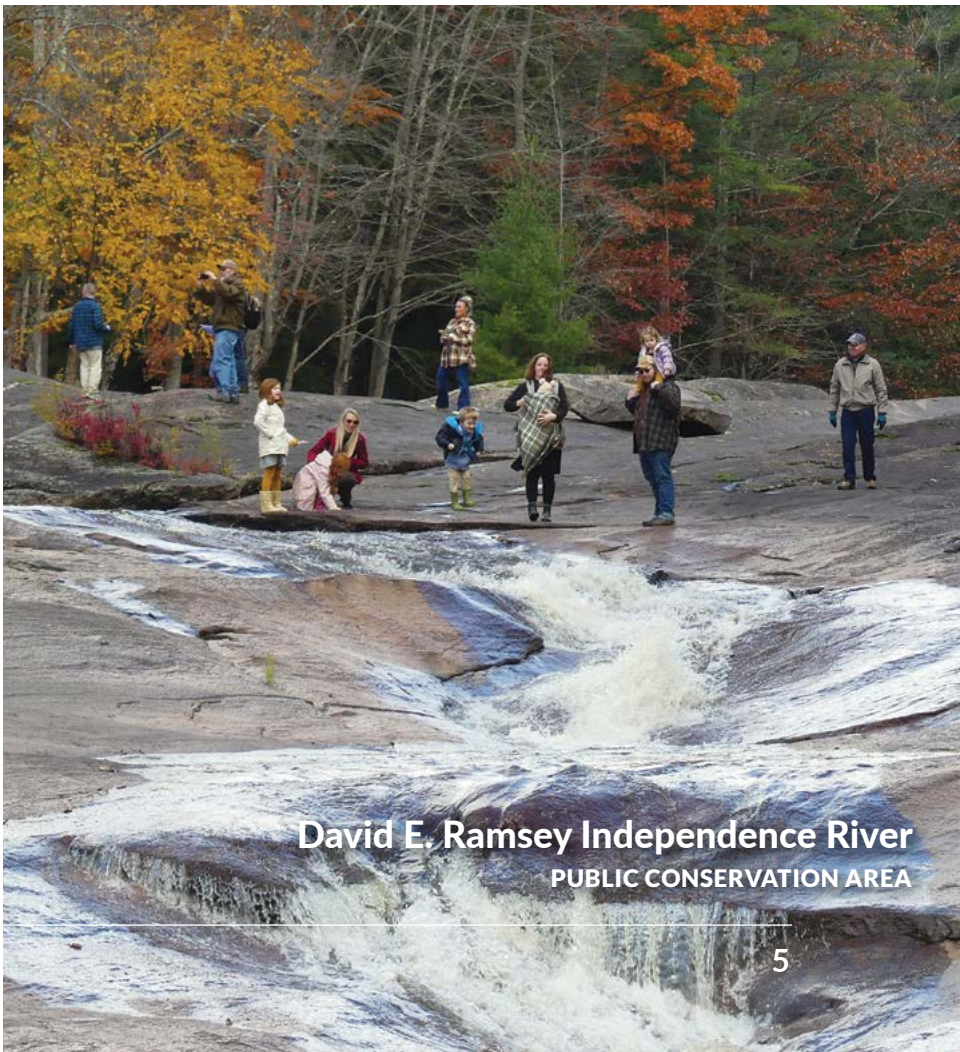
David S. Smith
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA



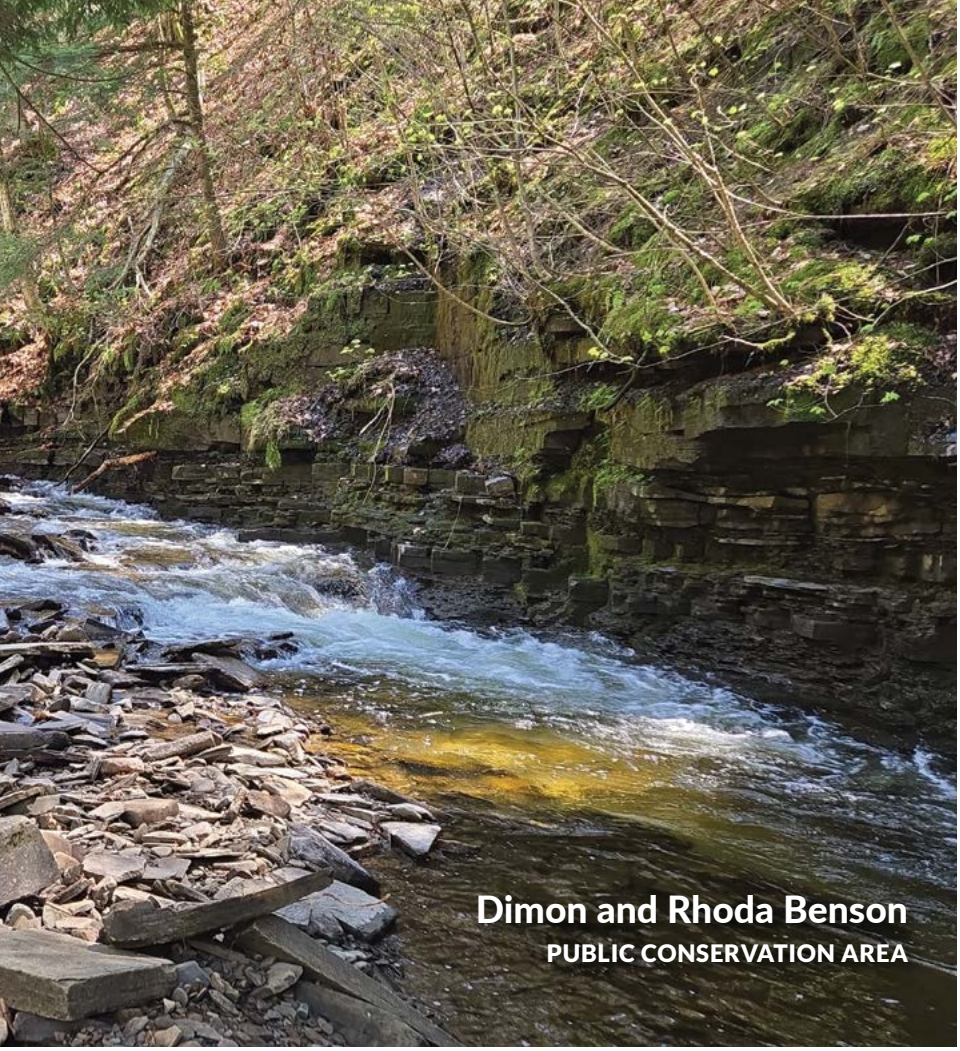
Stone House Preserve



Keller Mohawk Hill
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA



David E. Ramsey Independence River
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA



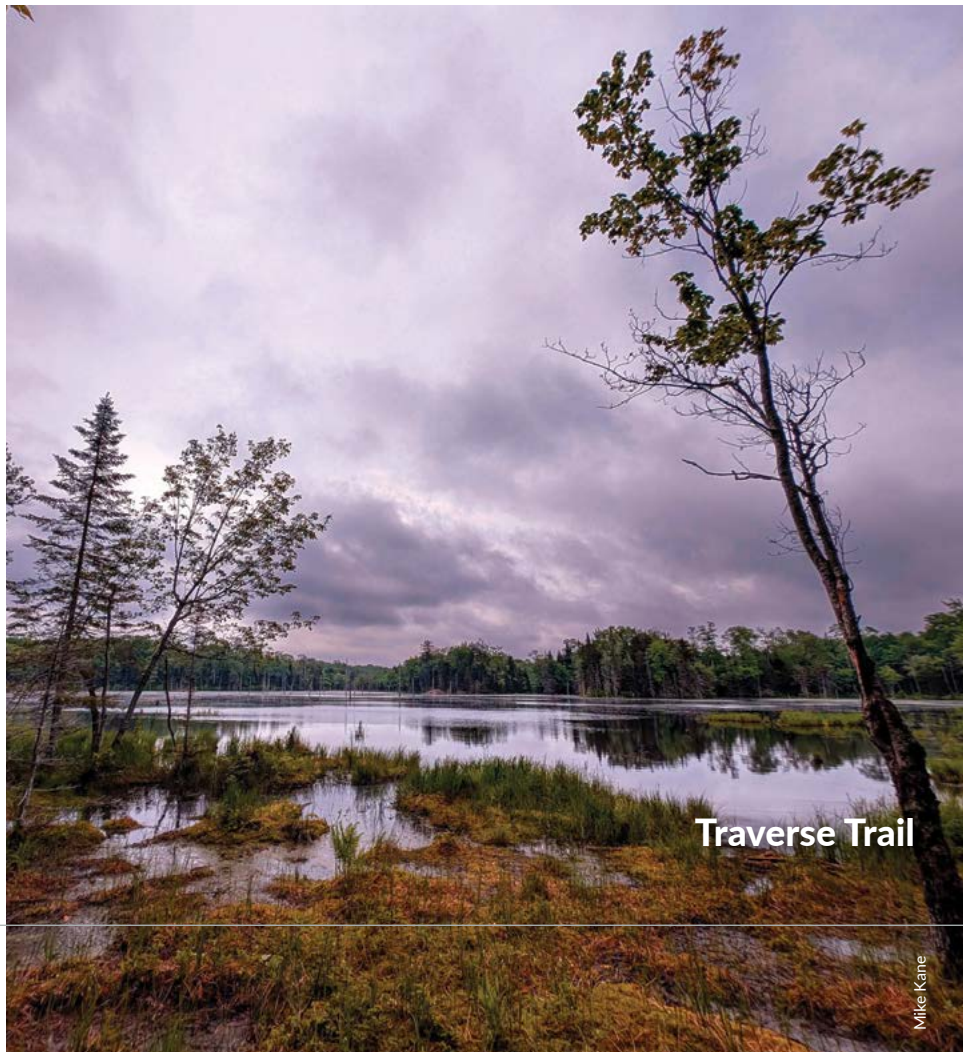
Dimon and Rhoda Benson
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA



Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA



French Settlement
PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREA

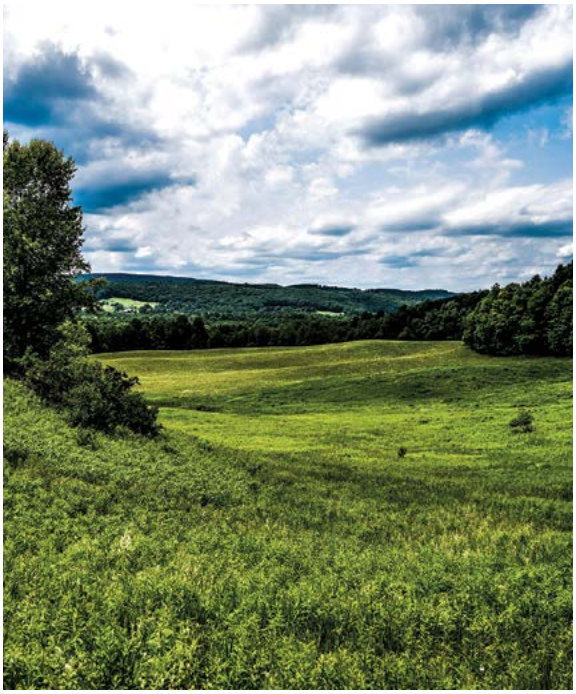


Traverse Trail

Mike Kane

Our Vision

We envision a Tug Hill region where healthy lands and waters sustain forests and wildlife habitat, support farms, and shape how we live, work, and enjoy the outdoors, now and for generations to come.



Christian Christman

Our Mission

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust protects natural areas, working forests, and farms, and strengthens people's connections with the lands and waters around us.



Zach Wakeman

Our Values

Stewardship and Commitment: We care for the land, resources, and relationships entrusted to us, today and for future generations.

Community and Belonging: We are a reliable presence throughout our region, welcoming diverse perspectives and building connection through our natural and cultural heritage.

Trust and Integrity: We follow through on our commitments and deliver consistent, high-quality work that our partners and communities can rely on.

Collaboration and Adaptability: We achieve more together when we listen openly, communicate clearly, and adapt alongside our partners and communities.

Gratitude and Generosity: We approach our work with appreciation for the land and one another, cultivating a spirit of caring and shared responsibility.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED:

Our Goals for the Next Five Years

This plan comes at a meaningful moment for our organization. As we mark our 35th anniversary, we are proud of how much we have protected and how much public access we have opened.

The next few years are about building a strong, stable foundation, caring well for the land already in our trust, securing dependable funding for our core work, and deepening our connections with the community, so that Tug Hill Tomorrow is positioned to grow its impact for decades to come.

The plan is organized around four goals.





Bruce Phelps





GOAL 1:

Conservation

Conserve the lands and waters that define the Tug Hill region and sustain wildlife, forests, farms, and clean water.



Jolene Doleon



Denise McDuff



Denise McDuff

Guided by a conservation plan, we will protect the places that make Tug Hill what it is, using a thoughtful balance of conservation agreements and land ownership.

Our priorities include the largely unbroken core forest of the Tug Hill Plateau; the forests, lakes, and wetlands north of Oneida Lake, where the sale and subdivision of large parcels is putting the landscape at risk; and productive, actively worked farms that anchor the region's food economy and rural character, from the areas around Fort Drum to the Black River and Mohawk valleys.

We do this work hand in hand with landowners, municipalities, public agencies, and conservation partners, always reflecting local priorities.

GOAL 2:

Stewardship

Safeguard the lands and easements entrusted to us.





Protecting land is a promise that lasts forever, and stewardship is how we keep it. Every conservation agreement we hold must be monitored and cared for year after year, for good.

We will maintain strong, trusted relationships with the landowners whose easements we hold, welcome the next generation of owners as properties change hands, and care for our public conservation areas so they stay safe, welcoming, and resilient in the face of a changing climate.

That means investing in the people, tools, and systems that make good land care possible, and growing a volunteer stewardship program that offers meaningful, hands-on ways to give back.

GOAL 3:

Engagement and Belonging

Grow the community of people who appreciate and care for the Tug Hill region's lands and waters.





Conservation depends on people who feel connected to the land.

We will offer a welcoming mix of experiences: events and programs that open the door for anyone curious about the outdoors, alongside deeper, ongoing programs that build lasting relationships and a real sense of belonging.

We will create realistic pathways for youth and schools to get outside, design experiences that welcome people of all ages and abilities, and keep our public conservation areas inviting, since they are often the first place someone meets us.

Above all, we will show up consistently, listen to people who may not yet feel connected to our work, and share how conservation matters in everyday life.

GOAL 4:

Organizational Capacity and Resilience

Ensure Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has the capacity to sustain the organization, support its people, and serve communities well over time.





Tyler Clemons



Tyler Clemons

Everything above depends on a strong, stable organization.

We will build a more diversified and dependable funding base by growing individual and recurring gifts, expanding legacy and planned giving, and strengthening the reserves that allow us to meet our forever commitments and respond to new opportunities.

We will invest in our staff, cultivate an engaged board, strengthen the systems that keep our work consistent and accountable, and uphold the national Land Trust Standards and Practices as we prepare for accreditation renewal.

What Success Looks Like by 2030

If this plan succeeds, then five years from now:

- More of Tug Hill's core forest, working farms, and natural areas will be permanently protected, and more communities will have places to walk, paddle, hunt, fish, and simply be outdoors.
- The lands and easements in our care will be stewarded with excellence, backed by strong landowner relationships and the capacity to keep our promises in perpetuity.
- More people, of more ages and backgrounds, will feel connected to this landscape and to the land trust that helps protect it.
- Tug Hill Tomorrow will be a financially resilient, well-run organization, trusted by its partners and ready to grow its impact in the years beyond this plan.



Carrie Friend



John Tanney

How We'll Get There

We know we cannot do everything at once, and this plan is not meant to be tackled all at once.

Each year, our board and staff will decide together where to focus, weighing the impact of an opportunity against the effort and capacity it requires. This lets us concentrate on the work that does the most good, strengthen our foundation, and grow our impact as our capacity grows.

Above all, this plan keeps us grounded in our mission and our long-term responsibility to the land and the people of Tug Hill.



You Are Part of This

The land protected across Tug Hill has always been the work of many hands: landowners, volunteers, partners, and supporters who believe this landscape is worth protecting.

As we look toward the next five years, there are many ways to be part of what comes next:

- **Give:** A gift, especially a recurring one, provides the steady support that keeps our core conservation and stewardship work strong.
- **Leave a Legacy:** A planned or legacy gift helps protect these lands for the generations who will come after us.
- **Volunteer:** Join our stewardship efforts and lend a hand caring for the lands and trails we all share.
- **Visit:** Explore our public conservation areas, bring a friend, and discover what makes Tug Hill worth protecting.



If you have an interest in conservation easement, please contact us.

To learn more, get involved, or support our work, visit tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org.
We would love to hear from you.

A Community that Cares

This plan was shaped by many voices from across the Tug Hill region.

The process was led by a committee of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust staff and board members, with guidance from consultant Karen Strong of Strong Outcomes, LLC. The committee met between November 2025 and April 2026 to guide community outreach, define our vision and mission, and set our goals. Our full staff and board came together for a day-long retreat in March 2026 to imagine what success looks like and to draft the goals and priorities that became this plan.

Community input was at the heart of the work. In early 2026, nearly 300 people responded to a community survey, and we held in-depth conversations with 17 partners and community members, including landowners, donors, farmers, foresters, educators, conservation organizations, and local and regional leaders. Their perspectives helped us understand what people value most about this region and where we can make the greatest difference.

What we heard gave us confidence and direction. The community sees Tug Hill Tomorrow as a respected and effective conservation leader, deeply values the region's forests, waters, and outdoor recreation, and encouraged us to sharpen our focus, strengthen our capacity, and reach more people across the region. That guidance runs through every page of this plan.



Angela Bartelotte



With gratitude to everyone who shared their time and insight, including:

The Strategic Planning Committee
Natalie Bogdanowicz, Linda Gibbs, Heidi Jones, Bob Quinn, Heidi Sourwine, and John Souva

Our planning consultant
Karen Strong, Strong Outcomes, LLC

The partners and community members who shared their perspectives
John Constable III; Tina Cummings and Shannon New, Disabled Persons Action Organization; Leslie Evans; Angie Kimball, Cooperative Tug Hill Council; Katie Malinowski, Tug Hill Commission; Stu Miller, Mohawk Valley Conservation Coalition; Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM; Brian Roat, The Nature Conservancy; Julie Rubenstein, Camp Woodlot, LLC; Bob Sauer; Max DelSignore, Northern New York Community Foundation; Lorraine Hefner, Didymus Thomas Memorial Library; Jason Wagner, Fort Drum; Matthew Wagner, Ducks Unlimited; and Chris and Melanie Welch.

And the nearly 300 community members who responded to our survey, along with the many landowners, volunteers, and supporters who make this work possible.

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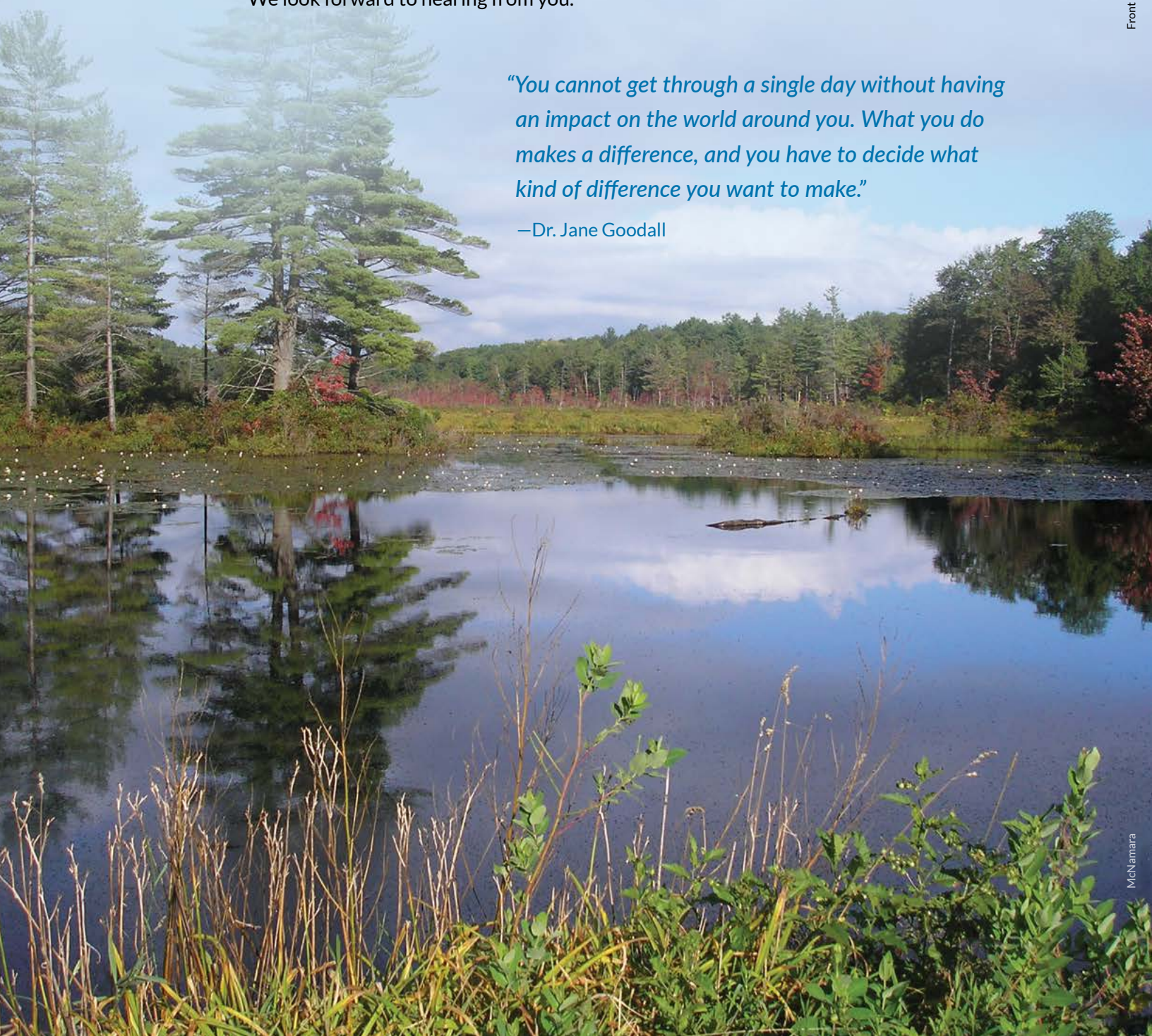
To get more involved

Visit our website tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org and sign-up for our eNews, Facebook, and Instagram page to receive updates on programs and events.

Feel free to call the office at 315.779.8240.
We look forward to hearing from you.

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

—Dr. Jane Goodall



Front cover aerial by Lois Calabrese

McNamara