

WWNY
May 31, 2011

REPLACING RUSTIC GUARD RAILS IN ADIRONDACK PARK

Motorists traveling through the Adirondack Park are accustomed to seeing brown, rustic-style guide rails protecting them from going off the road.

The guard rails are designed to fit in with the park's wilderness-style aesthetics and character.

"It's got to blend in a little better. More of a natural color in a native surrounding," said Mike Flick, spokesperson for the New York State Department of Transportation.

The rustic-style guard rails were originally installed in the 1980s, primarily throughout the Adirondacks and the Catskills, as well as along a few other state highways.

But state transportation officials say, they haven't held up as well as originally expected.

"They age out of service," Flick said. "They get beat up from hard winters, plow strikes, car strikes, and what not."

Although the rails blend in with the scenery, officials say they are not as safe, and do not last as long, as the typical galvanized guard rails.

So the rustic-style rails are being replaced.

"We're not happy that they're being taken out and replaced with galvanized rails," said the Adirondack Council's Brian Houseal. "But we understand the public safety concern." It will cost the state about \$140 million over a ten year period to replace miles upon miles of the rails.

In St. Lawrence, Franklin, and Clinton counties, replacing the rustic rails with galvanized steel rails will cost over \$1.5 million.

"You wonder if the state is as broke as we all think it is," said Mark Hall, town of Fine supervisor. "But when you talk about safety, I guess stuff needs to be done."

"You'd think a little better planning in the past would have not had us in this situation," Hall said.