

WNBZ
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Opponents to fire tower removal outweigh supporters

In two public hearings last week, public commenters opposed to a pair of state Department of Environmental Conservation proposals requiring the removal of the fire towers atop Hurricane and St. Regis mountains greatly outnumbered supporters of the plans.

Over the course of the two public hearings on Wednesday and Thursday, 39 citizens vocally expressed their opinions to DEC and Adirondack Park Agency officials. Of the 39 comments, 33 opposed removing the towers.

Four of the six comments in favor of the proposals came from the regions three primary environmental groups – the Adirondack Council, the Adirondack Mountain Club and Protect the Adirondacks.

The final decision is up to the APA Board of Commissioners.

DEC foresters argue their hands are tied by the state Land Master Plan, which requires the removal of non-conforming structures on state lands designated as a Wilderness, Canoe or Primitive area.

The Hurricane Mountain tower is located in the nearly 14,000-acre Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area and the St. Regis tower is in the St. Regis Canoe Area.

Proponents of the DEC plan argue the towers' removal avoids yet another inconsistency with the SLMP, while opponents counter the towers are a vital part of the regions cultural history.

Many commenters have stated, they believe the public comment period is simply a legal formality and carries no real weight over the final decision.

DEC officials have said that each comment will be taken into consideration.

Written comments received so far have yet to be tallied.

-Jon Alexander, 3-15-10