

# County and communities join forces to save fire tower

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The Telegram

The St. Regis Fire Tower located on St. Regis Mountain in the Town of Santa Clara is in danger of being dismantled due to its 'non-conforming' status within a forest classified as 'primitive' by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA).

But a number of towns, and various groups are supporting efforts to have the tower restored for aesthetic, recreational, and historical reasons.

And the Franklin County Legislature joined the towns of Santa Clara and Brighton in supporting a move to save the tower. On Thursday the legislators unanimously passed a resolution in support of preserving the tower, which is located in the Town of Santa Clara. Essex County has also passed a resolution calling for the preservation of the fire tower on top of Hurricane Mountain in Essex County, which is also in danger of being removed.

The resolution was offered without objection by the full board after David Petrelli addressed the legislature earlier Thursday to request their support in pre-

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serving the tower.

Petrelli told the board that the tract where the tower is located on is designated as primitive forest, which means that there can be no man-made structures on the tract. Man-made structures

Although the tower, which was constructed in 1918, was decommissioned 15 years ago no action has yet been taken by the APA to remove the tower, but the tower is living on borrowed time.

"Basically, if we're not successful in getting the classification removed it is ultimately going to be taken down," Petrelli told the legislators. "We cannot restore the tower until the Land State Master Plan status is changed."

He told the legislators that he plans to

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# TOWER: Up to the APA

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appear at the APA meeting on Thursday or Friday to present a letter to the agency's commissioners requesting that the St. Regis Canoe Area Unit Management Plan be permanently altered so the tower can be restored.

"For this to occur the tower's current 'non-conforming' designation needs to be removed," Petrelli said.

In addition to the resolutions from Santa Clara, Brighton, and Essex County, Petrelli presented a petition containing 1,500 names that he plans to present to the APA in support of restoring the tower. He also letters in support of the tower from the Rainbow Lake Association and the Adirondack Architectural Heritage.

In a letter to Erin Crotty, commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Petrelli requested the tower be preserved for "aesthetic, recreational, and historical reasons."

He told the legislators that the tower is still structurally sound.

"It hasn't been main-  
tained since it was taken out of service in 1990," Petrelli explained to the legislators. "While it's structurally sound the wood they used on it was not pressure-treated lumber so the lumber has to be restored (and) we have to put a new coat of paint on it."

He said that the state DEC cannot do anything to preserve the tower because the agency is responsible for enforcement, so it would be up to the APA.

He said if the tower is preserved the DEC would be responsible for the continual maintenance of the tower.

Petrelli said that he plans to include the resolution from Franklin County in the packet with the other documents, resolutions, and letters he plans to present to the APA at its meeting next week.

Following Thursday's legislative meeting Legislator Paul Maroun (R-Tupper Lake), whose district includes Santa Clara, said that fire towers in the Adirondacks have served the North Country and the Adirondacks for many years protecting the forests, and providing an aesthetic, recreational, and historical status for people inside and

outside of the park.

"I will be asking Dr. Whaley, chairman of the APA, and all members to permanently alter the St. Regis Canoe Area Unit Management Plan so that the St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower can be restored," he said. "I will be talking with APA officials, DEC officials and asking the assistance of Senator Betty Little and Assemblyman Chris Ortloff to ensure that this tower remains."

Maroun said that the fire towers could also provide a source for cellular connectivity within the Adirondack Park. He suggested that antennas could be placed along the sides of the tower that would satisfy both environmental concerns, and help secure a better safety network for E911 and cellular connectivity.

He said that he will be approaching officials of the APA and the DEC about the feasibility of installing the antennas on the side of the fire towers in the Adirondacks without exceeding the height of the towers.

"This is something that should be looked into after we save the St. Regis Fire Tower," he said.