



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

State Legislators to Sage: Tug Hill Commission - Worthy and Valuable Investment

PATTY RITCHIE May 9, 2011

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Senators Ritchie, Griffo, Assembly Members Barclay, Blankenbush, Tenney Sign Joint Letter

The Tug Hill Commission saves New York State money by helping local governments reduce costs and share services, the region's legislative delegation is telling the Governor's Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission.

New York State Senators Patty Ritchie and Joseph Griffo and Assembly members William Barclay, Kenneth Blankenbush and Claudia Tenney have written the SAGE Commission, telling them the Tug Hill Commission provides the kind of critical services that helps make local and state governments more efficient and reduces costs to both the state and municipalities.

"As the state representatives who serve the Tug Hill region, we believe an honest and objective analysis of the Tug Hill Commission will show it saves money, helps local and state agencies reduce staff and achieves the kind of shared services that Governor Cuomo has repeatedly insisted must be a top priority at all levels of government in the years ahead," the representatives wrote in a joint letter.

The Tug Hill Commission is a regional agency that serves rural communities in the four county (Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida and Oswego County) region of Central and Northern New York.

“The Tug Hill Commission provides staff assistance to numerous rural part-time local government officials, helping them to share services and allowing them to avoid hiring their own full time professional staff,” the representatives wrote. “Unlike many downstate local governments, many of the rural communities in the Tug Hill Plateau operate with very few full time staff members, outside of their town clerk and highway staff. The professional staff of the Tug Hill Commission helps these rural part-time officials provide invaluable basic services to their communities at a fraction of what it would cost if they were forced to hire fulltime staff or expensive consultants to replace the services provided by the agency. Numerous state agencies, like the Department of Environmental Conservation and others, have repeatedly told us that the Tug Hill’s technical advice and ability to coordinate services has often been of critical assistance to state agencies that must work with the local governments of the Tug Hill Plateau.”

“Due to the agency’s long history of service, the Tug Hill Commission is often seen as an honest broker between community leaders and state regulatory agencies, smoothing the way and finding ways state and local government can work together to serve their rural population while allowing the state to achieve its regulatory goals. Abolishing the Tug Hill Commission or transferring its responsibilities to some other agency is likely to create problems, force communities to hire staff and consultants and lead to the kind of duplication of services that New York State needs to avoid,” the legislators wrote. “We realize that at a time when the state is facing a massive deficit, you are looking to reduce duplication and foster greater efficiencies. That is a goal we share and applaud. However, we believe a fair analysis of the role of the Tug Hill Commission will show it already is helping

the governor carry out the goals he outlined in his State of the State message.