

Adirondack Almanack  
December 20, 2009

BLOG ENTRY

## Adirondack Council Seeks More Cell Tower Co-locations

The letter below is from the Adirondack Council calling on the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to change how it deals with applications for multiple cell towers on the same property. The Council is seeking to have APA amend their tower policy to encourage more co-location, which they say will limit environmental impacts from cell towers.

According to an APA announcement in the fall of 2008, since 1973, nearly 100 new and amended cellular carrier permits have been approved, including about 15 new free standing towers and about 25 tower and/or antenna replacements. About 50 towers have been co-located on free standing existing towers and other structures in that time.

Dear Mr. [George V.] Outcalt:

On behalf of the Adirondack Council, the Park's largest advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park, I wish to provide comments on the above-referenced project. As with similar projects in the past, the Adirondack Council is concerned with the lack of co-location of telecommunication towers in the Park, particularly those parcels which have multiple applications for towers.

I will not repeat the point we have already made to you and the Commissioners in our correspondence on the co-location issue from earlier this year, dated July 7, September 9 and September 10. All of these previous letters clearly state the need for better enforcement of the Agency's "towers policy" to seek co-location opportunities. For P2009-173, a Verizon tower for the same property was permitted on January 15, 2008. We urge the staff, and APA Commissioners, to carefully examine the need for a second new, stand-alone tower on the same site less than two years after permitting the first one. Companies should be encouraged or mandated to seek co-location when a nearby tower is available. Even a slightly taller tower will have less environmental impact, that having to construct a second tower. Depending on locations, a second tower may require additional tree cutting, road building and utilities to be installed.

As this is the third time in six months that non co-location of equipment within a short distance has been an issue and the other two times the projects have been approved, we suggest that the Agency seriously consider revising how it reviews and permits cell towers. One suggestion that the Council has made before, is to require that the applicant show its attempts to co-locate on existing structures within a reasonable distance of its site and explain in detail why no option other than a new tower is feasible. The second alternative is to add additional height on all new towers permitted by the Agency and strictly enforce the permit condition for co-location, so that any application in the immediate area of another would be directed to work with the other telecommunications company to co-locate on an existing structure. You could also take a hybrid

approach and adopt portions of both of these ideas. This can be accomplished by re-examining the “towers policy” and fixing some of the obvious flaws that are apparent now that the policy has been practically applied for over seven years.

It appears that telecommunications companies, for the most part, are not sharing space on each others’ towers, as was expected. Instead, they are moving onto the same property and putting up separate towers within a short distance of each other. We do not believe this complies with the “towers policy” or the Governor’s office / environmental groups / Verizon Wireless “Statement of Principles” for Northway towers from 2007.

We want to thank you for the actions you have taken so far to reduce the intrusion of towers in the Park. However, we believe more proactive steps need to be taken to further reduce the environmental impact of towers in the Adirondack Park to ensure they do not have an undue adverse impact.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Lorey  
Legislative Director

Posted by John Warren