

Partnership formed to upgrade fire towers

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In this photo taken Oct. 23, 2010, the Hurricane Mountain fire tower is seen in Keene, N.Y. Fifty-seven fire towers were built in the park after a series of devastating fires in the early 1900s. The towers were slowly decommissioned between 1971 and 1990. Many were dismantled, but 20 remain on state-owned property. Hurricane and St. Regis are the only non-conforming sites. The other 18 are in areas classified as less ecologically sensitive and remote.

AP Photo/Mary Esch
Associated Press

KEESEVILLE — Plans are being made to facilitate the restoration, interpretation and management of the Hurricane Mountain and St. Regis Mountain fire towers.

Adirondack Architectural Heritage has partnered with two volunteer groups, the

Friends of Hurricane Mountain and the Friends of St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower, for the project.

Both groups were formed to advocate for the preservation and public use of these towers, which were built in the early 20th century to protect Adirondack forests from forest fires.

In November 2014, the New York State Department of Conservation issued a final Unit Management Plan to recognize the historic significance of the towers and allow for their restoration.

Both Friends groups will operate under the nonprofit auspices of Adirondack Architectural Heritage and do their work through a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with DEC.

Both expect to begin active work on the towers and trails this year.

"The best news of all is that over the last 25 years, the whole landscape has changed around fire towers," Adirondack Architectural Heritage Executive Director Steven Engelhart said in a news release.

"There are hundreds of people around the region involved in their preservation and use, dozens of towers and observer cabins have been restored, tens of thousands of people enjoy visiting them every year and, perhaps most importantly, the state has become a much more enthusiastic and engaged partner."

To learn more, get involved or make a tax-deductible donation, visit the Friends of Hurricane Mountain website at hurricanefiretower.org and the Friends of St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower website at friendsofstregis.org.