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# 6. IMPLEMENTATION

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THE PLAN CAN DO LITTLE TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF CHANGE IN TUG HILL BY ITSELF. IT IS ADVISORY IN NATURE AND MUST DEPEND FOR EFFECT UPON THE WILLINGNESS OF PERSONS AND GROUPS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, IN THE NINE TOWN AREA TO TRANSLATE ITS PROPOSALS INTO ACTION. THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION INVOLVES HARNESSING THE AREA'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL RESOURCES IN PROGRAMS THAT WILL ENCOURAGE AND, IN SOME CASES, REQUIRE ACTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED IN THE PLAN.

UNLESS THIS ESSENTIAL FOLLOW-UP STEP IS TAKEN, EITHER TUG HILL WILL CONTINUE TO CHANGE IN A HAPHAZARD, OFTEN HARMFUL MANNER IN RESPONSE TO SPECULATIVE INTERESTS, OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISION MAKING WILL GRADUALLY PASS BY DEFAULT FROM THE NINE TOWNS TO A HIGHER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT. THE COOPERATIVE BOARD BELIEVES THAT NEITHER OF THESE ALTERNATIVES IS ACCEPTABLE. MANAGEMENT OF TUG HILL'S RESOURCES IS PRIMARILY A LOCAL AFFAIR AND SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED, FOR THE MOST PART, THROUGH PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED SINGLY OR JOINTLY BY THE TOWNS THEMSELVES.

SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE TOWNS MAY SEEK TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN ARE DESCRIBED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES. IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, THESE SHOULD BE EVALUATED, MODIFIED, DETAILED, AND FINALLY ACCEPTED OR REJECTED AS THE AREA BEGINS TO TAKE ON THE TASK OF MANAGING ITS NATURAL RESOURCES.

## COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTATION

In several respects, implementation of the Plan will find strength in numbers. First, the same mutuality of interests among the nine towns that fostered the cooperative planning effort originally will also assist in carrying out the Plan.

The Plan identified a number of concerns that go beyond the boundaries of any single town. These include the Tug Hill forest and the systems of streams and wetlands, all of which are significant in economic, recreational and physical terms to the area as a whole. Also significant are the area's agricultural lands and the location of new development, particularly from the standpoint of its impact on cost of town services. It is important that means be devised to permit proposals that would alter these resources to be evaluated and decided upon from an area-wide perspective.

The Plan suggests a second basis for cooperative action. If two or more towns wish to undertake similar administrative functions, it may prove less expensive and more efficient for them to pool their resources in a combined effort. The resulting economies of scale may enable levels of programming that would be too costly for a single town to attempt.

Similarly, when issues arise which are outside the towns' control, a single voice, speaking for all nine towns, will be heard most clearly and listened to most carefully.

There is a further practical test of the merit of cooperation. That is whether a given program is acceptable to each of the towns participating in its implementation. If participation is not voluntary, local control is lost. Therefore, any program proposed for joint administration must pass the test of local review and approval before its enactment.

## CATEGORIES OF IMPLEMENTATION

The approach to implementation should be varied and flexible. Generally speaking, implementing techniques reinforce one another. Hence, the more techniques that are brought to bear upon a problem, the better prospects for its solution become. Some of the categories which the Cooperative Board will explore for tools to implement the Plan follow:

### Public Decision Making

Public understanding and agreement with the Plan and the means for carrying it out lie at the heart of the planning process. Public review and discussion of the Plan and of each proposal for implementation are necessary for the process to move forward. Emphasis must be placed on involving local leaders, residents and all other parties who share a concern for the future of Tug Hill.

### Property Taxation

Much of the pressure for change in land use is related to property taxes. Rising taxes due to rising assessments and to enlarged tax levies by counties and school districts, a low income/high taxation ratio for natural product uses, inaccurate assessments and other tax related conditions represent forces for change which run counter to the Plan for Tug Hill. Tax-reform, including development of a uniform system of tax payments on state-owned land, is a key way in which to promote the Plan's implementation. Means must also be found to stabilize taxation of rural lands and halt the increase which forces unwanted changes in use by inability to pay increased taxes.

### Tax Reduction

Easements, leasebacks and other forms of less-than-fee ownership offer the possibility of continued private use at reduced tax levels. These arrangements could be accomplished through land dedication which would entail little or no acquisition costs. In those locations where the Plan is most seriously threatened by unwanted change, the option of public ownership exists.

Conversely, some of the Forest Preserve parcels now held by New York State should, because of their scattered locations and small size, be considered for reclassification or for sale. Such transfers should be made subject to use in conformity with the Plan.

### Land Use Controls

The Cooperative Board has selected the field of land use controls as the initial way in which to implement the Plan. The Board's initial inventory of land use control options appears in the Appendix. The controls listed fall within the following categories:

- **DEC Regulations:** The State Department of Environmental Conservation has authority to delegate its review and permit issuing functions under the Conservation Law to qualified local agencies. Certain DEC regulations, particularly those related to freshwater wetlands and stream protection, might benefit from more localized arrangements for enforcement.
- **Local Regulations:** These include zoning, subdivision, building, sanitary and other codes commonly employed by localities to guide private development activities. Their use in Tug Hill should be uniform, insofar as possible, as to required standards and procedures. The advantages of cooperative administration also deserve consideration.
- **Critical Areas:** Increasing use is being made of special regulations, to protect environmentally sensitive areas. The Cooperative Board prefers use of this technique, administered jointly by the nine towns, to protect the area's streams and forest. Draft stream protection and logging standards, prepared and suggested by the Cooperative Board, are included in the Appendix.

#### Financial Policy

Because road related costs are the largest item in the budgets of the nine towns, opportunities for savings through joint activities are worth exploring in the future. There are some immediate ways that towns can protect themselves from abrupt increases in costs. Adoption of any of the model road specifications prepared by the Cooperative Board will shift the responsibility to pay the cost of building roads for new developments onto the shoulders of the developers.

Devising a six (6) year capital improvement schedule for town road rebuilding will also provide a guide for major future expenditures and inform the public of the town's timetable for road improvements. In this way, public demand could not abruptly change improvement priorities for a road which would keep costs in a predictable framework.

## THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE COOPERATIVE BOARD

Apart from any role in the administration of implementation programs, there are a variety of tasks which the Cooperative Board must carry on.

- First of these, is to promote public discussion and understanding of the Plan so that implementation may proceed.
- The job of designing implementation programs for consideration by the towns is also urgent. After enactment, it will be necessary to monitor and evaluate the results of these programs to ensure their effectiveness.
- The Board needs to further identify areas of special importance from a natural resources standpoint and make recommendations on these as well as state-owned land. Beyond these priority items, the Plan should be updated and further detailed to reflect any change in the area's goals and objectives or other circumstances.
- Lastly, the Cooperative Board will continue to lobby for Tug Hill's interests and to provide a forum where anyone concerned with the Hill's future can come and be heard.

FOOTNOTES.

1. Jerome, P. and Smyth, P. "Physical Characteristics Report" for individual towns; and "Physical Characteristics - Soil Analysis," Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.
2. Smyth, P. "Land Use Inventory and Analysis, Cooperative Tug Hill Planning Board:" Table 1; Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.
3. Exford, D. Memorandum. "Land Sales/Transfers in 1974 in five Lewis County Towns.....," Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1976.
4. Smyth, P. "Land Use Inventory and Analysis.....," Table 3, Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.
5. Barwick, J. "Property Taxes on Tug Hill: Policy and Practice and the Effects on Land Use." Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1976.
6. Smyth, P. "Crossroads Analysis, Cooperative Tug Hill Planning Board," Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.
7. Smyth, P. "Land Use Inventory and Analysis....," Table 5, Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.
8. Smyth, P. "Transportation Inventory and Analysis," Temporary State Commission on Tug Hill, 1975.