

St. Regis UMP Public Comment meeting 3/10/10 by David Petrelli.

I invite all to view and consider the information provided on the website of The Friends of St. Regis Mt. Fire Tower at <http://www.friendsofstregis.org/> Even if at this moment you are not in support of this tower it provides a lot of information of why so many want to see this tower saved for future generations. My statements tonight can be viewed or downloaded on the [Latest News](#) tab of this site.

It's my contention that DEC does not need to remove this tower and there are options for retaining this tower. Both noted in this UMP amendment and in the Fire Tower Study for the Adirondack Park:

a) Request a revision to the Master Plan. Existing fire towers could be added to the list of structures that are considered as conforming to canoe area standards.

or

b) Request a reclassification—to historic or primitive—of the land the tower stands upon. A small parcel of land could be reclassified so that the tower and foot trail would conform with the Master Plan.

I strongly feel that DEC has not exhausted every alternative looking at these options in this UMP proposal. There is significant public support for this tower and many New Yorkers are very willing to discuss alternatives required with both the APA Board, our Governor and the DEC to approve such a changes. It appears to me that there can be compromises in the wording and the interpretations of current legislation to let the will of the majority be heard with the concerns of those opposing to be satisfied with the merits of why the few remaining NYS Fire towers be preserved.

We live in a democratic society and the public's will is clearly not being heard in this proposed UMP as minor modifications to the State Land Master Plan are not seriously being considered and the significant support for this tower is being cast aside. This is highly inappropriate as this tower is located on publicly owned land and is a tremendous public resource. Our SLMP is important; however it's my contention that there is nothing "non-conforming" about this tower when you look at the big picture.

Financially, I feel the decision to remove of this tower is irresponsible and inappropriate. There would be significant tax payer expense for the safe removal, and even if funding is available in these economic times, it could be used for other purposes. These expenses would be eliminated and as our group, The Friends of St. Regis Mt. Fire Tower has indicated previously we would help cover the material and labor costs of restoration.

There are also long term financial considerations that have not been adequately considered, there is considerable Heritage as well as Traditional Tourism that would be missed out on by local and state income from tax revenue on sales taxes on local goods and services.

DEC's role to "protect New York's natural resources and people" I believe DEC is not doing all it should to protect the tremendous natural resource we have in this fire tower. I do know that APA needs to approve any changes to the State Land Master Plan, but it is my contention DEC as Stewart and owner of this structure should be working with APA to find an acceptable alternative. What DEC is proposing in this UMP Amendment is to tear down their own history and heritage and to cast aside the significant legacy that has been appropriately established by previous generations of observers.

The historical loss of this tower would be huge and begs the question where to we start in considering historic structures and their conforming status. It would be very interesting to go down to any large New York State city and see how many historic structures do not meet today's current codes or standards, should we start tearing those structures down as well?

It was a hundred years ago this summer that a first fire observation station was installed on the St. Regis summit as well as a few other New York state summits. The importance of Article 14.01 of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law as discussed in the Fire Tower Study for the Adirondack Park page 16 and 17 supersedes any non-conforming status this tower may have under the SLMP.

The educational value of this tower in its current location is immense. We will lose a tremendous educational opportunity if this tower is removed. While you can create an educational opportunity with a tower off a summit you can never recreate the environment, the actual experience, and emotions of being in fire tower cab in its intended and original environment. It has been proposed to re-erect the tower at the Paul Smiths VIC, but now that this VIC might be closed what would ultimately happen to the fire tower?

This 35 foot tower on a 2,874 feet mountain, hardly the eyesore that it is made out to be. A very small number of previous public comments mentioned the visual degradation to a wilderness experience if the St. Regis Mountain fire tower remained. It is my contention again that an overwhelming number of individuals and especially local citizens welcome the presence of this tower on the summit, and this mountain would not be the same without it.

It would be VERY short sighted to remove this tower. With high certainty I will pose a prediction that the same minority of individuals with opinions that this tower must come down would be complaining twenty years after the tower was torn down because summit vegetation is being trampled by those trying to enjoy the views from this very scenic summit. With a restored tower the summit of this mountain will be better protected. The same protection could only happen otherwise, with the restriction of where the several thousand hikers this mountain has each year can step or be on the summit. I also want to say very clearly and directly that the views from the summit do NOT equal those from the cab of this tower. I can say this from personal experience, however also consider, if the same views were available why would this tower as well as all of the others, ever been installed and then maintained for almost a century.

*David Petrelli*