



101 Ways to Engage Local Municipalities

Experience from Tug Hill

May 15, 2020

Linda Garrett, Executive Director, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
Katie Malinowski, Executive Director, NYS Tug Hill Commission

Technical Support: Call 800-422-3623

Warm-Up Question:
Please share your biggest success working with a municipality.
Post in chat.



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Instructors



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Overview

Session Abstract

With constantly changing local officials and changing issues, building relationships with local municipalities can be a challenge, but is extremely important. Finding a trusted partner can help open doors and start conversations. This session will explore how Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Tug Hill Commission work together with local officials, and discuss a myriad of ways to build relationships and ensure your work is serving the community needs. In addition, we will look at a case study of 3,230- acre project with the Conservation Fund and NYS DEC that hinged on the Tug Hill Commission and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's good relationship with town officials.



Our Partnership

Tug Hill Commission and Tug Hill Tomorrow have a long standing partnership. The land trust evolved from public forums the Tug Hill Commission held in the late 1980's.

Post in chat: What other organizations do you partner with?



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Relationships

Building trust is critical for positive relationship building

- Ongoing cultivation of relationships – not only when you need something
- These positions can have high turn over so this should be a constant process
- Present at a board meeting - just because
- Work with town committees (i.e. conservation advisory) on their efforts
- Not just an Executive Director responsibility – board members, staff should as well



Local officials meet at Redfield Fire Hall

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POLL 2



Photo: Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Relationships Continued

- Work with trusted partners to give your organization credibility
- To maximize efforts, look for groups to reach out to (i.e. councils of governments, county level farm bureaus, county level supervisor/mayor associations, boards of legislators)
- Considering presenting at regional local government conferences



Presentation at annual Tug Hill Local Government Conference

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Relationships Continued

- In a non-confrontational way, share land trust views on potentially controversial projects (i.e., subdivisions, renewable energy, industrial development)
- Provide fact-based information to help inform decision-making
- Find the key local official – may not be just the supervisor or mayor, consider the town clerk, planning board chair, etc.



Photo: Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Communication

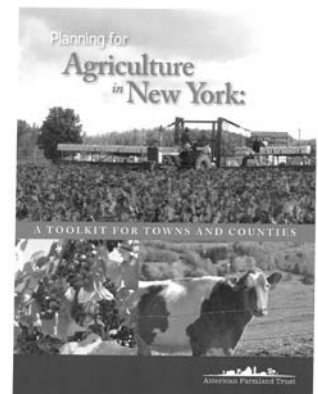
- Add local officials on mailing lists for newsletters, reports, updates, upcoming events
- Notify towns and villages when a project (easement, fee purchase) is completed in their municipality. This can be helpful in the future when the landowner comes to a town for a permit, etc. – the town will likely remember the easement and can help communicate back to the land trust
- Explain why the land trust is coming to them for approvals (i.e. EPF state funding requires signoff from local municipality)



Photo: Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Communication Continued

- Development FAQ sheet on specific initiatives, i.e. explaining how easements work, the importance of farmland in communities, etc.
- You don't have to reinvent the wheel – there may already be resources you can use. Be a resource for your municipality.
- Help communities spread their information by sharing on land trust social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- Develop or partner on the development of publications that give information to local officials



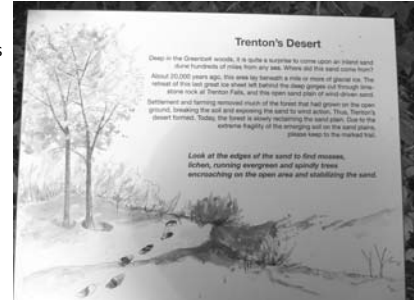
POLL 3



Photo: Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

Participation

- Work together to identify town open space/public access needs
- Partner on projects i.e. Community forests, public conservation areas
- Cost share opportunities, grant opportunities



Sign at the Trenton Greenbelt

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Participation

- Get involved during their comprehensive plan development; do a presentation, share your documents to inform theirs
- Volunteer when opportunities arise with other activities that fit in your mission (i.e. Black River Trash Bash) – supporting others, not always asking them to support you
- Table at a town sponsored event, farmers market, open houses, festivals, fairs
- Ask the municipality to participate in the land trust's strategic planning



Tabling at Local Government Conference

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Questions?



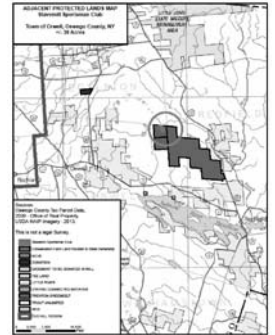
Photo: Cheryl Doherty, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust



Stavemill State Forest Case Study

Background

A 3,214 acre forested parcel, spanning two towns in Oswego County suddenly came up for sale. The land was owned by a local furniture manufacturer, and leased by a local hunting club. The State wanted to buy it to add to their forest land holdings, but could not move fast enough. The Conservation Fund, stepped in as an intermediary to quickly purchase the property, and then transfer to state.



Town Approval for FPIG Application

- Land trust did not have relationship with Town
- Researched Comprehensive Plan, specifically said encourage use of State Farmland Protection Program to protect Ag Land in Town
- We thought we had it "in the bag"
- We did not get approval and could not move project forward
- Lesson learned
- Questions?



Stavemill State Forest Case Study

The Problem

The problem was according to state law, the existing hunt camp would have to be removed, and the lease terminated.

The local community supported the State purchase but also valued the traditional uses of the property. Many of their residents were members of the hunt club. Without the Town's approval, the state could not move forward on the project.



@Carl Heilman

Stavemill State Forest Case Study

The Solution

Because of the long-standing relationship and trust the Towns had with the Tug Hill Commission and the Land Trust, a meeting was arranged with all parties, and an out of the box solution was created.

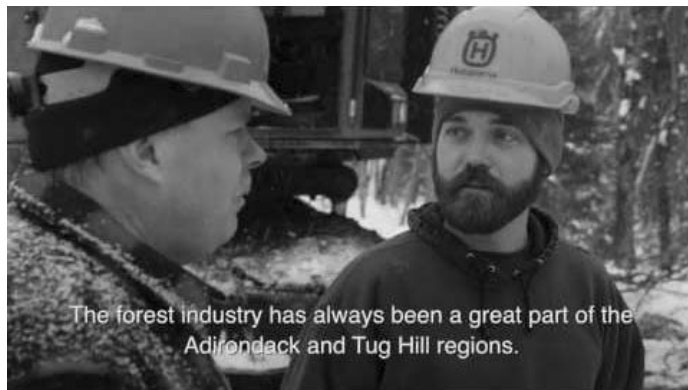
The hunt club purchased a small 6-acre lot around the camp from the Conservation Fund, the land trust holds an easement on the 6-acres and the remaining land was then transferred to the state to add to their adjacent forest holdings.

A key snowmobile corridor trail was also secured as part of the negotiations.



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Stavemill State Forest Case Study



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Stavemill State Forest Case Study

The Final Outcome

The Towns were concerned that the land would be developed and they would lose the traditional recreational, water quality, wildlife and timber benefits of the large forested block.

Because of the long-standing relationship the Towns had with the Tug Hill Commission they were willing to sit down and discuss options.

This was a win-win for all parties involved.



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Questions?



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- Webinar recordings:
<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/conference/2020-new-york-land-conservation-virtual-conference>
- Handouts and slides:
<https://tlc.lta.org/topclass/searchCatalog.do?catId=277618>
- Feedback on this webinar:
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