



**Breadcrumbs:** APA seeks more time to weigh fate of fire towers

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RAY BROOK — Adirondack Park Agency Commissioners voted Thursday to ask the state Department of Environmental Conservation to delay taking action regarding the future of a popular fire tower.

APA commissioners want DEC to wait until a multi-agency study on the costs and siting of the Hurricane Mountain fire tower is complete before making decisions that could result in the structure's removal.

In concert with DEC and the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the agency is currently considering two options that could allow the towers atop both Hurricane and St. Regis mountains to remain. Citing budget constraints, however, DEC officials have said it would be cheaper to remove the towers.

APA Chairman Curt Stiles said there's no indication now that DEC is considering immediate removal of the towers, but DEC owns the towers and could remove them at any time.

"DEC has always had the right to remove a non-conforming use," Stiles said. "They are basically working on the same page as we are."

Significant public comment has been received by APA and DEC in support of maintaining the towers. But at present, neither tower is in compliance with the State Land Master Plan. Both towers are currently considered non-conforming structures under current land-use designations.

DEC officials said Thursday the department has yet to set a timetable for their removal.

Stiles noted all three state entities are working together on the study.

The APA is considering creating small primitive or historic designations that would bring the towers into compliance. Under the historic designation, the cash-strapped state would be required to foot the bill for the restoration and maintenance of the towers.

DEC officials estimate a single restoration could cost more than \$50,000.

Proponents of the towers argue they represent significant artifacts of the region's cultural history, something that could be lost if they are removed.

Opponents counter they are in clear violation of the SLMP, which seeks to remove remnants of past human activity in the more restrictive land use designations.

Both towers are listed on the state and federal Registers of Historic Places.