

For Release: IMMEDIATE

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**DEC RELEASES ADIRONDACK FIRE TOWER STUDY AND MANAGEMENT PLANS
FOR HURRICANE MOUNTAIN AND JAY MOUNTAIN AREAS****Public Meetings Slated for Feb. 25**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today released four related documents to the public: draft unit management plans (UMP) for the Jay Mountain Wilderness and the Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area, a draft amendment to the St. Regis Canoe Area and a study of fire towers in the Adirondack Park.

DEC will hold public meetings to take comments on the unit management plans and the draft amendment later this month (details below).

Adirondack Park Fire Tower Study

Fire towers once operated at 124 locations in New York State, 57 of those within today's Adirondack Park. The advent of the use of aircraft for fire sighting and the rising costs of manning the fire towers slowly led to the deactivation of most of these stations. This study provides recommendations for the future use of the 20 remaining fire towers on state forest preserve lands and four towers under DEC jurisdiction on private land, along with an assessment of associated observer cabins and radio facilities. It will serve to inform management proposals outlined in unit management plans on a unit-by-unit basis in conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP).

The study recommends that 22 of the 24 towers remain but suggests the removal of the Hurricane Mountain and St. Regis Mountain Fire Towers because neither conforms to the APSLMP. (The Hurricane and St. Regis fire towers are currently inaccessible.)

Hurricane Mountain UMP

The Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area comprises 13,784 acres of forest preserve lands in the Essex County towns of Elizabethtown, Jay, Keene and Lewis. Characterized by mountainous uplands, the primitive area includes Hurricane Mountain, the tallest (3,694 feet) and most popular recreational destination in the unit. In addition to removing the fire tower, actions proposed in the draft UMP include:

- Removal of the Gulf Brook lean-to.
- Rerouting of eroded sections of the trail network.
- Imposing a maximum group size of eight for overnight use and 15 for day use.

(MORE)

Jay Mountain Wilderness UMP

The Jay Mountain Wilderness comprises 7,951 acres of forest preserve land in the Essex County towns of Jay and Lewis, and is one of the smallest and least developed wilderness areas in the Park. Actions proposed in the draft UMP include:

- Rerouting sections of the old Jay Mountain herd path to establish a new Jay Mountain Trail with a trail head on Jay Mountain Road.
- Imposing a maximum group size of eight for overnight use and 15 for day use.

St. Regis Canoe Area UMP Amendment

The draft amendment to the St. Regis Canoe Area UMP proposes the removal of the St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower.

Public Meetings

A public meeting on both the Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area and the Jay Mountain Wilderness Draft UMPs will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 25, in the auditorium of the Keene Central School, located at 33 Market Street in Keene Valley.

A public meeting on the draft amendment to the St. Regis Canoe Area UMP will be held at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 25, in the Freer Science Building Auditorium at Paul Smiths College, located at the intersection of Route 86 and Route 30 in Paul Smiths.

Both meeting facilities are wheelchair accessible. Please provide any requests for specific accommodation in advance to 518-897-1248.

Copies of the documents are available on compact discs (CD) at DEC offices in Albany, Herkimer, Warrensburg, and Ray Brook. To request a copy, e-mail r5ump@gw.dec.state.ny.us or call 518-897-1291. CDs containing all four documents are also available for public review at the town offices of Santa Clara, Brighton and Harrietstown in Franklin County, and the town offices of Elizabethtown, Jay, Keene and Lewis in Essex County. The following libraries also have CDs containing the documents for public review:

- Saranac Lake Free Library, (518) 891-4190.
- Joan Weil Library, Paul Smiths College, (518)327-6313.
- Elizabethtown Library, (518) 873-2670.
- Keene Public Library, (518) 576-2200.
- Keene Valley Public Library, (518) 576-4335.

(MORE)

Additional information about the study, the draft UMPs and the draft amendment and the full documents may be viewed or downloaded at the DEC web site as follows:

- Fire Tower Study - www.dec.ny.gov/lands/62283.html
- Draft Amended St. Regis Canoe Area UMP - www.dec.ny.gov/lands/22588.html
- Draft Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area UMP - www.dec.ny.gov/lands/62167.html
- Draft Jay Mountain Wilderness UMP - www.dec.ny.gov/lands/61975.html

To Comment

The deadline for comments is March 26. Please submit written comments as follows:

- Draft Amended St. Regis Canoe Area UMP: Steve Guglielmi, Senior Forester, P.O. Box 296, Ray Brook, NY 12977.
- Draft Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area UMP or the Draft Jay Mountain Wilderness UMP: Rob Daley, Senior Forester, P.O. Box 296, Ray Brook, NY 12977.

Or e-mail a comment on either of the two Draft UMPs or the Draft Amendment to r5ump@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

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