

CONNECT CONSERVE CELEBRATE



2015
Annual Report
& Highlights

It's partnerships that are making Tug Hill shine

Imagine what it would be like, living up here on Tug Hill, without the wild woodlands or the vast farm fields sweeping into the distance. Imagine what it would be like, visiting Tug Hill, and not being able to fish, hunt, canoe or hike in those woods and the fresh cool waters of our rivers and streams.



Yes, Tug Hill is a special place. And it's the support of people like you and our partner organizations who are making sure that it will remain that way.

Conservation, and the related programs like connecting the next generation to the land, take a diversity of people and organizations to make it happen.

These partnerships include: the Army's farmland and buffer program (ACUB) with Ducks Unlimited; our wildlife connection partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Tug Hill Commission; generous foundation and organizational support like the Northern New York Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Oneida and Herkimer Counties; and the New York Conservation

**"It takes a growing team
to conserve what's
special here."**

Partnership Program through the Land Trust Alliance. It takes a growing team to conserve what's special here.

Thanks to your support, we've now assisted numerous farm families like the Murrays featured in this Annual Report. Thanks to you and their conservation efforts, they can now pass their farm onto their kids—something that might not have otherwise been possible without conserving their land.

You've helped establish wildlife areas important to their long-term survival, enabled forestry to continue in a manner that balances wildlife habitat and economic return, and ensured that the Joseph Blake Wildlife Sanctuary continues to become a place for people of all ages to enjoy the wonder of nature.

In short, the future of conservation in Tug Hill is brighter because of you and the partnerships we have. With yours and growing community support, the coming years will enrich the lives of more people and wildlife and ensure that the lands and waters we treasure will be here for years to come. We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Bob Quinn in black ink.

Bob Quinn, *Board Chair*

A stylized, handwritten signature of Linda Garrett in black ink.

Linda Garrett, *Executive Director*

The big picture just got local

There's a major highway that runs through Tug Hill. Thousands use it every year. Sometimes there are bottlenecks where the traffic is congested, or where there's a break in the journey. Yet very few people know about it, where it is, and why it's so important.

That highway? It's the wildlife corridor between Tug Hill and Canada. Home to a wide diversity of important species like moose, bobcat, fisher, and black bear, this corridor is made up of "stepping stones" that serve as a critical link between large areas of woodlands, farms and waterways.

Now, thanks to a partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Society and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, local Tug Hill landowners are able to help increase scientific understanding of this region with the installation of wildlife cameras. This past year, thanks to you and other member's support, as well as some terrific volunteer landowners like the Burtons, the Ritters and the Smiths, we were able to install nearly 20 wildlife cameras.

The result? There's a lot of movement out there. Risks of fatalities by cars, residential conflicts, and changing weather patterns can take a toll on wildlife health and diversity. The cameras have helped emphasize that the need for connecting protected areas together to create a wide and contiguous corridor is as important today as it will be in the future with the growing stressors of climate change.

Local landowners are exploring if conservation is right for them as part of this wildlife monitoring project and scientists like Zoe Smith of the Wildlife Conservation Society are working with communities and organizations like the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust to identify the particularly critical areas to conserve before they are lost. It's a project that will have lasting impact and may play a central role in the survival of many wildlife species as they travel between Tug Hill and Canada and all the states in between.



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Wildlife conservation takes a team:

- The Staying Connected Initiative, of which Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is part, encompasses a region of 80 million acres across five states.
- Climate change is causing stress for animals: breeding, feeding, and raising young is becoming out of sync for many species, and extreme weather is causing additional hardship.
- A corridor system, with publically and privately owned land, will help animals migrate to find appropriate food and shelter.

— Staying Connected Initiative (SCI)

CONNECT...

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CONSERVE...

It's the right thing to do, and you made it possible

When Lynn and Peggy look out their farmhouse window over the fields, they often smile. Sometimes it's the sight of their grandkids running in the field; other times it's because a new crop of hay just made it in before the rain. But often, it's because they know that this portion of their farm—all 1,265 acres of it—will remain free of haphazard development, forever. It will remain a farm.

The Murrays have owned this farm for over 80 years. Their family has grown up there and the farm has changed. There's more conservation tillage practices than 20 years ago; they're rotating crops and using winter rye to reduce winter erosion.

As part of the headwaters of Sandy Creek, which flows into Lake Ontario, taking the long view and conserving the farm was simply “the right thing to do for both our family and the land,” remarked Lynn.

The cows are happier too, with new, well ventilated barns and dry paddocks. Conservation for the Murrays means taking care of the land, their animals, and their family in a way that will ensure that it's both a thriving and profitable family business and a great place to live, work and play.



Your support, as a Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust member, helped the Murrays conserve their farm. Thanks to you, we were able to assist them in protecting their land with a combination of state and federal funding through the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB)—as well as a number of other farm families in Tug Hill.

Funding for these farmland protection projects usually comes from the Army, in addition to New York State's Environmental Protection Fund through the New York State Agriculture and Markets farmland protection program. While they often take years to complete, the end result is a family farm that will be here for generations to come.

Over the past 25 years, 93 families have conserved the lands they call home and, in so doing, the heritage of our region and the landscape that makes this place so special. Thanks to you, in the coming year, families like the Murrays will be able to conserve their farms as well.

Our farms are precious. You are helping to make a difference:

- As of 2012, the most recent census data, Tug Hill had **719** active dairy farms. In 1964 there were **5,019** dairy farms in the region.
— *Ag Census 2012 and 1964*
- Nationally, 40 acres of farmland are lost every hour.
— *American Farmland Trust*

Thanks to you and community support, 43 families have conserved their farm in 25 years, conserving 13,751 acres for generations to come.



For conservation to last, kids have to come first. You are helping to make that possible.

- Cornell researchers, and others, have documented that most kids need to connect with nature early on to develop a conservation ethic.

— *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*

- Nationally, children spend an average of 90% of their time inside.

— *Children and Nature Network*

- Regular interaction, and play time in nature and green spaces like forests and farms, can reduce ADHD and anxiety.

— *Applied Psychology: Health & Well-Being*

Creating a love of the land and learning

Your support helped another child connect to nature, capturing a moment away from the computer screen or the game box, drawing them into the world of bugs, birds, and butterflies. It was a fleeting moment, but we all saw it too—out on the trail during a story walk or during a children’s program with the local library in Lowville, Carthage, Black River, and Watertown.

Libraries are terrific places to bring the love of conservation to kids, right there amongst the books and tables full of interesting crafts and drawing materials. There’s nothing like a four-year-old curled up on their parent’s lap, listening to a story about a beaver in the woods, as the sun washes over her face and catches the joy and imagination in her eyes.

The wonder of farms, nature, streams and lakes—it’s all there with a turn of a page and a story waiting to unfold. It’s a partnership that brings the love of learning and conservation together.

As a land trust, we believe in bringing conservation to people where they are as well as providing opportunities for them to get outdoors. Tug Hill Tomorrow’s Library Program is something that we hope to establish every year, with funding from donors and area foundations.

As Dawn Myers, Director of the Lowville Free Library, explained, “Everyone enjoyed listening to the stories and talking about the beautiful Tug Hill region. The partnership ignites the love of reading and learning through the fabulous stories about our rural lands—right here in the library, along with a fun craft and tasty snack. It’s a fabulous partnership,” continued Dawn, “it helps get kids reading and engaging with the natural world as a cherished and wondrous place.”



CREATE...

Sharing the joy for the land, creating a healthy community

Leiter Doolittle walks a little bit more carefully than he might have 60 years ago. As a young man, growing up along the West Canada Creek, he used to hike creek-side in pretty fast order. Leiter, now in his 80s, still loves to hike, and there's no better place to do it than with a group of enthusiastic folks on a Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust outing along Inman Gulf.

Every year, people like Leiter (although often a tad younger) enjoy the very special places of Tug Hill through our recreational programs. "I have always wanted to hike along Inman Gulf, but never got around to it," remarked Leiter. "This was the perfect excuse to finally do it. It's a great way to share my love of the out-of-doors with others who care; I feel like I'm with friends and family."

Research from *National Geographic Magazine* and *Proceeding of the National Academy of Scientists* has again documented that getting outside in nature enhances our brains and reduces stress and anxiety. It also can help build a lasting commitment to conservation and foster a greater sense of empathy for those that live in the natural world.

These hikes are good for the heart and soul, and good for developing and celebrating a love of the land. We couldn't offer them free, to people from all walks of life, without you. Thank you.



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COMMUNITY...

A special place for generations to come

Tug Hill is a place that stays with you. Those quiet moments out on the water, listening to birds in the woods, the smell of fresh hay or a camp fire, or our snow...lots of snow.

As a locally supported, community-based land trust, your gift of time, talent and financial contributions is what make conservation possible. It takes a community of people like you, partnering with landowners, community-organizations, and the amazing volunteers that help make this all happen. With your help, local families conserve their land, an extraordinary act of generosity and conservation vision. Your donations, no matter the size, are ensuring that Tug Hill remains a special place for years to come. Thank you.

A heartfelt thank you to monthly conservation heroes

Community programs and conservation continue throughout the year, and monthly donors are making that happen every day. Monthly giving accomplishes so much and is one of the easiest ways to have a big impact, no matter the size of your gift. It's easy and safe, and it provides a way to spread your passion and donation over the course of the year.

To find out more about how you can support local conservation efforts, or to become a monthly donor, please contact Lianna Lee at tughilloutreach@nnyemail.com or call her at 315-779-2239. Or, you can use our online form to quickly set up your monthly gift today. Simply click on the "Donate now" button at TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org. Thank you for being champions of change.

Planning for Forever: Tug Hill Endowment Created

For conservation to last for generations, we need to make sure Tug Hill Tomorrow will remain a strong, vibrant, and responsive organization. A key part of that strategy is the establishment of an endowment, where the principal is intact, forever, and the investment income is used to help conservation every year, all year long. Now, thanks to the generosity and vision of Bob and Carol Keller, the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has made a big step in that direction.

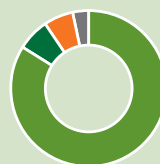
In addition to their remarkably generous annual support, the Kellers have established an endowment fund in Tug Hill Tomorrow's name at the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties to allow others to contribute as well. We are also working with Northern New York Community Foundation with the goal of creating a similar fund there. If you are interested in leaving a lasting impact and legacy in Tug Hill, contributing to the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust endowment is a great way to do it.

Your annual gift, like the Kellers, is critical to today's conservation work. When you contribute to the endowment as well, you are making a difference for today and tomorrow.

2015 Financials

Conservation happens every day, all year long, and your support makes that possible.

Thanks to you, farms and woodlands, wildlife habitat and clean water is conserved. Through our free programs, people from all walks of life experience the wonder of Tug Hill—creating memories that last a lifetime.



2015 Revenue

Foundations & Grants ¹	\$1,090,050
Individual contributions	\$88,165
Special events	\$77,828
Other income ²	\$42,056
Total	\$1,298,099



2015 Expenses

Program Services	\$1,173,672
Administration	\$54,169
Fundraising	\$33,256
Total	\$1,261,097

¹ Foundations and Grants — In 2015 we received \$1 million from NYS Agriculture and Markets to purchase conservation easements from willing landowners. This amount is also reflected on the expense side under Program Services.

² Transaction income for conservation projects and contract work.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. These audited figures reflect the fiscal year January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015. A copy of the full audited financial statement is available upon request by calling Linda Garrett at 315-779-8240 or emailing thtomorr@northnet.org.

Thanks to you, our farms, woodlands, and fresh water

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CELEBRATE...

You're making a difference

Giving a precious gift that changes lives

When you give the gift of time, we know it's the most valuable thing you have to give—and we appreciate it. All year long volunteers are providing the time and talent behind trail restoration and maintenance, walks for community members, graphic design and photography, and community gatherings and fundraising dinners.

For some, it's a few hours; for others its several days over the course of the year. The donation of your time is what makes it possible to connect kids to the land, protect the farms and forests, and host programs throughout the year. You make Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust thrive.

If you would like to volunteer, or know a business or community organization that would like to help out, contact Lianna Lee at (315) 779-2239. She'd be delighted to brainstorm with you about what might be a good fit for your time and talent.