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[APA changes fire tower stance](#)

KIM SMITH DEDAM Press-Republican

RAY BROOK — The Adirondack Park Agency has now drafted plans to designate land under two fire towers as Historic.

It is an apparent step back from plans last month to leave the structures to degrade naturally.

The resolution on Thursday's APA agenda to maintain the towers at St. Regis and Hurricane mountains would allow for restoration, recognizing their historic place in the Adirondack Park.

STRONG INTEREST

The two steel spires have been the subject of much discussion and strong public sentiment in public hearings, held first for unit management plans by the Department of Environmental Conservation and then for reclassification by the APA.

Several environmental groups have pressed for removal, claiming the towers are non-conforming in the Wilderness area.

DESIGNATED AREA

The final resolution going before commissioners in the APA State Lands Committee on Thursday says reclassification includes "one-half acre on the summit of St. Regis Mountain, one-half acre on the summit of Hurricane Mountain, each proposed for reclassification to Historic, and 13,449 acres of the Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area to Wilderness."

The final Environmental Impact Statement, which accompanies the resolution, says a Historic land-use designation "would allow restoration of the fire towers."

It also acknowledges that fire towers in the Adirondack Park are closely associated with development of the Forest Preserve, since they "were also instrumental in stimulating and managing recreational use in the early 20th century and cultivating a modern conservation ethic with the public. As such, they also represent the first public recreational structures in the nation's first Forest Preserve."

LANDMARKS

The Environmental Impact Statement further suggests that a Historic designation would “preserve these historical resources associated with wild land stewardship and forest fire suppression as a community landmark — and provide further opportunities to involve community and private interests in stewardship of the Forest Preserve.”

Of 57 fire towers built in the Adirondack Park between 1909 and 1950, 34 still exist: 11 on state land have been restored, and eight owned by DEC still hold radio equipment.

The towers on St. Regis and Hurricane are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

But DEC had tagged those towers for removal 10 years ago in accordance with the Master Plan.

RESTORATION COST

Among potential impacts listed in the revised plan to restore them is the cost to maintain them, whether by friends groups or the state.

In September, APA Commissioners Leilani Ulrich and Bill Thomas asked APA staff to research associated costs.

Officials from DEC suggest it would cost about \$50,000, not including labor, to repair a fire tower.

In a memorandum dated May 6, APA State Lands Planner Kevin Prickett said the first step is usually engineering review, an analysis that costs about \$10,000.

But 10 years ago, materials used to restore the tower on Poke-O-Moonshine amounted to \$5,000.

APA commissioners are expected to discuss the proposed Historic resolution at 11 a.m. Thursday at the headquarters in Ray Brook. The meeting is open to the public.

‘ENCOURAGED’

Friends of Hurricane Mountain Tower co-organizer Alta J. Longware of Elizabethtown is extremely happy with the prospect of a Historic land-use designation.

But she is watching the process closely, as each plan for use or restoration has to be updated in the DEC unit-management process.

“There is something in the resolution that concerns me; if you look at one of the last statements, it says something about understanding the financial restraints of the state, indicating future disposition of the towers will be up to DEC — they left that little window open. How would you

read that?”

Hurricane Friends has started a fund for the purchase of materials.

“Our future plan is to get an established not-for-project umbrella group for our project,” Longware said Tuesday. “I’m am just very encouraged by the APA’s efforts to listen to the communities wishes.”

OTHER ACTION

The October meeting is one day only, and Regulatory Programs Committee is scheduled to consider an expansion of greater than 25 percent at the Cold Spring Granite Company in Jay and a proposed new commercial campground with 510 campsites in the Town of Fort Ann.

APA will also consider a request from Barton Wind Partners for wind-monitoring masts located on Pete Gay Mountain in North Creek.

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