



## Forest Fire Lookout Association – New York Chapter

603 Mohawk Ave – Scotia, New York 12302

Bill Starr, State Director  
Former N.Y.S. Forest Fire Observer

(518) 598-4370      pillsbury\_mtn@yahoo.com

### Press Release

June 24, 2010

In a June 17, 2010 article appearing in the Adirondack Journal the Dept. of Environmental Conservation estimates that a single fire tower restoration could cost up to \$50,000 and APA Chairman Curt Stiles claims that the state will be strapped with the cost of restoring the fire towers on Hurricane and St. Regis Mountains. Recent history points out that the state DEC has no grounds in making their \$50,000 claim.

Several Adirondack fire towers have been restored using money from charitable contributions and through various historical restoration grants. With the use of volunteer labor the state DEC's involvement has been in an administrative and support roll.

Presently the DEC owned fire tower on Mount Beacon, in Beacon, N.Y., is under restoration by a local volunteer group. Through historic preservation grants and charitable contributions this group has raised nearly \$45,000 to pay for the restoration.

The Mount Beacon fire tower is twice the height of both the Hurricane and St. Regis Mountain fire towers and is in far worse condition. The Friends of Mt. Beacon has hired a local contracting firm to perform the heavy and technical portion of the restoration work and coupled with volunteer workers, to perform the painting and light work on the fire tower, the total cost for the restoration will be \$30,000 to \$35,000. If the group had not hired the contracting firm their cost would be \$7,000 to \$10,000.

Presently two groups have formed and have expressed their desire to restore the fire towers on Hurricane and St. Regis Mountains through an "Adopt-A-Natural Resource" (AANR) agreement with the NYS-DEC, but so far no such agreement has made.

Both the Hurricane and St. Regis Mountain fire towers are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and through these listings historical restoration grant funds are available, therefore claiming the present financial crisis facing the state government should not be an issue. However before any grant money can not become available to these groups until the state enters into an AANR agreement.

By refusing to enter into these agreements the state is not fulfilling their obligations under federal and state historic preservation laws which state that each and every alternative must first be exhausted before the state can apply for permission to remove these two fire towers.

Lastly the Adirondack Park State Master Plan can easily be amended to create a historical zone that will bring both fire towers into compliance and thus allowing them to remain at their mountaintop locations.

**Source:** Denton Publications - Adirondack Journal - Elizabethtown, N.Y.

## APA seeks more time to weigh fate of fire towers

by Jonathan Alexander

**June 17, 2010**

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.