

Greenings

Celebrating Conservation & People



“Protection of this property not only provides habitat for wildlife moving between Tug Hill and the Adirondacks but also helps conserve the West Canada Creek...”

– Chris Welch

**TUG HILL
TOMORROW**



**Fall/Winter 2022
Volume 54**

I'm delighted to join the team

I am very pleased to join the team at the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust as the new Executive Director. This region has meant a lot to me over the years, as I have lived on the edge of these treasured lands for most of my life.

I confess that as a child growing up near Utica, I took the region for granted—it was not covered in our geography class in school, nor did anyone talk about the Tug Hill region, back in the 1970s.

Yet we spent countless days going into the Tug Hill to swim, camp, and hike. My relatives owned farms in the southern region and we looked forward to visiting those areas in the summer, in awe of the vast fields we drove past en route to their farmsteads.

Soon after I graduated from college, I moved away from upstate New York—from these beloved lands—but somehow, I knew I would be returning.

And I did in the late 1990s, moving to the North Country, this time on the northern edge of the Tug Hill region. By then Tug Hill had begun to receive national notoriety on the Weather Channel for its tremendous snowfalls.

A life-long love of the region

Living in an area affected by lake effect snow was a new experience and I have since grown accustomed to the Tug Hill winters. As a weather buff, the sight of modulating snow bands in the sky and the prospect of heavy snow is rather exciting to me. It is all part of the glorious experience of living in this great region.

These lands are part of who I am. They are part of my heritage. Like many of you, I care deeply about the land and the need to protect it. Leading the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust will be my way of seeing to it that this region continues to be cherished. Tug Hill feeds us, allows us to enjoy the great outdoors—the water and wilderness—and shapes our lives in so many other ways.

Your support and engagement ensure that we can continue to inspire the next generation to care about Tug Hill, as you do. Together we can foster a desire to care for and conserve the lands that matter locally, as well as throughout the region.

As a locally supported conservation organization, we are able to assist local families to conserve their lands and establish new public conservation areas for all to enjoy because of you.

There's so much opportunity ahead. Already in the short time I've been here, there are several new land conservation projects and community programs waiting for us to take action in the coming year.



I'm proud to be a part of this important organization and this wonderful community. I look forward to meeting you, the people of the Tug Hill region.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark".

[Mark Pacilio](#)
Executive Director



Kaiden Steria

"Your support and engagement ensure that we can continue to inspire the next generation to care about Tug Hill, as you do."

Nature is a necessity. Let's make sure there's access close to home.

Between family obligations, school, our jobs, and community responsibilities, it's a challenge for many of us to break away from our busy lives to experience the wonders of Tug Hill.

When we make the benefits of outdoor experiences accessible to everyone, everywhere, we build stronger connections and communities. We need accessible public places to connect with friends and family, and to ground ourselves in the healing power of nature.

And that's exactly what's happening...

Tug Hill Traverse Trail Progress

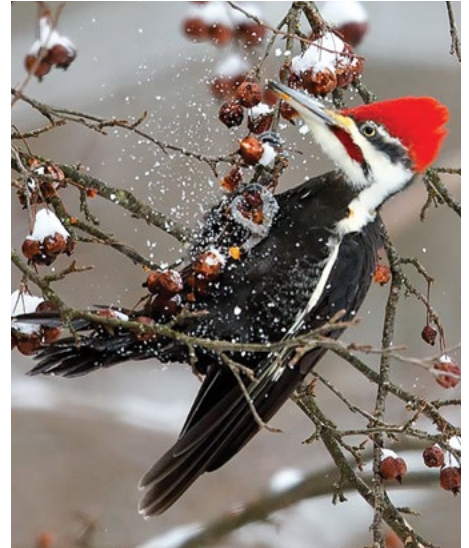
Our extraordinary volunteers along with the Adirondack Mountain Club Black River Chapter volunteers completed clearing, marking, and maintaining the approximately 9-mile northern section of the future 20-mile Tug Hill Traverse Trail this past summer.

Passing through protected forest lands over moderately difficult remote terrain, past wetlands and forest resiliency plantings, with occasional views of the East Branch of Fish Creek, there's no better place to get away from it all. The work continues south next year. Everyone is welcome to help out and there's no experience needed.

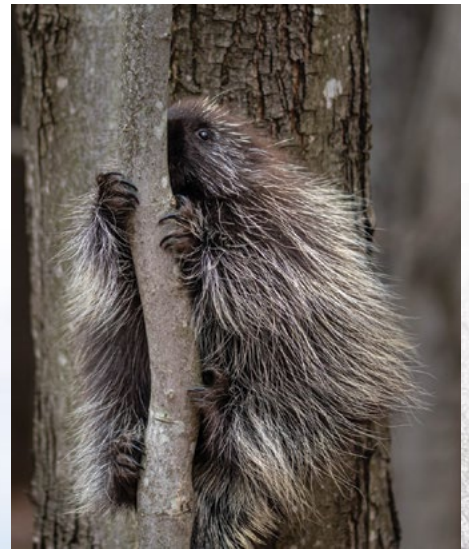
French Settlement Road Conservation Area Update

This beautiful 121-acre public conservation area is located in the Town of Lorraine in Jefferson County. Progress is underway, and a parking area and related trails are ready for implementation. We are working with the town as well as looking for possible funders, including individual donors, to complete a kiosk, signage, parking area, and accessible trails.

The land was donated by Dr. Marvin Reimer and is home to a variety of wildlife, including migrating cedar waxwings and year-round residents like the beaver, fox, and great horned owl. If all goes well, by next summer we'll be ready to invite you for a walk.



Pamela Underhill Karaz



Lee Ellsworth





Forests provide more than timber

It wasn't that long ago when Tug Hill's woodlands seemed to go on forever, a haven for people and wildlife alike.

Over the years, as has been the case in other rural areas, families have sold their land and family camps, increasing the risk of a slow but steady conversion to residential lots.

When land is sold and developed into smaller parcels Tug Hill's wildlife becomes more vulnerable to the impacts of roads, traffic, and potential user conflicts. For some, like the shy and elusive bobcat that depends on solitude for survival, it can drive them out.

But there's another way

Across the state, local families, hunting clubs, and conservation organizations like Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy are pursuing funding necessary to conserve critical lands.

One such example is a partnership between the Ton-Ka-Wa Rod & Gun Club, our land trust, and The Nature Conservancy. Over the past several years, we have worked with the Ton-Ka-Wa Rod & Gun Club to clarify if they were interested in

conserving their 773-acre property in the Town of Ohio in Herkimer County.

The Club's property is part of a major wildlife migration corridor in upstate New York and provides a natural buffer from future run-off, pollution, and extreme weather events for many of the streams within the Mohawk River Watershed.

Club member Chris Welch explained that their members recognized that "protection of this property not only provides habitat for wildlife moving between Tug Hill and the Adirondacks but also helps conserve the West Canada Creek, a tributary that flows through the property and into the Mohawk River.

"The river is a major recreational destination for the Mohawk Valley region, as well as a drinking water source for an estimated 100,000 Albany County residents. We wanted to do something that benefited the Club and the community."

Because of the importance of the land and its location, The Nature Conservancy obtained a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Water Quality Incentive Program to conserve the property.

The grant will compensate the Club, based upon a professional conservation appraisal that reflects restricting incompatible development and future division of their property. The land management goals include establishing



"There's no way we could undertake the habitat projects we want to do, like improving the dams for ponds and enhancing wildlife habitat along streams, without this grant."

—Heidi Jones

stream buffers and restoring ground-water recharge areas to protect surface or groundwater drinking water sources.

The land continues to be owned and managed by the Club, remains on the tax rolls, and is not for public use other than what the Club permits.

As with all of the voluntary conservation agreements, technically referred to as a conservation easements, the conservation of the land will last for generations.

"There's no way we could undertake the habitat projects we want to do, like improving the dams for ponds and enhancing wildlife habitat along streams, without this grant. We appreciate the opportunity to both conserve the land and restore some of the habitat," explained Club member Heidi Jones.

As our region faces more extreme weather amplified by climate change, we will see increased periods of prolonged summer droughts interrupted by heavy rainfall that can lead to flooding.

Mark Pacilio, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's Executive Director notes that "this type of partnership can play a pivotal role in enhancing water quality and improving stormwater resilience, using nature as a tool for change as well as conserving recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat. This is a win-win."

Is conservation right for you, or someone you know?

Would you like to protect your land? Do you know someone who might be interested in protecting their farm, woodlands, or wetlands?

People protect their land for a variety of reasons. For many, it's a way to ensure their love of the land will remain intact after they leave. For others, it's a way to honor their parents and grandparents. Sometimes it helps with estate planning or financial management plans.

If you would like to explore if conservation is right for you and your family, contact JJ Schell, Associate Director/Land Protection Director at 315-779-8240 or email him at jschell@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org.

All conversations are confidential to provide your family the privacy it needs to make a decision that is right for you.



Jeannine Eckel

Withstanding the test of time.

Farmland conservation and a new generation.

Shortly after Rob Spoon and Alix Kreuger were married in August of 2000, they began thinking about ways to preserve the farmland they owned.

The property, an ecologically diverse and beautiful farm, has been in Rob's family since they first settled in what is now Amboy, NY in the 1700s.

"My connection to this place runs deep," explains Rob. "My great, great, great grandfather Peter Spoon first established the farm. Over the years it grew as family members acquired additional acreage adjacent to the original property into the 450-acre property it is today."

Rob remembers his grandfather using horses to farm, something Rob would often comment on. "I think about that. He was farming with horses and there were times when I struggled to run our dairy farm with a tractor."

Now in their 60s, after a life of farming, Rob and Alix began to seek a suitable buyer; a farmer who would continue to farm and one who shared their commitment to the land.

Farmland protection and the next generation

Rob's niece Brandy had once lived on the family farm and recently bought a small farm up the road. She started

raising beef and was looking to expand her operation to a more sustainable scale. The Spoon farm was ideal for pasturing cows and increasing hay production.

"Selling the land, conserved, to a local farmer is a great feeling," explains Alix. "With Brandy owning our family farm, we will still be able to be involved in farming. Our conservation easement is flexible, so Brandy and our family can continue to develop a sustainable farming operation and possible agritourism endeavors."

The decision to conserve their land seems like a no-brainer now, but that wasn't always the case.

"Like other farmers, I was concerned that an easement would mean that someone else would be telling our family how to farm the land. In conversations with land trust staff, I realized that an easement would be a great way to protect our ancestral land and ensure it could be well cared for," reflected Rob. "We appreciate that the next generation will now be able to continue our family's farming legacy."





Volunteers are the heart and soul of Tug Hill

Are you looking to make a difference and have fun with friends and family? Volunteering is a great way to do that and there are a lot of ways you can jump right in.

Photographs. We are always looking for photographs for social media, our publications, and sharing with others. Let us know if you'd like to share photos of people on trails, wildlife, farms, water, and urban conservation efforts.

Trails. You can volunteer to help create new trails, or maintain existing ones, for as little as a few hours a year or on a monthly basis. No experience is needed. For example, you can help us continue building our Traverse Trail in the heart of the Tug Hill Core Forest.

If you'd like to volunteer, there's a place for you. You can spend a couple of hours, or all day, depending on your interest and availability. From helping out in our office, providing support at events, or assisting with trails and outreach, there are many ways to get involved. Often, there is an opportunity to include friends and family as well.

Contact Lin Gibbs via email at lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org or call our office at 315-779-8240 to explore what feels right for you. You can watch our Facebook and Instagram pages for announcements too.



Zachary Wakeman continues to provide inspiring photos. He's often accompanied by his daughter Maddie as they explore Tug Hill.



Conservation changing lives in

Conserving land has been a life-long goal for people like Richard Hughes, a Utica area landowner and farmer. “Our family has been here for almost 80 years, and we want to make sure that others can enjoy this beautiful area, like we have.”

Richard is not alone. Local enthusiasm is growing, with farmers asking for our assistance to conserve their land, community members providing funding for local trails, and families offering their land to host nature programs.

[John Souva](#), Land Protection/Education and Outreach Manager for the southern region of Tug Hill has been listening to ideas on how our land trust can support additional land conservation and meet a growing desire for expanded community programs.

“I’ve been talking with local families who are very interested in conserving their farms and woodlands. Many have been here for generations, others are newer to the area,” explained John.

“There’s a lot of farmland at risk around the Utica area,” remarked John. “New farmers, and younger farmers, are looking to find ways to purchase farmland at an affordable price — and land conservation can help.”

Providing more opportunities to connect to nature

In the short time that John has been on staff, he has uncovered a lot of interest in providing safe and welcoming access to nature for everyone, including those in urban, rural, and suburban areas in the southern Tug Hill region.

One example was a recent partnership with the nonprofit organization, [Midtown Utica Community Center](#) (MUCC) at Camp Nazareth in Woodgate, NY.



the Utica area

MUCC (midtownutica.org) is an inclusive and multicultural community center in Utica, NY. The organization's programming is designed to enhance the safety, health, and educational opportunities of their diverse community.

In addition to providing space for cultural and wellness events, MUCC provides programs for community members to adapt to their environment, heal from trauma, and chart their individual paths to success.

As a result of this partnership, more than 60 urban youth who otherwise might not have been able to experience swimming, canoeing, or fishing experienced nature first-hand.

"For many of these kids, it was a time when they could share their joy of being outside. It's the sort of gift that makes a difference for years to come," explains Kay Klo, Executive Director of MUCC.

In the coming year, we will be working with MUCC and several other community groups to offer complementary programs and assist in conserving locally important lands.

These community and conservation partnerships are made possible in part thanks to a three-year grant from the [Land Trust Alliance's New York Conservation Partnership Program](#), [The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties](#), and ongoing generous donations from community members.

Kathy Smith, a long-time resident in the southern Tug Hill region, recently commented, "I can't tell you how exciting it is to have the Land Trust working with us. It has been an interest for many years. Now we can really get things done."



"For many of these kids, it was a time where they could share their joy of being outside. It's the sort of gift that makes a difference for years to come."

—Kay Klo, Executive Director of MUCC



Kids are staying inside, even in rural areas

You are helping to change that.

Your love of the land may seem natural to you, but it's more at risk than ever before. *That's partly because children are now spending less time outdoors than the average prisoner.* Sadly, the lure of technology is winning.

Thanks to community support, our programs are free, fun, and in nature. They're a great way to inspire kids' interests and passions in a way that connects them to the land and water, creating memories they will cherish.

Inspiring tales in the outdoors

Getting outside can sometimes be difficult, especially with youngsters who have high energy. We strive to offer programming that makes it easier. This past summer, we created story walks for youth that helped focus their energy, and encourage reading, family fun, and outdoor learning.

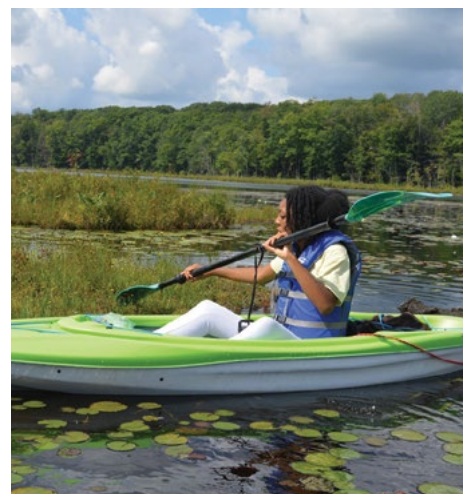
So when the [North Country Prenatal/Perinatal Council](#) reached out to us, we partnered with them and the [Lowville Free Library](#) to install "The Listening Walk" by Paul Showers as a story walk at the Maple Ridge Center. At the kick-off celebration, the first 100 youth to complete the trail received a free book and ice cream cone.

Additionally, we hosted six weeks of storywalks at the [Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary](#) in Rutland, installed by the [Carthage Free Library](#) as part of their summer reading program.

Programs and events for friends and families

When you have an afternoon and want to go on a paddle or snowshoe hike, where do you turn? Visit our website to check out a variety of experiences.

In the coming year we will be partnering with community groups from Utica to Watertown to bring a variety of nature-based programs for people of ages.



Want to get breaking news? [Sign up for our eNews](#) and [social media](#) on our website for program updates.

Join others as a part of the Heart of Tug Hill Legacy Society

Have you considered how you might leave a lasting impact for generations to come?

Leaving a gift of any amount to the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is a terrific way to make a legacy gift. It's easy to do and signifies that you care about this beloved region.

Your generosity and compassion will ensure that kids and families can develop a love of Tug Hill like you do. Because of you, cherished lands and waters will be conserved and cared for. Let us know if you've included us in your will so we can extend our appreciation to you.

A special thank you to:

Carol Beck

Harold Boyce

Leiter & Ricky Doolittle

John & Marcia Gosier

Gordon Hayes, Jr.

Steve & Madeline Hunter

Bob & Carol Keller

Russ & Rebecca Myer

WINTER FUN CHALLENGE

Want to get outside?

If you get restless during Tug Hill's winter season, we have a challenge for you!

Come out with us, or go out on your own this winter, to explore the region on snowshoes, skis, sledding tubes, and more.

We're putting together a list of great places to have fun—many are included in the Tug Hill Recreation Guide that you can find on our website's *Explore* section. We'll also include some additional places throughout the region.

There's a lot to do, no matter your age or experience.

If you submit a list of eight or more different experiences you've enjoyed with related photos using the [Winter Fun Challenge](#) form on our website, you can receive a patch or decal that signifies you are a Tug Hill winter winner.




We're here for you...

Want to find out about new projects, family-friendly programs and hikes, conservation tips, and community events?

Sign up for our updates

TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org

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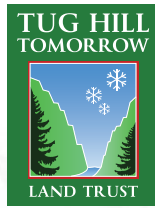
John Souva, III
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Julie Christmas

Your love of Tug Hill shows...

People like you are the engine behind what makes conservation happen in Tug Hill, and this coming year it's more important than ever.

Eight farms, two new public conservation areas, and hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat are waiting to be conserved. Not to mention all of the programs we will be offering that will benefit youth, landowners, and community members.

Join other donors who are making smart giving choices. Many of our supporters are choosing to donate stock or contributions from their IRA this year. Year-end charitable donations will have a big impact on our conservation success and potentially help you save on your taxes.

There's so much opportunity to conserve the lands we all love. And because of you, 2023 could be an extraordinary year. Feel free to call Mark Pacilio, Executive Director, or email him at mpacilio@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org if you have any questions.

