

# **HURRICANE MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER STEWARD**

Welcome. Thank you for joining the Adirondack Mountain Club and the Friends of Hurricane Mountain effort to preserve and protect this special mountain and the forest that surrounds it.

We work under a Volunteer Service Agreement with the State of New York.

As Stewards, we have three primary missions:

1. Protect and preserve the tower and forest;
2. Inform and educate hikers about the tower and its role in protecting the Adirondack Forest;
3. Help hikers to have an enjoyable experience.

## **FIRST.....YOUR OWN PREPARATION**

Fill out and sign a Volunteer Application Form, before your first trip of the year.

Check the required equipment list and bring warm clothes. For every 1,000 feet you climb it can be 3-5 degrees colder than the trailhead. Wind chill makes it much colder on top. It is recommended to change to all dry clothes after hiking up in the morning. Bring water, at least 3 liters of water for a full day on top of an Adirondack summit. The constant wind dries you out. Protect yourself and your pack from rain. Use a pack cover and/or line your pack with a plastic trash bag, and pack your extra clothes in plastic or dry bags.

Get out of the tower and off the summit during thunderstorms. Stay below treeline until the storms pass (wait 40 minutes until the last time you heard thunder, if you hear thunder during that time restart the clock).

A first aid kit, map case and radio will be available for you to pick up at the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy in Keene Valley. Please return gear after your shift.

Sign in and out using the radio at the trailhead. There will be a cheat sheet in your map case on how to do that and what to say. Keep the radio on at all times and keep it on you while you talk to people on the summit. This is so you can hear if DEC Dispatch tries to get ahold of you or bad weather is coming in. If the radio doesn't have a charge, do not go into the backcountry.

It's also good to have a full charge of your cell phone before starting out in the morning. Verizon phones usually get good reception on the summit, but not along the trail. Put your phone on Airplane mode while hiking to keep from running down the battery.

Bring a large plastic bag for trash to carry off the mountain after your day is done. Please bring plastic gloves for the messy parts of this task. Do not attempt to deal with human waste without gloves.

Bring, and use, insect repellent. Lyme disease is in the region. Check yourself for ticks after you get home.

## 1. PROTECTING THE FOREST and the TOWER

Engage hikers in conversation about Hurricane. You should give new arrivals some time to catch their breath and take care of their basic needs (think Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).

Point out surrounding peaks and other features to hikers. Share the history of the tower and the mountain. People who enjoy and value their surroundings are most likely to take good care of them, both now and in the future.

The concept of stewardship is a beautiful one! It is the idea that we humans are only on this great, green Earth for a very short time, and that it will continue its infinite spin long after we're gone. With that we are endowed with responsibility. And our most magnificent duty is to leave it spinning freely, in every way, just as we found it.

And so it is that being a steward is a noble profession. For after you teach yourself to care, you can begin to teach others. This wilderness is a special place. That specialness is what draws people here. We all have a role in protecting it.

The tower was erected to protect this wilderness. That is what makes it historically important. That is what connects the tower to hikers who visit the summit today.

While we DO NOT have the authority to enforce state rules for the Hurricane Wilderness, we can and should encourage hikers to abide by them using the Authority of the Resource Technique.

### PROTECTING THE TOWER

Safety. For safety, only 6 people should be in the tower cab at once.

Vandalism. Other fire towers in the Adirondacks are often targets of vandals. Graffiti, broken windows, broken fencing and common problems.

The Tower is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Sites. It is a publicly owned historic site. We don't have legal authority to stop someone from vandalizing the tower, but persuasion usually works. The fencing around the stairs is important for safety and should be protected. Report any instances of vandalism directly to the DEC.

The Tower was reopened for public access in the Fall of 2015. New stairs, flooring and protective fencing were installed by a crew from the Student Conservation Association and Friends of Hurricane Mountain volunteers. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation paid for materials, flew them to the site, and funded the SCA crew.

### PROTECTING THE FOREST. LEAVE NO TRACE.

Hikers should leave the trails and mountain top as they find them. That means not cutting trees and branches. Avoid walking on fragile summit vegetation and soil/gravel. There is plenty of rock on the top of Hurricane, so it is easy to avoid disturbing trees and plants.

The essential rule for hikers is to carry out whatever you carry into the woods. This includes garbage and even biodegradable food scraps. Burying garbage is not allowed.

There is an outhouse located below the summit, north of the trail. A sign points the way. Hikers should use this facility, and keep it tidy, disposing of toilet paper inside.

CAMPING. Camping is permitted in the Hurricane Wilderness. Tents must be placed at least 150 feet from any trail or stream or pond but camping at designated sites should be encouraged (most campers do not have the skills to pristine camp). Camping is also permitted at designated areas (near the Gulf Brook cross on the north trail) and at lean-tos (Gulf Brook and the Biesemeyer Lean-to at Lost Pond.)

For groups of 10 or more, and to stay more than three nights, a permit is required from a Ranger.

Camping is NOT ALLOWED on the summit, because the rock summit exceeds 3,500 feet. Also, the trail runs right through the middle.

DOGS. As a matter of common sense and safety, dogs should be kept under control (or leashed) near other hikers and especially children and other dogs. There is not a regulation to keep your dog on leash at all times in the Hurricane Wilderness.

## 2. INFORM AND EDUCATE

### TIMING AND APPROACH

Timing is everything! So it is with Stewarding! When you approach a hiker you have only a very brief window of opportunity in which to influence someone's hiking habits. If, on the other hand, you are concise, convincing, connected, and timely, then you have done your very best to make your message heard.

So if timing is everything, how do you know when the time is right? How do you know when the person is "ready" to listen to you, and hear you, and learn from you, and not just have your words go in one ear and out the other? Well, there's a simple three step process that will get you there. I call it checking in, checking out, and orchestrating the moment.

Checking in - Chances are that the moment of one's arrival on the summit may not be the best time for them to hear your whole rap. Remember that if people are exhausted or exhilarated, cold or hot, hungry or thirsty, windblown or wet, they are not ready to listen. Psychologist Abraham Maslow captured this idea in his "hierarchy of needs". People cannot focus on higher brain functioning when more basic physiological needs have not been met.

Chances are, when people arrive on the summit, they aren't ready to talk. Although they may not be ready to hear your whole spiel, you may still want to "check in" with them. You can make small talk about where they came from, or the weather, congratulate them on reaching the summit, and at the same time introduce yourself. Let people know that you would like to speak with them sometime before they leave the summit. Some people will be ready for your delivery right then and there. Go for it! Many will not be ready. Encourage these folks to check back with you before they leave. This helps to insure that they will come to you when they feel ready to listen. This is important!

Checking out - This happens at the same time as you're checking in. You're checking people out in order to better assess your audience, and tailor your presentation to them. So as a person hikes up take notice of who they are. Are they following Leave No Trace or leaving orange peels everywhere? Find out if people are alone or hiking with a group. Are they first time hikers or wily old mountaineers? Do they seem to be in a hurry or planning to stay a while? Try your best to quickly get an idea of who people are, what they know, and when they may be ready to listen. When speaking with people do your best to acknowledge their background and experience. This helps them feel that you are on their level.

It's also helpful to take a close look at people, and try to remember what they look like, what they're wearing, what kind of pack they're carrying, or any other identifying characteristics. This will help you later on when you're trying to figure out who you have or have not spoken with; or in the unfortunate event that this person is involved in a search and rescue effort. Your words will seem more directed and will be more effective if people feel that you've recognized them and know who they are.

Orchestrating the moment - Now take what you've learned, and use it to figure out not only what to say and how to say it, but when to say it. This will all be different if you're talking to a Girl Scout troop, or a middle-aged couple, or some beer drinking bad boys. A first time hiker would need to hear your whole rap, while the woodsy old timer might only get a quick review to confirm that they actually know what they think they know. Use what you've learned. If someone is a member of a group, try to gather the whole group and speak to them all at once. This saves you some talking, and speaking to the group as a whole increases their compliance as they're more likely to monitor and remind one another. If someone is tired, or hungry, or cold, suggest that they have some lunch or get a jacket on before you talk to them. Allow people to satisfy their needs, get settled, and be "ready" to listen without distraction. Then give it all you've got!

I once made the mistake of trying to speak to a group of hungry Boy Scouts while they were eating lunch. I may as well have been speaking to the stones. They were so busy eating that my words were just blown away by the wind. I stopped where I was and asked them to call me when their lunch was finished. I was truly amazed the second time around by having their totally undivided attention.

On the busiest of holiday weekends, with a couple of hundred people on the summit, you'll be doing well just to deliver a basic message to the people who comes up. You just won't have enough time to use the whole process we've described here. That's OK. Do the best you can. You may have to check in, check out, and orchestrate the moment all at the same time.

## HISTORY OF THE TOWER

Back in 1876, Adirondack surveyor Verplanck Colvin used Hurricane as one of his key survey peaks. A wooden pole survey tower was put up, and wrought iron "eyes" used to anchor the tower can still be seen in the rock just north of the tower.

The State of New York responded to a series of devastating forest fires in the first decade of the 20th Century by establishing fire observation stations on many mountains in the Adirondacks. A fire observer station was established on Hurricane in April 1910, but without a tower because the bald summit already offered 360 degree views. Rangers strung 2½ miles of phone wire to the summit.

The fire stations, new logging regulations and an alert public all helped to reduce the forest fire damage.

The present tower was erected in 1919. It was one of 13 steel towers built that year, and is 35-feet tall.

While the tower cab offered protection from the weather, the observers actually lived in a cabin at the foot of the East trail, often with their families for the summer. The cabin was demolished in 1985.

Nearly 30 different observers (all men) served on top of Hurricane from 1910 until the tower was closed in 1973.

Though the state originally planned to remove the tower, a local citizen effort helped to turn that decision around, and the tower was reopened in the fall of 2015, after partial rehabilitation. The rehabilitation work continues.

### THE ADIRONDACK WILDERNESS.

The Adirondack State Park consists of 6 million acres, and is the largest park in the nation, outside of Alaska. It is roughly the size of Vermont and is larger than Yellowstone, Glacier, Everglades and Grand Canyon National Parks, combined.

The State Forest Preserve within the park makes up approximately 2.5 million acres, and is protected by the New York State Constitution, thanks to an 1894 amendment approved by the voters. The state has classified certain areas as specially protected areas, including the Hurricane Mountain Wilderness, the Central and Outer High Peaks Wilderness, and more.

The Adirondacks contain 85% of all wilderness in the eastern United States.

Protecting these vast wilderness areas, which are within a one-drive for 60 million people, is a challenge. Consequently, members of the public are the backbone of protection. Residents of the park and the entire region state play a huge role in enjoying and protecting the wilderness, and have for more than a century.

Campers and hikers helped reduce fire danger back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and then significantly reduced litter, trail erosion and damage to alpine vegetation in recent decades.

## 3. HELPING HIKERS

People will often look at you as an authority figure, maybe even think of you as a Ranger. But we have absolutely no authority to make hikers follow the rules or use good sense. We are advisory only. We are not law enforcement.

**REMEMBER.** You are not responsible for hiker safety. We may offer assistance and advice. We may use our radio to report emergencies. But NYS Rangers have made it clear that we are not to assume responsibility for hikers. We have no search and rescue responsibilities.

Our role is to transmit information.

Emergency calls.

In case of serious injuries that you see on the summit, or that is reported to you, use your radio to call DEC Dispatch immediately. Also call DEC Dispatch to report lost hikers, a fire, or unsafe conditions (like a biting dog). Write down details of the incident on our incident report form that is in your map case-- who, what, what, where-- because the dispatchers will ask you those questions. After you fill out an incident report, leave it in the map case and contact Kayla (315-706-8704) or [kaylaw@adk.org](mailto:kaylaw@adk.org) immediately.

The phone number for DEC Dispatch is 518-891-0235. Other advice from Rangers:

Do not give away your water, or clothes that you need to stay warm on the summit.

You may offer band aids, Ibuprofen, and/or aspirin or anything else in your first aid kit. If something is running low, contact Kayla.

### Trail and hiking information:

#### There are three trails to the Hurricane summit.

South. From Rt 9N, this trail was significantly rebuilt and improved in 2014. It is 3.4 miles long and rises 2,000 feet.

North. From Crow Clearing off O'Toole Road, this trail rises 1,600 feet over 3 miles. The first mile is virtually flat.

East. From Hurricane Road in Elizabethtown, this was the old observer's trail. It climbs 1,700 feet over a distance of 2.7 miles, though the first half mile is also virtually flat.

The Adirondack Mountain Club has a strict rule about providing information. We only give objective information about the trail (distance and elevation).

If you encounter hikers on the trail or at the summit, tell them how far it is and how high they have to climb but refrain from predicting how long it will take them. Everyone has their own pace.

You can make suggestions about equipment if it has to do with safety. Do remember that many people climb Hurricane in light weight sneakers, and some people climb in sandals. People assume their own risk when they hike in the Adirondack Mountains.

You can suggest other comparable hikes, such as Noonmark, Jay Mt. or Hopkins. Or other fire towers in the area like Poke-O-Moonshine or Belfrey.

Urge hikers to get a map and trail guidebook. They are available at The Mountaineer in Keene Valley, at the ADK High Peaks Information Center at the Heart Lake Program Center and at stores in Lake Placid.

#### OTHER REFERENCES FOR YOU AND FOR HIKERS:

Friends of Hurricane Mountain website ([www.hurricanefiretower.org](http://www.hurricanefiretower.org)) and Facebook page.

NYS DEC website ([www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov))

Adirondack Mountain Club website ([www.adk.org](http://www.adk.org))

Adirondack Fire Towers -- the Northern District. By Martin Podskoch. 2005. Purple Mountain Press.

Views from on High. By John P. Freeman and Jim Schneider. 2021. Adirondack Mountain Club.

National Weather Service website ([www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov))

## APPENDICIES

### Leave No Trace Principles

Leave No Trace principles were developed in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special considerations for the area you'll be visiting.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Always leave your itinerary with someone at home.
- Travel in small groups to minimize impacts.

#### 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Hike in the middle of the trail; walk through (not around) puddles/mud.
- Stay off of vegetation; walk on rocks where possible.
- Camp in designated sites where possible.
- In other areas, don't camp within 150 feet of water, trail, or a road.

#### 3. Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack out all trash (including toilet paper), leftover food, and litter.
- Use existing privies, or dig a 6-8 inch deep cathole at least 150 feet from water.
- Wash yourself and dishes at least 150 feet from water. If needed, use only small amounts of biodegradable soap.

#### 4. Leave What You Find

- Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.
- Let photos, drawings, or journals help capture your memories.
- Do not build structures or furniture or dig trenches.

#### 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Use a portable stove to avoid the lasting impact of a fire.
- Where fires are permitted, use existing fire rings and collect only downed wood.
- Burn all fires to ash, put out campfires completely, and hide traces of fire.

## 6. Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance.
- Avoid wildlife during mating, nesting, and other sensitive times.
- Control pets at all times, and clean up after them.

## 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Let natural sounds prevail; avoid loud sounds and voices.
- Be courteous and yield to other users; take breaks to one side of the trail.

# HISTORY OF THE ADIRONDACKS

by Tony Goodwin

(reprinted with permission from the Adirondack Mountain Club Trail Guide to the High Peaks)

The Adirondack region of northern New York is unique in many ways. It contains the only mountains in the eastern United States that are not geologically Appalachian. In the late 1800s it was the first forested area in the nation to benefit from enlightened conservation measures. At roughly the same time it was also the most prestigious resort area in the country. In the 20th century, the Adirondacks became the only place in the Western Hemisphere to host two Winter Olympiads. In the 1970s the region was the first of significant size in the nation to experience comprehensive land use controls. The Adirondack Forest Preserve (see below) is part of the only wild lands preserve in the nation whose fate lies in the hands of the voters of the entire state in which it is located.

Geologically, the Adirondacks are part of the Canadian Shield, a vast terrain of ancient Precambrian igneous and metamorphic rock that underlies about half of Canada and constitutes the nucleus of the North American continent. In the United States the Shield bedrock mostly lies concealed under younger Paleozoic sedimentary rock strata, but it is well exposed in a few regions, among them the Adirondacks. The Adirondacks are visibly connected across the Thousand Islands to the Grenville Province of the eastern side of the Shield, which is approximately one billion years old. Upward doming of the Adirondack mass in the past few million years - a process that is still going on - is responsible for the erosional stripping of the younger rock cover and exposure of the ancient bedrock. The rocks here are mainly gneisses of a wide range of composition. One of the more interesting and geologically puzzling rocks is the enormous anorthosite mass that makes up nearly all of the High Peaks region. A nearly monomineralic rock was apparently formed at depths of up to fifteen miles below the surface. It is nearly identical to some of the rocks brought back from the moon.

The present Adirondack landscape is geologically young, a product of erosion initiated by the ongoing doming. The stream-carved topography has been extensively



modified by the sculpturing of glaciers which, on at least four widely separated occasions during the Ice Age, completely covered the mountains.

Ecologically, the Adirondacks are part of a vegetation transition zone, with the northern, largely coniferous boreal forest (from the Greek god Boreas, owner of the north wind, whose name can be found on a mountain and a series of ponds in the High Peaks region) and the southern deciduous forest, exemplified by beech/maple stands, intermingling to present a pleasing array of forest tree species. Different vegetation zones are also encountered as one ascends the higher mountains in the Adirondacks; the tops of the highest peaks are truly arctic, with mosses and lichens that are common hundreds of miles to the north.

A rugged and heavily forested region, the Adirondacks were generally not hospitable to native Americans, who used the region principally for hunting and occasionally for fighting. Remnants of ancient campgrounds have been found in some locations. The native legacy survives principally in such place names as Indian Carry, on the Raquette River-Saranac Lake canoe route, and the Oswegatchie River in the northwest Adirondacks. The first white man to see the Adirondacks was likely the French explorer Jacques Cartier, who on his first trip up the St. Lawrence River in 1535 stood on top of Mont Royal (now within the city of Montréal) and discerned high ground to the south. Closer looks were had by Samuel de Champlain and Henry Hudson, who came from the north and south, respectively, by coincidence within a few weeks of each other in 1609.

For the next two centuries the Champlain Valley to the east of the Adirondacks was a battleground. Iroquois, Algonquin, French, British and eventually American fighters struggled for control over the valley and with its supremacy over the continent. Settlers slowly filled the St. Lawrence Valley to the north, the Mohawk Valley to the south, and somewhat later the Black River Valley to the west. Meanwhile the vast, rolling forests of the interior slumbered in virtual anonymity, disturbed only by an occasional hunter, timber cruiser or wanderer.

With the coming of the 19th century, people discovered the Adirondacks. Virtually unknown as late as the 1830s (the source of the Nile River was located before the source of the Hudson), by 1850 the Adirondacks made New York the leading timber-producing state in the nation. This distinction did not last for long, though, as the supply of timber was quickly brought close to extinction. Meanwhile, mineral resources, particularly iron, were being exploited.

After the Civil War, people began to look toward the Adirondacks for recreation as well as for financial gain. An economic boom, increasing acceptability of leisure time, and the publication of a single book, "Adventures in the Wilderness" by Reverend William H. Murray in 1869, combined to create a veritable flood of vacationers descending upon the Adirondacks. To serve them, a new industry, characterized by grand hotels and rustic guides, sprang up. Simultaneously, thanks to the pioneering work of Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, the Adirondacks, particularly the Saranac Lake area, became known far and wide as a mecca for tubercular patients.

In the decades following the Civil War the idea of conservation began to take on some legitimacy, thanks in large part to the book "Man and Nature" written by George Perkins Marsh in 1864. In this remarkably influential book, which noted historian Lewis Mumford once called "the fountainhead of the American conservation movement," Marsh called for the implementation of such practices as reforestation and watershed protection, and suggested that the Adirondacks were a good laboratory for testing these ideas. Another trend in the middle decades of the 19th century was an increasing acceptance of wilderness. This was brought about partly through the work of poets such as William Cullen

Bryant, writers such as Henry David Thoreau, and artists such as Frederick Church. Also contributing to this trend was no longer seen as a physical threat, at least not in the more populous, affluent East.

Vacationers, tubercular patients, conservationists, wilderness devotees - all of these people wanted to see the resources of the Adirondacks preserved. This was partially achieved in 1885, when, after much political wrangling, the New York State legislature created the Adirondack Forest Preserve and directed that "the lands now or hereafter constituting the Forest Preserve shall be forever kept as wild lands." This action marked the first time a state government had set aside a significant piece of wilderness for reasons other than its scenic uniqueness.

In 1892, the legislature created the Adirondack State Park, consisting of Adirondack Forest Preserve land plus all privately owned land within a somewhat arbitrary boundary surrounding the Adirondacks, known as the "blue line" because it was drawn in blue on a large state map when it was first established. In 1894, in response to continuing abuses of the Forest Preserve law, the state's voters approved the inclusion of the "forever wild" portion of that law in the constitution of New York State, thus creating the only wild land preserve in the nation that has constitutional protection. Today the Forest Preserve consists of 2.5 million acres, being those lands owned by the people of the State of New York that are within the 6-million-acre Adirondack State Park, which is the largest park in the nation outside of Alaska.

In the first decade of the 20th century, raging fires consumed hundreds of thousands of acres of prime Adirondack forest lands; the scars from these fires can still be seen in many locations, both in exposed rock and in vegetation patterns. After World War I, tourism gradually took over as the primary industry in the Adirondacks. The arrival of the automobile, the invention of theme parks (some of the very first of which were in the Adirondacks), the development of winter sports facilities (with Lake Placid hosting the Winter Olympics in 1932), the increasing popularity of camping and hiking, and the growth of the second-home industry all brought such pressures to bear on the region that in 1968 Governor Nelson Rockefeller created a Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks. This commission made 181 recommendations, chief among them that a comprehensive land use plan, covering both public and private lands, be put in place and administered. This was accomplished by 1973, with the creation of the land use plans and the Adirondack Park Agency to manage them. While the plans and the Agency have remained controversial, they are indicative of the need to address the issues facing the Adirondacks boldly and innovatively.

In 1985, there were 112,000 permanent residents and 90,000 seasonal residents in the 9375-square-mile Adirondack Park, which is roughly the size of the state of Vermont. Recreation, forestry, mining and agriculture are the principal industries in the Park.