

TUG HILL  
TOMORROW



LAND TRUST

# Greenings

Celebrating Conservation & People

FALL/WINTER 2025

**“Dave found peace at this magnificent river and in these beckoning woods. He would be deeply honored to know that others will find the same solace and wonder in this setting that bears his name.”**

**– Sherry Ramsey**

## EXPLORING THE LAND TOGETHER

# More to Explore at Special Places Close to You

From newly opened trails to the protection of important wildlife habitat, each of THTLT's nature preserves offers a unique opportunity to explore, unwind, and connect with the land. Over the past year, exciting strides have been made at several sites. Here's a look at what's new and what's still to come.



### David S. Smith Public Conservation Area

#### Experience the Wonders of Field and Forest near Fort Drum

This gem is now easier to find thanks to a newly installed roadside sign. The trail begins on a mowed path that winds through grasslands and into shaded woodlands, offering a peaceful place for walking, wildlife watching, or simply soaking in nature.

This summer, the trail has been used for both recreation and outdoor education.

**Plans are in the works** to establish a parking area that will make it easier for schoolchildren, families, and the Fort Drum community to experience this land, creating space for discovery, connection, and the healing power of nature close to home.



### Stone House Preserve

#### Woods and Wetland Forays Abound near Camden

A brand-new parking area and welcoming entry sign now greet you as you arrive at Stone House Preserve. With over 4.7 miles of trails now open, this Preserve boasts the largest trail network of all our properties. These paths guide hikers through mature forests, alongside quiet wetlands and sparkling streams, offering countless opportunities to encounter wildlife and explore the landscape.

**More trails are planned**, with the hope of opening additional areas that allow visitors to explore Tug Hill's unique forests, observe the wildlife that calls them home, and learn more about this remarkable landscape.



## David E. Ramsey Independence River Public Conservation Area

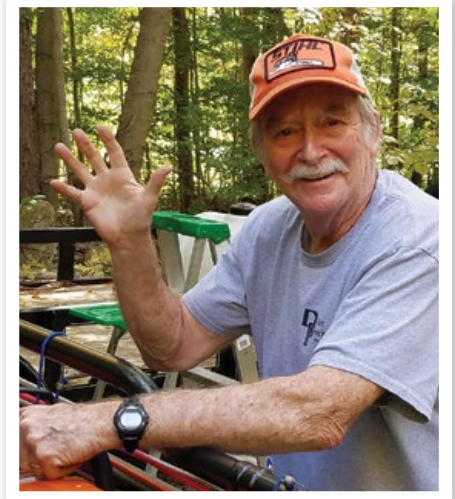
### **Birdsong and Rushing Water Bring Peace at the Independence River**

This property holds a rich natural and cultural story. Previously protected through a conservation easement, it was generously donated by Bob and Carol Keller to Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and is now named in honor of their longtime friend David E. Ramsey, who cherished the river and these woods.

Set in the Town of Greig along the scenic Independence River, this forested preserve features a tranquil trail that leads visitors from the southern boundary up to the river's edge. As you walk along the rocks beside the water, keep an eye out for remnants of a bygone era, iron drill holes that once guided log booms downstream, echoing a time when timber moved rivers.

A new entry sign now marks the property, and future enhancements, including additional trails and a kiosk, will open even more opportunities for visitors to wander these woods, find moments of peace, and connect with the natural beauty that has inspired so many.

*Continues on page 4*



*Forever tied to the place he loved, David E. Ramsey's memory lives on in these woods.*



*Continued from page 3*

## **Dimon & Rhoda Benson Public Conservation Area** **New Outdoor Opportunity on Slate in Oswego County**

Thanks to the generosity of William and Mabry Benson, this newly gifted preserve marks the first in Oswego County. Located in the Town of Boylston, the property lies along the banks of Little Sandy Creek, where rocky cliffs rise above rushing water offering a scenic escape.

**Plans are underway to establish** a trail network in 2026, along with a parking area, kiosk, and roadside sign, offering the Oswego County community a preserve to explore, wander, and a place to reconnect with nature right in their own backyard.

## **French Settlement Road** **Public Conservation Area**

### **Field, Forest and Stream Habitats** **to Discover near Lorraine**

Despite this year's heavy snowfall and a stormy spring, our volunteers have helped to keep this special place open for hiking all summer long with regular trail mowing maintenance.

Wooden platforms are now installed in key areas, allowing visitors to easily cross wet spots on the trail.

**Next year**, additional trail loops will be marked and opened, giving visitors even more chances to explore, catch a glimpse of beavers, foxes, songbirds, and other wildlife in their natural habitat, and take in the surrounding beauty.



## Keller Mohawk Hill Public Conservation Area

### Plans to Expand Wildlife Viewing of Grassland and Water Habitats in West Turin

Exciting plans are taking shape to construct a new two-level wildlife viewing platform.

The platform is in the early design stages, with one level designed to be wheelchair accessible, ensuring everyone can enjoy the remarkable views of grasslands, wetlands, and the birds that call them home.

#### Construction is anticipated to begin in 2026.

Your support can bring this project to life, every gift will be doubled thanks to a \$10,000 match from Dani Baker of Cross Island Farms.

Contact Associate Director Heidi Sourwine at [hsourwine@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:hsourwine@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org) to learn more.



## Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary

### An Incredible Gift of Land and Stewardship

In 2012, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust was honored to receive the North Country Bird Club's gift of this well-managed forest property, located in the Town of Rutland, east of Watertown.

This year we will add recognition of the many dedicated bird club volunteers who cared so capably for this special place, and who worked hard to make it an enriching place for both people and wild creatures for so many years.



Denise MacDuff



## **BUILT WITH HEART** **Thank You, Bob McNamara**

These exciting updates would not be possible without longtime volunteer, Bob McNamara, lending his time, talent, and craftsmanship.

From designing, building, and installing every entry sign to planning future kiosks and interpretive signage, Bob's work helps to shape the experience for every visitor.



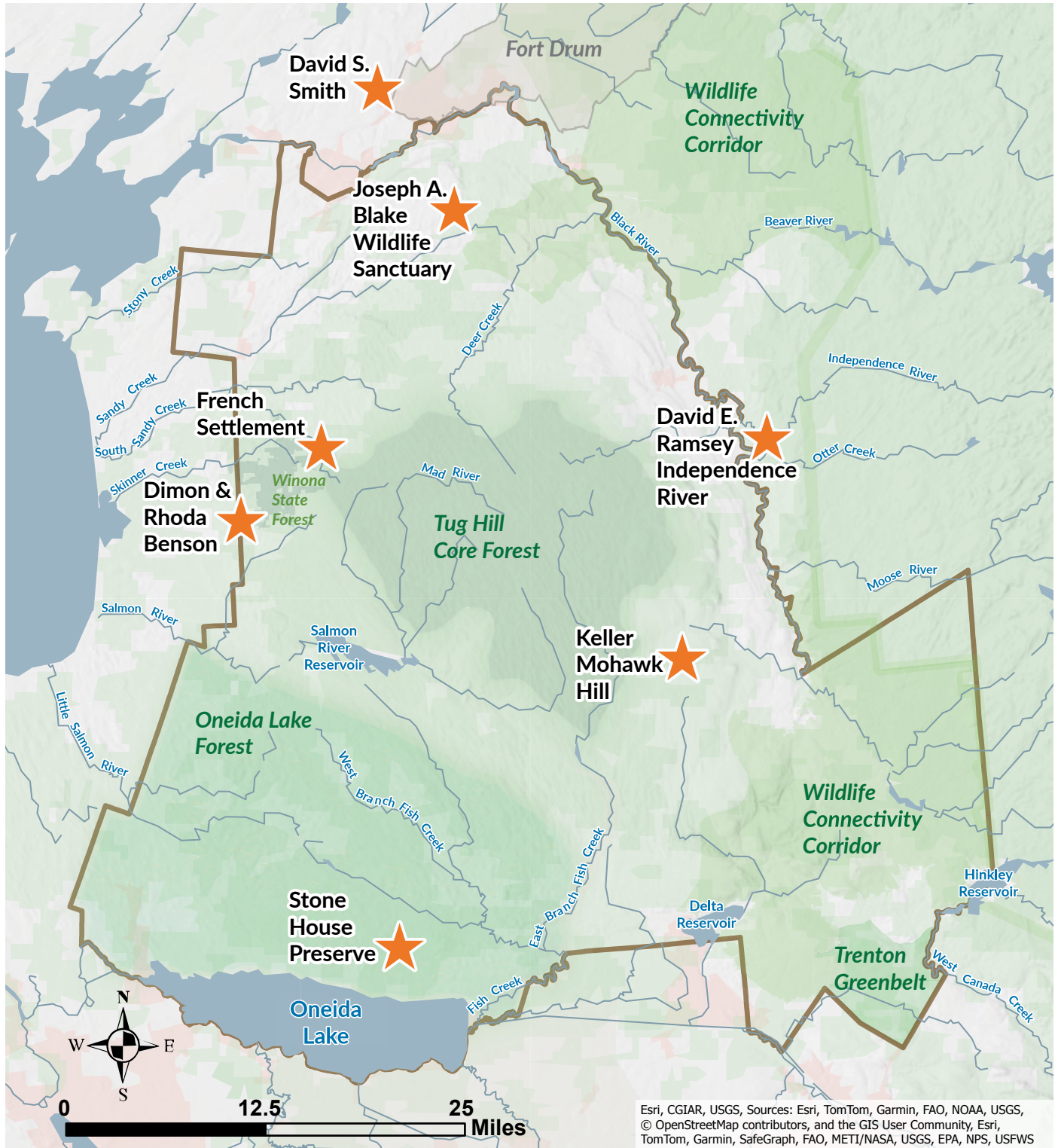
# Find a Preserve Near You

Our seven preserves are waiting for you!

These special places exist and thrive thanks to your care and support.

Thank you for helping protect the landscapes and wildlife that make Tug Hill so special.

Whether you love hiking through forests, spotting birds and wildlife, paddling on a peaceful stream, or gliding across the snow on skis or snowshoes, there's a preserve for you. Lace up your boots, grab your gear, and find your next adventure!





# Sharing the Wonder, Deepening Connections

## Weekly dispatches bring us all closer to Tug Hill

This past spring, recently retired educator and board member Laurie Frykholm was ready to use her newfound free time to get outdoors more often.

Early on, she decided to visit THTLT's Keller Mohawk Hill Public Conservation Area, just south of Constableville, to see what it had to offer. The open landscape calmed her, the potential for wildlife piqued her curiosity, and her photography goals emerged. She was hooked. Weekly visits ensued.

"I've always enjoyed being outside exploring. Being up at Keller Mohawk Hill brings back childhood memories of nature walks with my parents and my great-grandpa."

Laurie's delight in and curiosity about each new animal sighting and every new flower bloom from March 2025 onward was infectious. Snowy spring mornings gave way

to sunny, hot, humid days, and then cooler fall temperatures. Laurie noted each successive discovery as the seasons progressed.

Laurie's observations and photographs became a Friday Field Trip feature on the land trust's social media pages. In the process of getting to know Keller Mohawk Hill more, her sharing that journey has helped us feel closer to this truly special restored grassland and wetland habitat, and provided invaluable information to assist the land trust's habitat management activities.

"I am enjoying my role as a citizen scientist photographing and recording weekly changes at Keller



Laurie Frykholm

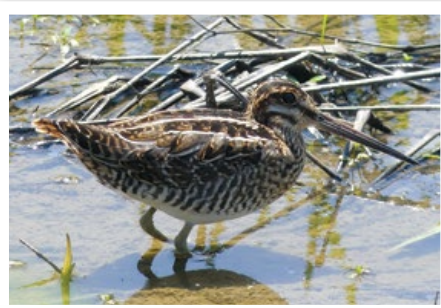
Laurie Frykholm receives the Above and Beyond Award at the 2025 Tug Hill Community Picnic, from Executive Director, Mark Pacilio, in recognition of the heart, energy, and countless hours she devoted this year to conservation and community."

Mohawk Hill, which helps track local biodiversity for conservation efforts. When I find something that I am not familiar with I photograph it and then research it. I have learned so much over the past few months, especially about the birds that call Keller Mohawk Hill home and the birds that stop by during seasonal migration."

Your visits to our properties, offering nature experiences close to home, are invited and encouraged.

### We'd love to hear about your adventures and observations!

Send your photos and stories to Linda Gibbs, Community Programs Director, at [lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org).



Laurie Frykholm

## WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT Wilson's Snipe

Tug Hill is important not only as breeding habitat, but as a migratory stopover for the Wilson's Snipe, flying between northern Canada and northern South America each spring and fall. They love the mud flats found at Keller Mohawk Hill, and are known for their fast flight with speeds up to 60 mph!

## BRINGING THE FOREST BACK TO LIFE

# Restoring Forest Habitat for Bats and Beyond

**W**hen the David S. Smith Public Conservation Area was protected in 2022, one of the driving forces behind the effort was the opportunity to maintain and improve important habitat for two endangered species: the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat, which rely on healthy, mature woodlands for roosting.

But protecting the land was only the first step. Now, with new partnerships and funding in place, restoration work is planned to expand and improve critical habitat.

### A Focus on Invasive Species

Along the woodland edge, a thick tangle of invasive buckthorn has crowded out native vegetation and diminished the ecological value of the surrounding brushland.

In partnership with the St. Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario (SLELO) Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), an ambitious habitat restoration project to remove buckthorn and honeysuckle from the site is set to begin.

This work, being carried out by F&W Forestry, uses targeted methods that minimize disturbance to desirable native trees. The goal is to open up space for natural regeneration, allowing young native trees to grow without competition from invasives. Follow-up work is planned for 2026 to ensure long-term success.

Once the invasive canopy is gone, native plants, including trees ideal for bat roosting, can begin to thrive again. It's the kind of patient, careful work that restores balance to the land and builds habitat from the ground up.

### A New Forest Takes Root

Looking ahead to 2027, the second phase of restoration is planned to begin with the transformation of an open meadow into new forest.

With a strategic plan of up to 5,000 trees to be planted, including oaks, pines, maples, and hickories, this project would expand habitat for bats and many other woodland species. Trees like shagbark and pignut hickory, in particular, provide the loose bark structure that endangered bats seek for summer roosting.



*Current hedgerows of invasive Buckthorn and Honeysuckle will be removed and improved to support native insect, bird and bat habitat.*

Key plantings and other efforts may further be implemented along the creek on the property to bolster the riparian buffer, depending on funding available.

By increasing the amount of forest on the landscape, this project also supports broader efforts to improve climate resilience in New York. Larger, connected forests help clean our air and water, store carbon, and buffer the effects of a changing climate.

### A Vision for the Future

Restoration takes time, and it relies on strong partnerships and support from people who care deeply about the land.

At the David S. Smith Public Conservation Area, the work underway today is part of a larger vision, one that includes healthy forests, thriving wildlife, and lasting connections to nature close to home.



## Meaningful Ways to Give

**As a community-supported conservation organization, none of this work would be possible without you, our donors, partners, landowners, and volunteers.**

Your support helps us protect the working farms, forests, wetlands, and wildlands across Tug Hill, ensuring that these special places can be enjoyed for generations to come.

### Become a Monthly Donor

Make a monthly gift that keeps conservation going all year long. Become one of our sustaining donors whose generosity makes an ongoing difference every single month. It's your monthly gift that allows us to seize opportunities and respond to unexpected challenges. All contributions of any size are greatly appreciated.

### Gifts of Stock

A gift of stock is a great way to support local land conservation, while also avoiding capital gains taxes and receiving an income tax deduction. If you itemize your deductions, you may be able to take a charitable deduction for the entire donation amount. Your support will make a big difference and help conserve the region's farms, clean waters, and woodlands while creating new trails and community programs.

### Join the Legacy Challenge

Leave a lasting impact on Tug Hill's future. By including the Land Trust in your will, you help protect our forests, waters, and wildlife for generations to come.

Thanks to the generous support of Bob and Carol Keller, new legacy commitments unlock a \$1,000 gift to the Land Trust (up to \$10,000), and past supporters are honored with a \$2,500 gift. Participating is simple, confidential, and a meaningful way to create your personal legacy.

We are deeply grateful to the generous individuals who have already chosen to include the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust in their legacy plans. Their vision and commitment help ensure the lands, waters, and communities of Tug Hill will thrive for generations.

Carol Beck  
Harold Boyce\*  
John & Marcia Gosier  
Steve & Madeline Hunter  
Bob Keller  
Carol Keller

Chris Kelly  
Virginia Kelly  
Dave & Uli Larrabee  
Steve Litwhiler  
Russ & Rebecca Myer

*\*Deceased*

### Other Ways to Give

For other ways to give, go to our website:

[tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/ways-to-give](https://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/ways-to-give)

or contact our Associate Director, Heidi Sourwine at [Hsourwine@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:Hsourwine@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org).

## READERS EXPLORING NATURE

# Strengthening Community Connections through Reading

When we decided to start a book club this year, we never anticipated how many people would be interested in taking part. Over 35 people reached out shortly after our announcement for more details, and we're so grateful they did!

Since February 2025, readers have gathered together every other month, in person and online, to share their thoughts on a variety of both older and newer fiction and non-fiction books about owls, forests, Tug Hill cultural history, turtles, fish, and more.

Building community connections, learning new things and sharing personal stories while discussing the past eight books on our list so far has been joyful and personally impactful. So far readers have been inspired to get outside more often, add native plants to a garden, help a turtle make a safe road crossing, explore the family property's historic land use, consider land conservation options, and donate funds to local wildlife rehabilitation organizations.

### You're invited to join in 2026!

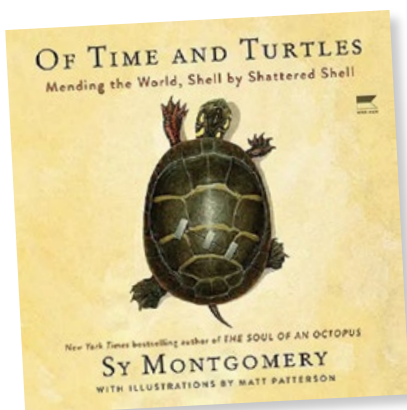
Readers can jump in or opt out at any time during the year according to their interests and available time to read. A Facebook group is active for reflections and conversations between meetings.

Our last 2025 book club meeting is on November 20th. If you'd like to receive information about the book club, contact Linda Gibbs at [lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:lgibbs@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org).



"The book *Of Time and Turtles* inspired me to donate to North Country Wildcare. Their work is truly an around-the-clock effort, and funding is always needed not just to support wildlife rehabbers, but also to sustain organizations that protect wildlife habitats.

– Chris Stelzer



"I've enjoyed the books, especially the July books. *Of Time and Turtles* by Sy Montgomery is a wonderful collection of stories. Some of the stories have brought tears to my eyes. I also made an effort to locate Elderberry tea, which is delicious."

– Malinda Zehr



**FACT:** Turtles are the most imperiled major group of animals on earth. If you save a female turtle, she may be able to lay eggs for another 100 years.



## FLASH MOB, NATURE EDITION

# A Property with a Rare Spark

Art Evans and Leslie Reed-Evans have spent years enjoying the quiet beauty of their camp tucked along the Black River. Though they live in Massachusetts, Tug Hill has always held a special place in their hearts.

Their 12.5-acre property in the Town of Leyden may be small compared to others in the region, but its conservation value is anything but.

Art and Leslie and NY entomologists have been hard at work documenting a rare population of synchronous fireflies, a species known for its mesmerizing display of coordinated light. On warm summer nights, these unusual fireflies blink in unison along the riverbank and forest edge, lighting up the woods in a natural rhythm that is as fleeting as it is unforgettable.

Unlike typical fireflies that flash randomly, synchronous fireflies pulse their light in perfect coordination, entire groups lighting up and going dark in a stunning, wave-like pattern.

This synchronized flashing is part of a mating ritual, with males trying to outshine each other to catch the attention of females. The result is a breathtaking natural phenomenon

that feels almost otherworldly. These fireflies are found in only a handful of places in New York State and are considered highly localized.

Their presence is often limited to small pockets of undisturbed habitat with very specific conditions: rich native vegetation, natural darkness free of light pollution, moist soils, and intact hydrology.

Art and Leslie's property meets all of these requirements, offering them a rare and valuable haven.

Their light show only lasts a few short weeks, usually from late June to early July, and only on warm, humid nights with no rain or wind. Miss it, and you'll have to wait another year.

Beyond the fireflies, their land holds prime agricultural soils of statewide importance, offers wildlife habitat,

*By day, this tiny firefly blends into the foliage, but come evening, it will pulse in perfect rhythm with others, creating a breathtaking display.*

and contributes to the larger network of conserved lands in northern Lewis County.

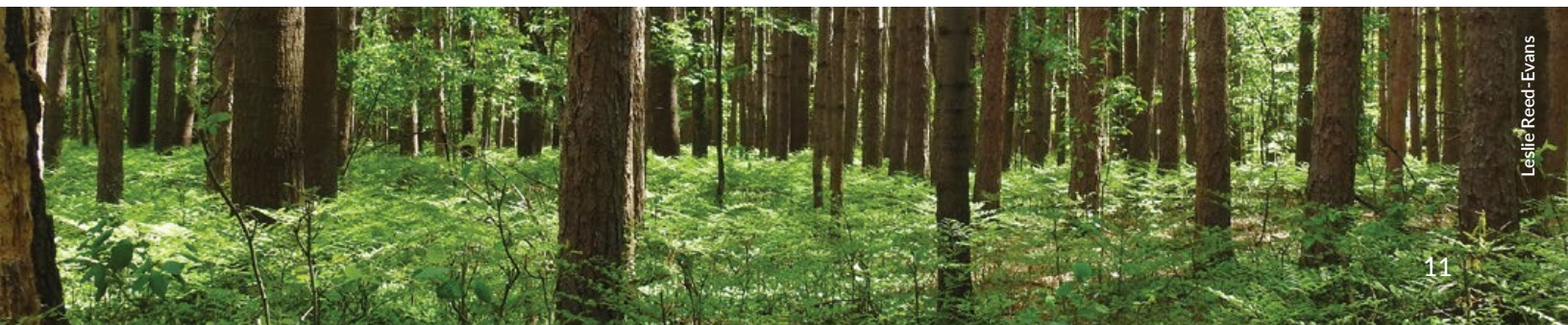
Recognizing the ecological value of their land, Art and Leslie chose to donate a conservation agreement to Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust.

It's a decision that reflects their values, both as exemplary land stewards and as people who believe in leaving the world a little better, and wilder, than they found it.

Their gift ensures that the land, and the rare species it supports, will continue to offer beauty, inspiration, and discovery for generations to come.

**“As lifelong conservation advocates, Art and I knew this land was worth protecting. Land trusts like Tug Hill Tomorrow ensure these special places are preserved for wildlife and for generations to experience their beauty and wonder.”**

**– Leslie Reed-Evans**





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

 [@TugHillTomorrowLandTrust](https://www.facebook.com/TugHillTomorrowLandTrust)

 [@tughillnature](https://www.instagram.com/tughillnature)

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Natalie Bogdanowicz**, Montague  
*Chair*

**Melanie Parker Geurtsen**, Rodman  
*Vice Chair*

**David Zembiec**, Adams  
*Treasurer*

**Heidi Jones**, Barneveld  
*Secretary*

**Robert Keller, Jr.**, Boonville  
*Immediate Past Chair*

**Susan Fassler**, Amboy  
*Director-at-Large*

**Beth Maguire**, Henderson  
*Director-at-Large*

### DIRECTORS

**Laurie Frykholm**, Rome

**Fred Munk**, Lowville

**Lynn Murray**, Copenhagen

**Robert Quinn**, Sackets Harbor

**Danielle Salisbury**, Rome

**Zachary Wakeman**, Pulaski

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Ben Coe**, Watertown

**Paul Miller**, Blossvale

**Peggy O'Shea**, Barneveld

**Chris Welch**, Barneveld

**Bob McNamara**, Constantia

### STAFF

**Mark Pacilio**  
*Executive Director*

**Heidi Sourwine**  
*Associate Director*

**Casey Downing**  
*Business Manager*

**Linda Gibbs**  
*Community Programs Director*

**Silas Hart**  
*Land Protection Manager*

**Emily Males**  
*Director of Operations & External Affairs*

**Max Mintz**  
*Land Protection Manager*

**John Souva, III**  
*Conservation Director*



120 Washington Street, Suite 510  
Watertown, NY 13601

315.779.8240

Non-Profit Org.  
Watertown, NY  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 32

## Winter Solstice Celebration

### Friday, December 19th • 7-8:30 pm

**Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary**  
31241 Middle Rd., Watertown, NY

Celebrate the longest night of the year by candlelight with a hike or snowshoe along our magical forest trail loop! Stop along the way to learn about how people have celebrated this time of reflection through the ages, decorate a tree for wildlife and leave with positive intentions for the coming year. Hot cocoa and light refreshments provided.

**RSVP:** [tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/events](https://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/events)

### Owl Prowls are coming soon!

Make sure and sign up to receive all the details:  
[tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/stayconnected](https://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/stayconnected)



Serena Soldani

## Share Your Tug Hill Photos

We're always looking for beautiful photos that showcase the landscapes, wildlife, people, and everyday moments across the Tug Hill region. Your photos could be featured in our annual calendar, Greenings newsletter, website, or social media, with full credit given for any published images.

To submit photos or learn more, contact Emily Males at [emales@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org](mailto:emales@tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org). Thank you for helping us capture and share the spirit of Tug Hill!

### 2026 Calendars are Available!

Purchase the 2026 calendar featuring community submitted photos at [tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/shop](https://tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org/shop).



Photographs: All photographs are taken by staff unless otherwise noted.  
Front Cover: Independence River by Sherry Ramsey.

Share this newsletter with a friend or recycle. 