

TUG HILL  
TOMORROW



LAND TRUST

# Greenings

Celebrating Conservation & People

SPRING/SUMMER 2025



**“The future of life on  
earth depends on our  
ability to take action.”**

– Sir David Attenborough  
Naturalist & Conservationist

HAPPY SPRING!

# Environmental protection and conservation is boosted in this year's state budget

This vibrant season brings joy, and this year I'm especially excited to share great news. The New York State budget will enable Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to conserve more of the beautiful landscapes in the Tug Hill region.

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which is part of the budget, allocates crucial funding for conservation projects and environmental initiatives. Each year, we collaborate with fellow Land Trusts and conservation organizations in Albany to highlight the importance of protecting our lands and environment.

Our advocacy ensures that the Governor and Legislature understand the importance of providing adequate funding for essential programs, like the farmland and forestland protection easement programs.

This funding allows us to partner with landowners to secure conservation easements for their properties, ensuring their land will be protected forever.

Thanks to our collective advocacy, EPF funding will hopefully be increased to \$500 million, expanding opportunities for us and over 90 Land Trusts across New York State. This is a huge victory for conservation.

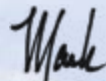
Within the EPF, funding for the Forest Conservation Easement for Land Trusts (FCELT) program could increase from \$1 million to \$5 million, which would

mean a significant victory for regions like Tug Hill. This increase would provide essential resources for securing conservation easements that protect our forests from development.

Additionally, it is anticipated that there will be more funding for Conservation Partnership Program grants at LTA NY, a funding stream that our Land Trust has benefited from in the past, including assisting us with the addition of a staff person in the southern region of Tug Hill.

These enhancements are part of the EPF's growth due to our efforts and will help us to make a meaningful impact on preserving the Tug Hill landscape.

I'm thrilled that New York State is investing in conservation, and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is ready to expand our conserved land acreage in the coming years



Mark Pacilio  
Executive Director



**Together, we can cultivate a legacy of conservation for future generations.**



## A NEW CHAPTER IN CONSERVATION

# Discovering the Stone House Preserve

**A remarkable family's wish to ensure that their lands will provide community benefits for future generations is now secure.**

In the town of Vienna, situated on the northeastern edge of Oneida Lake, Roger and Elaine Norton embarked on a lifelong journey to protect and nurture their beloved homestead. With a deep appreciation for nature, the couple cherished their time spent camping and hiking.

Their remarkable 380-acre property, rich in woodlands and wetlands, became the heart of their efforts to safeguard the diverse plant and animal life that thrives in this beautiful landscape.

Elaine played an active role in The Nature Conservancy and was passionate about sharing her love for natural history with her biology students at Camden Central School, where she was a teacher.

Together, she and Roger created nature trails that meandered through their woodlands and wetlands, providing a space for family, friends, and neighbors to explore and appreciate the beauty of nature.

### Sharing an appreciation of nature

Their vision was to preserve this woodland as a forever wild area, fostering wildlife habitat while offering opportunities for the community to learn about natural history and the importance of land conservation.

The Norton daughters, who grew up on the property and inherited it from their parents, also learned to appreciate nature and have tended to the property since their parents' passing. Ruth Norton is the main caretaker.

Several years ago, to honor their parents' wishes for the eternal preservation of their land, the sisters reached out to the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to explore potential avenues for achieving this goal. After several visits to the property and meaningful discussions with Ruth and her sisters, a collaborative plan emerged.

The Land Trust agreed to accept the donation of the majority of the property from the Norton family, agreed to steward the land in perpetuity, and also establish it as a public conservation area. The area would be named the Stone House Preserve, paying tribute to the 19th-century stone structure where Ruth continues to reside.

George Bibbins, a Land Trust Board Member at the time, remarked, "When I saw how diverse and well-maintained this property was, I was convinced that this property was an outstanding project for the Land Trust. This was matched by the Norton sisters' eagerness to work with us to get this project done."

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Tyler Clemons



Tyler Clemons

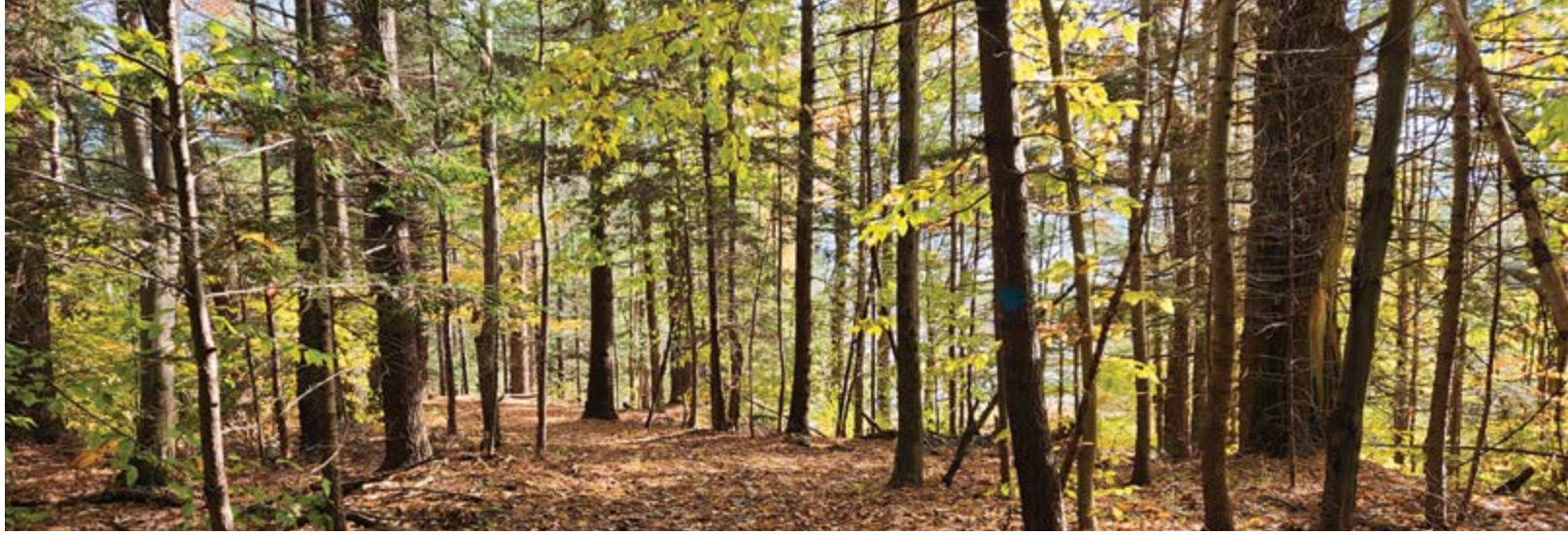


Stone House Preserve's field, forest and wetland habitats support a large variety of plants and animals throughout the year, like the Blackburnian Warbler in spring and summer as well as Red Foxes and Painted Turtles all year round.

A small forest cabin on the property will allow for guest and resident caretaker and intern accommodations in the future.



Tyler Clemons



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“We are delighted to work with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to honor both our family’s multi-generational involvement in nature conservation and our parent’s desire to preserve their woodland intact and forever wild,” remarked Ruth, who along with Martha, Mary, Patricia, and Catherine, have had a lifelong love of their property.

The donation by the Norton family encompasses 380 acres of land featuring charming old stone walls and historic foundations throughout the property, as well as the picturesque Brockway Brook, a beautiful waterway that adds to its natural beauty.

Thanks to the generosity of the Norton family, the preserve currently boasts six miles of scenic trails and is sure to lure visitors to hike, bird watch, and immerse themselves in the beauty of nature.

### Exciting plans for the future

We have exciting plans for trail enhancements and for educational programs designed to engage and inspire nature enthusiasts, fostering a deeper connection with the natural world.

To enhance the visitor experience even further, we are planning to establish a designated parking area, an informative kiosk, and clear road signage at the preserve. These improvements will not only increase accessibility

but also provide essential information for visitors. Much of this work is also made possible through a generous grant from The Nature Conservancy, for which we are immensely grateful.

### You are invited to help steward the land with us

As the Land Trust embarks on this exciting new chapter, we encourage you to get involved in any way you can. There are numerous volunteer opportunities available, from trail maintenance to educational outreach, all aimed at enhancing and preserving this beautiful space.

The Stone House Preserve is more than just a recent addition; it represents hope and teamwork in our conservation efforts. We encourage you to visit, explore, and be a part of the future of this beautiful landscape. By establishing this preserve, we will protect the beauty and health of this land for future generations.

The Land Trust is honored to receive this donation of land from the Norton family. This September, we invite you to visit Stone House Preserve by attending our annual Community Picnic, which we are holding at the site. Come enjoy informational walks on the trails, guest speakers, and more. We’ll have more details in the months to come.

**A special thank you to the Norton family for being a vital part of this journey!**



### Save the Date

**Join us as we celebrate conservation and our community at the 2025 Tug Hill Community Picnic on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at Stone House Preserve.**

Get ready for a day filled with optional morning nature walks and activities, followed by lunch and presentations showcasing the incredible work you’ve helped achieve. We’ll also share a glimpse into the exciting projects on the horizon. Stay tuned for more event details and registration information coming soon!



## HENRY PARRY AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT

# A Legacy of Land Stewardship

In the heart of Camden, the Parry Agricultural Conservation Easement stands as a testament to the enduring bond between family, agriculture, and the environment. Established in 2008 by brothers Charles and Henry, this easement not only protects the land for future generations but also embodies the multi-generational vision that is essential for sustainable farming practices.

Conservation easements can be viewed through various lenses. While some landowners focus on immediate benefits, others, like the Parry brothers, recognized the importance of thinking long-term.

Their legal agreements ensure that the land remains dedicated to agricultural use, fostering a sense of security for future generations. As farmers often live and work on their land, they become deeply invested in its future.

### **The questions are vital:**

Will the fields remain intact?

Will they be developed or left to naturalize?

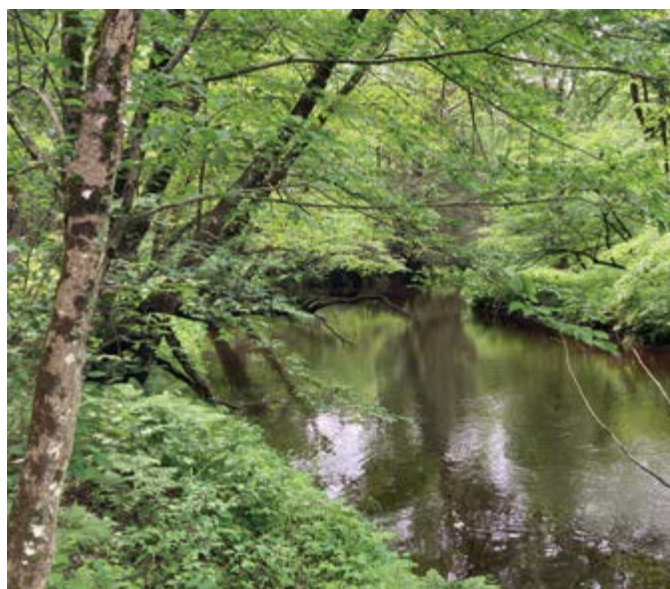
Will sustainable practices be upheld?

### **Planning for the generations to follow**

Surviving brother, Henry Parry has taken these considerations to heart. Recently, he revisited the terms of his conservation easements in preparation for the future management of his farm, which he currently leases to neighboring farmers for hay production.

As he prepares his nephew, Tim, to inherit the land, they are engaging in meaningful conversations about the value and complexities of the easement. This dialogue is crucial as they plan for the future, ensuring that the land continues to be a source of agricultural productivity and community character.

The value of conservation easements extends beyond individual landowners. They play a significant role in maintaining the rural character of Tug Hill towns.



*Planning for the Parry farm's ongoing stewardship for conserved lands is a commitment to family, community, and the environment, allowing for farm income while ensuring the conservation of cultural, landscape, and natural resource sustainability.*

**“The land will continue to be leased for agricultural uses and promote what I’ve loved about it my whole life.”**

**–Henry Parry**



## **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 Mark Pacilio, Executive Director at 315-779-8240 or email him at [mpacilio@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:mpacilio@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org).

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

Agricultural lands provide essential habitat for wildlife, open spaces for residents, and locally produced food that supports community health and economic stability. These elements collectively enhance the quality of life for all, reinforcing the importance of preserving such lands for future generations.

### **Stewardship maintains protection over time**

Henry reflects on the impact of the conservation easements, stating, “The Conservation Easements Charlie and I put on the farm back in 2008 have allowed me to plan for the future with my nephew, who will inherit the land after I’m gone. The land will continue to be leased for agricultural uses and promote what I’ve loved about it my whole life.”

This sentiment encapsulates the spirit of conservation: a commitment to stewardship that transcends generations. To assist the Parry brothers in securing the conservation easements, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust agreed to fund the stewardship component of the transaction.

Funding this Stewardship contribution will ensure that the Land Trust will be able to monitor this farm for easement compliance in perpetuity.

As the Parry family continues to navigate the complexities of land ownership and farming succession, they remain engaged with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. This partnership ensures that the values of conservation are revisited and upheld, creating a legacy that honors both the land and the family’s agricultural heritage.

The Parry Agricultural Conservation Easement is not just a legal agreement; it is a commitment to family, community, and the environment. By prioritizing the long-term health of the land, Henry and Tim are ensuring that the agricultural legacy of Camden thrives for generations to come.

**Together, they embody the essence of conservation: protecting our resources while nurturing the ties that bind us to the earth.**



## WATER QUALITY

# A Cornerstone of Conservation at Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

**A**t Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT), our commitment to environmental stewardship goes beyond simply conserving land; it includes a thorough evaluation of water quality as a crucial factor in our conservation efforts.



When considering new projects, we meticulously assess the potential impacts on water resources, ensuring that our investments contribute to the preservation of clean, healthy water for both the environment and local communities.

**Water quality is fundamentally linked to the health of our ecosystems.**

### We ask critical questions:

- Does the proposed conservation project safeguard clean water?
- Are there sensitive species, such as native and introduced trout, that depend on high water quality?
- Is this land a vital source of drinking water for nearby residents?
- Does the proposed conservation project safeguard clean water?

These considerations guide our decision-making process and help us identify projects that will have a meaningful impact.

### Ton Ka Wa – An example of land and water stewardship

One of our most recent agreements protects the 768-acre Conservation Easement at Ton Ka Wa Rod and Gun Club in Herkimer County, which has garnered significant

attention from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Black River Watershed.

Funded by over \$500,000 from the State’s Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program, this project aims to protect the Hinkley Reservoir, a critical drinking water source for more than 125,000 residents.

The property features approximately 2,500 feet of pristine shoreline along the West Canada Creek, which feeds the reservoir, as well as about 6,500 feet of shoreline on Conklin Brook.

The significance of these water resources played a vital role in the priority ranking of this project.

Chris Welch, President of the Ton Ka Wa Rod and Gun Club said, “The ability to safeguard the water quality in both Conklin Brook and the West Canada Creek was an important factor in our decision to place a conservation easement on the land; especially since most of our members are avid fishermen.”

In addition to Ton Ka Wa, we are excited about our new Forest Conservation Easement and Land Trust (FCELT) grant property owned by Peter Doerner in the Town of Boylston. This property is an area

that is home to unique natural communities that contribute to the maintenance of excellent water quality in the Redfield area.

The ongoing project is expected to be completed by the end of 2025 or early 2026, further showcasing our commitment to water quality conservation.

**Water quality also impacts the health of fish populations, such as trout, which are sensitive to environmental changes.**

To lessen changes that could affect these populations over time, conserving land resources such as forests and stream vegetation that provide clean and plentiful water is essential not only for wildlife but also human health and our region’s fishing economy.

At THTLT, we recognize that water quality is a defining element of our conservation mission. By prioritizing projects that protect and enhance water resources, we strive to ensure a sustainable future for both our ecosystems and local communities.

**As we move forward, we invite you to join us in our efforts to promote clean water and preserve the natural beauty of Tug Hill.**



**PARTNERSHIPS**

# Working Together Can Protect Hemlocks

## Partnering Helps Early Detection

Since March of 2020, THTLT and the St. Lawrence – Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) have teamed up every fall/winter season to teach volunteers how to identify Eastern Hemlock trees, then survey the trees for the presence of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA).

HWA is a non-native invasive insect that kills Eastern Hemlock trees, and is most noticeable in colder weather.

As a result of this teamwork, nearly 100 passionate Tug Hill recreationists are now empowered as citizen scientists with skills to survey these important trees and report the presence or absence of HWA while out snowshoeing, cross-country skiing or hiking anywhere in the region.

If you'd like to be notified of future trainings, contact Linda Gibbs at 315-779-8240 or [lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org).



HWA

*These tiny insects form white frothy balls around themselves in winter. They drink tree sap and can kill a Hemlock tree within 5 years.*

*More Information and Resources available from: SLELO PRISM at [sleloinvasives.org](http://sleloinvasives.org) NYS Hemlock Initiative at [blogs.cornell.edu/nyshemlockinitiative](http://blogs.cornell.edu/nyshemlockinitiative)*

## Why Hemlocks Matter

**On Tug Hill, about 1 out of every 4 trees in our forests is an Eastern Hemlock.**

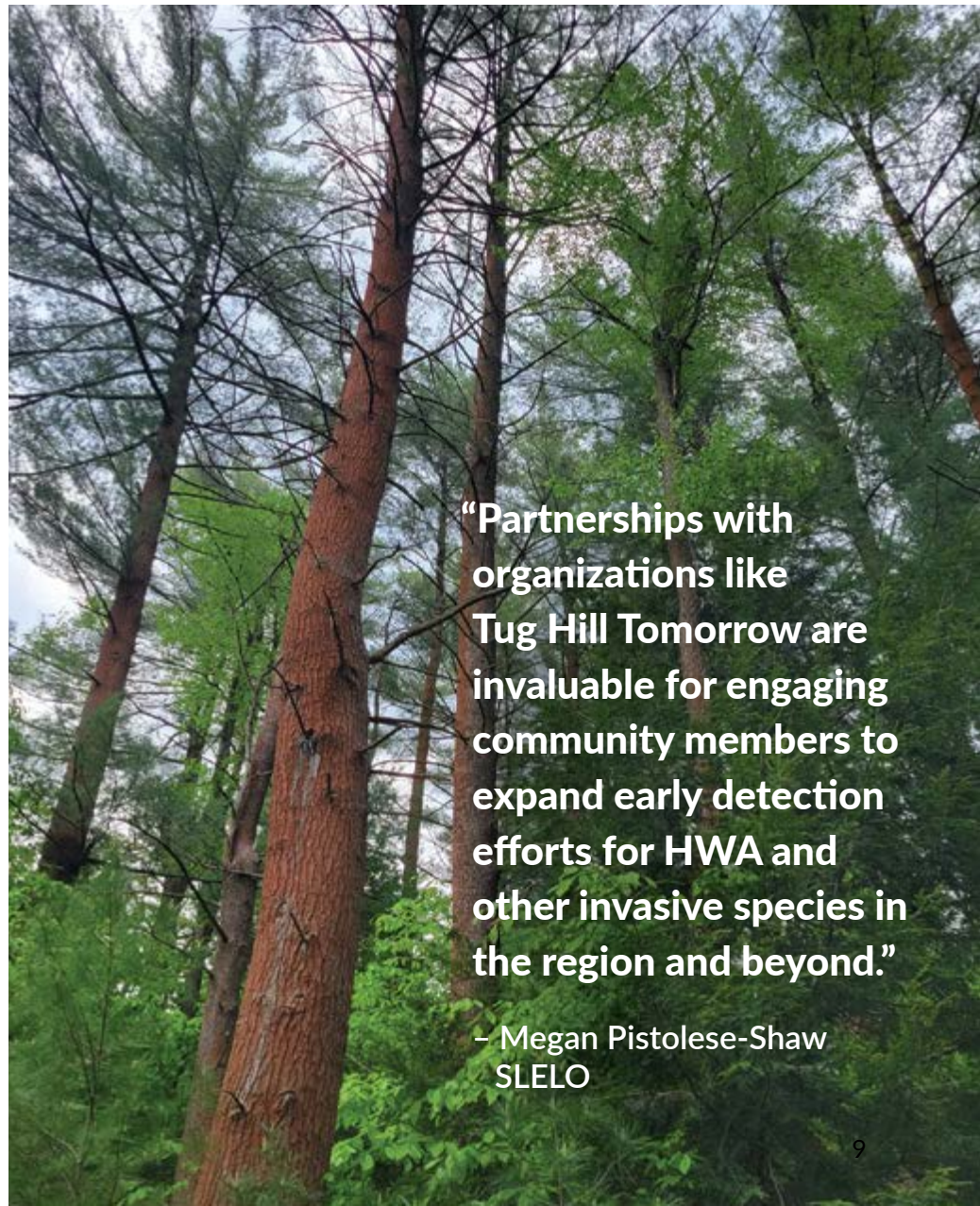
The Eastern Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*, is considered a foundational species, as it provides critical food and shelter for a wide variety of birds and mammals in winter.

Hemlocks also regulate stream flow, provide shade to keep trout streams cool, minimize runoff and soil erosion along steep slopes and stream sides, and help keep water clean.

## HWA Spread Concerning

HWA has been spreading northeast along Lake Ontario to trees in Selkirk Shores and Mexico Point State Parks and was recently found near Verona Beach.

HWA are thought to travel on the feet or fur of animals or by tree-to-tree contact during high wind events, as they can't fly. They were first detected in southern New York State in 1985. Chemical and biological treatments are potential ways to treat HWA when detected early.



**“Partnerships with organizations like Tug Hill Tomorrow are invaluable for engaging community members to expand early detection efforts for HWA and other invasive species in the region and beyond.”**

**- Megan Pistolese-Shaw  
SLELO**



## Volunteers are the Heart and Soul of Tug Hill

**Their dedication makes all things possible**

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.

**Events.** Serve as a Tug Hill ambassador by setting up, manning and/or taking down our booth at one or more special events throughout the year. Volunteer ambassadors chat with interested event attendees, help them complete fun informal activities and hand out conservation, natural history and organizational information. Past events have included Fort Drum's Outdoor Adventure Day, the Salmon River Fish Hatchery's fall annual open house, Earth Day at Zoo New York, and many more.

**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](mailto: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.



**"I feel like I make a difference when I volunteer with the land trust.**

**Whether it's helping at an event or cleaning up a trail, I meet great people, have fun, and feel I've made an impact."**

**- Laurie Frykholm**

UP FOR AN ADVENTURE?

# Check Out Tug Hill Explorer Backpacks at Your Local Library

## It's official!

There are now Tug Hill Explorer Backpacks available and ready for borrowing from all of our 30 regional community libraries.

Each backpack, focused on either birds or animal tracks, contains books, guides, and equipment that you can use to explore in the outdoors.

Realizing that not everyone is able or comfortable attending a guided walk with us, we decided to make it easier for anyone to explore Tug Hill

on their own time, at their own pace. We are delighted that our amazing libraries agreed to accept our donation of outfitted backpacks for their patrons' use.

We also offer free programming upon request for classrooms, homeschool groups, youth groups, or other interested groups at local libraries or other locations.

If you'd like to schedule an in-person program, contact Linda Gibbs at [lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org) or 315-779-8240.

## Find a Tug Hill Explorer Backpack in these communities:

**Jefferson County:** Adams, Adams Center, Black River, Carthage, Rodman, Watertown

**Lewis County:** Constableville, Lowville, Lyons Falls, Martinsburg, Osceola, Port Leyden, West Leyden

**Oneida & Herkimer Counties:** Barneveld, Boonville, Camden, Holland Patent, Poland, Prospect, Remsen, Rome, Turin, Westernville, Woodgate

**Oswego County:** Central Square, Orwell, Parish, Pulaski, Sandy Creek, Williamstown



Tug Hill Explorer Backpacks available at libraries contain books, tools, activities and trail suggestions.





## 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](http://TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org)

 @TugHillTomorrowLandTrust

 @tughillnature

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Mary Regan-Benson

## You're invited

Register to attend at [tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/events](http://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/events)

### Evening Birding

**FRIDAYS: May 16, June 27, & July 25**

**6:30 - 8:00 PM**

Constable Hall • Constableville, NY

### Tug Hill Book Club

**THURSDAYS: May 29, July 24, Sept. 25, & Nov. 20**

**7:00 PM**

Online/In-person Meetings

### Grassland Habitat Plants: Natives, Invasives & Habitat Restoration

**Tuesday, June 3 & Thursday, June 5**

**6:30 - 7:30 PM**

Online Webinars

**Saturday, June 7**

**10:00 am - Noon**

Guided Field Trip at the David S. Smith Public Conservation Area  
Taylor Road • Evans Mills, NY



Tyler Clemmons



Photographs: All photographs are taken by staff unless otherwise noted.  
Front Cover: Turtle, sun basking by Susan Florence Donohue.

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