ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY
VISUAL ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The following methodology should be used to determine the visibility of a tower or other tall structure from public use areas. Public use areas include highways, roads, trails, vistas, public or semi-public buildings, lakes, rivers, campgrounds, parks, beaches, recreation areas, historic sites, natural and man-made attractions and any other areas where public use is evident. The methodology has been designed to facilitate the Agency's assessment of the visual or aesthetic impacts of towers and other tall structures generally in excess of 40 feet in overall height or otherwise having the potential to be readily visible from off-site locations. Agency staff must be present during the field analysis to verify the results of the visual assessment. Contact the Agency's assigned Environmental Program Specialist to schedule the visual analysis field assessment.

1. Provide a 7.5-minute topographic map of the area within five miles of the proposed tower or other tall structure. Delineate on the map the following view-sheds using the proposed structure's location as the center point: Foreground (0 to 1 mile), middle-round (1 to 3 miles) and background (3 to 5 miles). Also, delineate by computerized analysis all areas on the map within the 5 mile radius where the proposed structure would be visible based on topography alone (USGS 20 ft. contours) and the location of all public use areas (identified above). The public use areas must be clearly identified on the map. A second map may be included that incorporates an average vegetation height in the computerized analysis (e.g., 50 or 60 feet).

2. Assess the extent of the structure's actual visibility from each public use area identified in step 1 above. This can be done by floating a balloon at the height of the tower or other tall structure and checking each of the identified public use areas that are within the shaded areas on the map. A brightly colored balloon or collection of balloons may be the best "target" for this step. Floating two balloons at the proposed tower location, one at the proposed height of the tower and another "marker balloon" at a higher elevation will help locate the proposed structure on the landscape. Other possible "targets" include a tarp, scaffolding or a crane. Balloons are not intended to simulate the structure; they are simply used to mark the location and the height of the structure on the landscape. However, knowing the dimension of the balloon (e.g., three feet) will help with producing the required photographic simulations.

3. Provide a map with the same information on it as the first map that identifies the public use areas and portions of these areas from which the proposed structure will actually be visible and the photo stations from which photographs were taken. Also provide GPS coordinates for the selected photo station at each view point and identify the photo stations by number on the map.

4. Provide high quality representative photographs from each photo station showing the existing view and the view with the proposed structure simulated in the photograph. Using a single lens reflex (SRL) camera, provide at least two 8 in. x 10 in. photographs from each identified viewing station using 55mm and 85mm camera lenses (or digital equivalent). A third photograph using a 120mm or greater camera lens may be helpful to aid in the development of the simulations. Higher camera lenses are also useful to simulate closer views from bodies of water when boats are not available or practical to take actual photographs from the water-body. All photographs should be labeled and indexed to a table describing the photographs' locations, the distance from the proposed structure; the GPS coordinates of the photo station and the size (mm) of the camera lens.

5. In consultation with Agency staff, determine if representative line-of-sight profiles should be prepared from each photo station depicting the proposed structure, existing topography and heights of intervening vegetation and provide the necessary line-of-sight profiles.

6. Provide a detailed written report of the structure's visibility in terms of what portions of the structure will be seen, the distance from the viewing point to the proposed structure, the location and height of intervening vegetation, plans for protecting the existing vegetation around or near the structure, plans for planting new trees or other vegetation, and for roads and trails, the duration (time and distance) of the view. Describe the visible portions of the structures in terms of color, reflectivity, lighting (if any) and its visibility at different times of the year (e.g., leaf-on and leaf-off conditions).

A vegetative screening plan may be required that includes: a tree protection zone within a certain distance of the structure (e.g., no vegetative cutting easement), a vegetation planting plan that will screen the structure within a given time frame or any other measures that will minimize or mitigate the potential visibility of the new structure as viewed from the identified public use areas.