



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
January 2021**

The start of a new year! A year filled with opportunities! You can have the opportunity to be the 100th member of our New York State Chapter – hurry before someone else grabs the slot and the prize! You have the opportunity to be the person who will receive a patch for assisting with a work project in 2021! You have the opportunity to help out our NYS Chapter by donating old fire tower photos you may have, assisting with updating the NHLR and Lost Lookout web pages, helping to organize a work project, ... The possibilities are endless and so are the rewards when you realize the role you have played in preserving a fire tower and its history! These structures are truly irreplaceable and it is up to all of us to do what we can to keep them!

We started off the new year with our monthly photo contest on our Facebook page and the winner is Joe Dlugolecki with his photograph of Goodnow Fire Tower taken in January of 2019. Congratulations Joe! And a big thank you to all who continue to participate in this fun monthly contest. In addition to having their photograph here, their photo is also the cover photo for our Facebook page next month.



Additionally we started another Facebook activity called Mystery Monday in which we are posting a photograph that contains a bit of mystery. It could be we really do not know what the photo is of, or it could be we give some small details and hope the visitor can determine what they are looking it. We are getting some great photos sent to us for this fun weekly event and greatly appreciate all the enthusiasm! Here is an example for you to solve.

We are hoping to connect a bit more with our northeastern neighbors in 2021. We will be adding a Northeastern Section to this newsletter and hope that we may find some partnerships that will benefit all of us.

Parks and Trails Partnership Grant Funds are available: Check out the web page for details. Take note there are webinars scheduled beginning January 20th to help you understand your eligibility and the process. The application deadline is March 11th, so act accordingly! <https://www.ptny.org/our-work/support/park-trail-partnership-program>

Forest Preserve Fire Tower Stewardship Funds are available for 2021. If you are a Friends Group with a VSA and did not get the information about this grant, please let me know. This grant can cover Education and Outreach and Maintenance and Rehabilitation.

In 2021 as we work toward new opportunities, we have a couple of success stories to pass along this month: Rock Rift, Bramley, and Makomis Fire Towers are all making great progress toward becoming fire towers that will be reopened to the public.

Makomis Fire Tower Project: In an effort to recreate an important symbol of Adirondack history, increase tourism in the community which improves the local economy, and to create educational opportunities in the Village of Speculator an effort has been underway to rebuild the historic Makomis Fire Tower at the Village Park. This tower is one of the first eleven steel fire towers erected in the Adirondacks in 1912. The project has an estimated cost of \$165,000.00. Grant awards totaling \$110,000 have already been awarded through a DEC Smart Growth Grant and the Adirondack Foundation, leaving just \$55,000.00 to be raised to complete the project. How can you be involved? Donations of all sizes are welcome. You can also consider sponsoring a step or a landing. All donations will be recognized. Questions and requests for information can be directed to makomistower@gmail.com. All donations can be sent directly to the Village of Speculator at PO Box 396 Speculator, NY 12164. XXX

Bramley Mt Fire Tower: Remember last month when we wrote about the Challenge Grant that the Friends of Bramley Mountain had? Well guess what – Challenge met! In only a few weeks' time, supporters of the Bramley Mountain Fire Tower project met the \$5000 challenge grant, raising a total of \$10,000! The Friends say “We owe a huge THANK YOU to our benefactor Gale K. for her generous matching gift, and to each of you who stepped up to get us to the top. Every dollar puts us that much closer to climbing the stairs of the actual tower, so don't stop now. We've still got a ways to go. “ Congratulations on meeting this challenge! For more information on this exciting project, check out their web page: <https://bramleymountainfiretower.org/> XXXXX

Rock Rift Fire Tower: The Town of Tompkins has continued it's work behind the scenes at Rock Rift. Last year they had applied for the tower to be listed on the National Historic Register. Once that was granted, they applied for a grant from the Preservation League. That grant was awarded and will allow them to obtain an engineering report. Here is a local [newspaper article](#) with more information about the project and the grant. The bulk of the work that may be needed will be paid for through donations. If you would like to donate, please send a check to Supervisor William Layton Rock Rift Fire Tower Restoration Project PO Box 139 Trout Creek, NY 13847.

Photo credits: Paul Hartmann collection, Makomis (1974), Bramley (1974), Rock Rift (Unknown).



In Memoriam

We lost a great Ranger this past month. Bill Morse was a Lt. Forest Ranger with the NYSDEC who served for many years. He was fondly talked about in our household and often praised by my Dad for his excellent horseshoe play! Bill was a family man whose son, Robert is now a Lt. Forest Ranger in Region 3, following in his Dad's footsteps. Our condolences to the family. <https://www.humistonfuneralhome.com/obituary/William-Morse>

Around the State

Poke-O-Moonshine: There are events coming up at Poke O on January 23rd and January 30th. Take a look at the details on the Friends web page: <https://www.pokeomoonshine.org/events> Additionally, some may have wondered (myself included) how the newly acquired OSI properties in the area might affect the tower and trails. David Thomas-Train of the Friends of Poke O Moonshine assures me there will be no changes to the tower or trails, but there may be added bonus trails nearby as OSI develops some old logging roads in the area! https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/osi-buys-2200-acres-in-eastern-adirondacks?mc_cid=84a469472d&mc_eid=52401a349c

Red Hill Fire Tower: The new trail to Red Hill Fire Tower is open! While the NYSDEC has not made any official announcements, they did lead a First Day Hike to the tower via the new trail. Red Hill Committee Chair Doug Hamilton went along and said the new trail was beautiful. That was enough to encourage me to visit! The new trail is 1.8 miles from the Fire Department in the Village of Claryville. Head east on County Route 19, going past the Red Hill Road to reach the trailhead on your right. The trail head was plowed and should hold 8 to 10 cars. The trailhead and first 1.1 miles of the new blue marked trail is through NYCDEP lands, switchbacking through a hemlock forest and eventually mixed hardwoods. It passes through several sets of typical Catskill ledges, even going past an overhang that may actually have a cave under it. There are several sets of stone steps very nicely constructed through the rock ledges along the way. The blue marked trail joins the old yellow trail from Dinch Road at 1.4 miles and continues to the tower from there. Total mileage is 2 miles, elevation gain is 1200 feet. Doug had advocated for this new trail for many years and we thank the NYSDEC and particularly the NYCDEP for making this partnership happen. NYCDEP lands do not have the same constraints as working on Forest Preserve, thus allowing some heavy equipment to be used for that first 1.1 miles of trail, allowing for a fantastic trail! My only disappointment was that there was absolutely no mention of the volunteer work done to restore the fire tower or the continued volunteer maintenance and stewardship presence on the mountain for the last 24 years. The Red Hill Fire Tower Committee has put in thousands of hours over the years and we will advocate for some acknowledgment in the future.



Wrapping up 2020: As 2020 ended, FFLA Chapters across America provided year end reports of activities and these reports are all posted on the national web page: <http://ffla.org/chapter-reports.html> These reports do include NY, but I will summarize some of the items contained in that report here. Despite Covid-19 causing all of us to stop and rethink how we were interacting with others and with inanimate objects like fire towers, much was accomplished in 2020. Our membership numbers, our donations, our Facebook members, our available funds all continued to grow thanks to all of you! We were also able to get some work done on fire towers despite Covid-19, again thanks to all of you! Our Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event was once again very successful and even spread to other states, thanks to all of you who participated! We started our State Chapter web page, thanks to the generous work donated by Retired Forest Ranger Paul Hartmann and we have a significant donation of photographs and memorabilia donated by FFLA Eastern Deputy Chair Mark Haughwout. Thanks to web master Tom Rankin for putting it together and keeping it up to date! We have much to do in 2021, but I am confident that with all of your help, we will accomplish a great deal!

“What did the Observer do all day?” That is likely one of the most frequently asked questions of today's fire tower stewards. Well here is the answer to that in an “official memo” format.

“Observer's Duties – The Observer has the responsibility of accurately and promptly reporting all forest fires which can be detected from the forest fire observation station to which he has been assigned. He mans the tower during all daylight hours when a forest fire hazard exists and at such other times as the Ranger or District Ranger may specify. He may be required to be on duty any day of the week including Sundays and Holidays and for considerably more than 8 hours per day when forest fire hazard conditions prevail. He is required to operate two-way radio when such equipment is in his tower and to maintain a radio log. He is expected to maintain the trail and telephone line to his station, and during periods of wet weather he may be temporarily assigned to other work as specified by the District Ranger. He may have to act as dispatcher particularly during the initial stages of a fire. He makes out the required Observer reports and maintains a visitors register. He maintains the tower and cabin in a neat and clean condition and is held responsible for the proper care and use of all State property assigned to his station. NOTE: The hours for Observer's will be as follows: Under normal or low hazard conditions the Observer will be on duty from 9:00am to 5:00pm. When forest fire hazard conditions prevail, the Observer will be on duty from 9:00 until dusk, and sometimes longer when requested by the District Ranger or Forest Ranger in charge. When working on trails, etc. away from the tower, the work hours will be established by the Forest Ranger in charge. The normal work week will be 6 days including Saturday and Sunday. When forest fire hazard conditions prevail the Observer may be on duty 7 days a week, and if possible would adjust the day off to correspond with current weather conditions. Probably the most important requirement of an Observer is his faithfulness to his job. It would be better to have no Observer assigned to a station than to have one who is being depended upon to be on duty in the tower, when he is not.” From NYSDEC Fire Observation Stations document dated August 1968.

My Dad loved his job as an Observer and he also enjoyed some of the “other related duties” he was assigned. Sometimes he was on Search and Rescue, sometimes he painted state lines, he built trails and lean-tos, moved lean-tos, built new trails, maintained trails, and even took down other fire towers. There was one exception to his love of these other duties - rainy Mondays. Remember it states *during periods of wet weather he may be temporarily assigned to other work as specified by the District Ranger*. Rainy Mondays meant he would get assigned garbage pick up at campgrounds and primitive campsites! Does anyone else have any memories they would care to share about other related duties? We are always willing to provide a space to share them here.

Membership: If you are not a member or perhaps overlooked renewing your membership, please take a moment and think about joining or renewing. You can do so online quickly and easily <http://ffla.org/learn-more--join.html> and your membership helps the good work of this Chapter a great deal! Thank you!

FFLA Grant Program: Don't forget that the FFLA offers grants for restoration or emergency stabilization. Last year not all grants were used, so do consider taking advantage of this opportunity. <http://ffla.org/restoration-grants.html>

Could you or your Friends group use some FFLA brochures? We have plenty, just send me a note and I will get some to you!

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