§ 847-a. Statement of legislative findings and purpose. The legislature hereby finds that for approximately twenty-five years, the Tug Hill commission has provided essential planning and technical services to the sixty-two local governments and to residents in the twenty-one hundred square mile Tug Hill region.

The legislature further finds that, lying between Lake Ontario, the Black River and Oneida Lake, is a region of approximately twenty-one hundred square miles that encompasses towns and villages scattered in a vast acreage of forest and farm land. The core of the region encompasses more than eight hundred square miles of remote forest land and the headwaters of several major rivers, with much of the area inaccessible by public road. These lands and waters are important to the state of New York as municipal water supply, as wildlife and plant habitat, as key resources supporting forest industry, farming, recreation and tourism and traditional land uses such as hunting and fishing. State assistance through the Tug Hill commission to help Tug Hill local governments and organizations is merited and needed because of the importance of these resources to the state, and because of the small population and relative poverty of the region.

The legislature further finds that the Tug Hill commission, originally established in nineteen hundred seventy-two as a temporary state commission, has studied the Tug Hill region, provided technical assistance to the region's local governments and reported to the governor and legislature regarding the conservation and development of the Tug Hill region. The purpose of the commission is to enable local governments, private organizations, and individuals to shape the future of the Tug Hill region, and to demonstrate and communicate ways that this can be done by other rural areas. Commission programs are geared toward the conservation and productive use of the natural resources of the region, strengthening of the long-term economy, employment, cultural and social resources, and the general well-being of the rural communities. The commission has facilitated local action as the most enduring and cost-effective method of retaining the rural and remote character of this land, and of retaining the independent way of life of its people and their economy.

The legislature finds that the Tug Hill commission's track record demonstrates its capability for working together with towns and villages for appropriate community and economic development and resource protection. Its continuation will enable municipalities to perform their basic local government functions.

It is the purpose of this article to insure continued municipal assistance, conservation, preservation and development in the region by continuing the Tug Hill commission, in order to serve those local government and regional needs, now and in the future.