



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



What an exciting month to be a member of the NYS Chapter of the FFLA! Our volunteers have been out there making things happen along with our NYSDEC partners, community members, other organizations, and local counties. Read on for all of the details!

Let's start with thanking the volunteers who have hung in there for the Pillsbury Fire Tower project! We have been working on this one for a few years with the ultimate goal being to re-open the cab of the fire tower for visitors. We have had terrible weather, illness, road closures and more in our way, but we got it done! On July 24th, (a perfect weather day), 7 of us with heavy packs made our way up the trail to complete the restoration of the last landings. We had completed the steps last year. With that done, the DEC can now have the radio equipment upgraded and moved and we can go back in and repair the fencing and complete the work necessary to re-open the cab to visitors. Thank you for this work day goes to John S., Ron H., Tom R., Adam N., Jeremy P., and Jim H. It felt so good to make this step happen!

Next up was a wonderful partnership with the Adirondack 46ers who spent a day working at Poke-O-Moonshine. From John S. of the 46er crew are some photos and information about the actual work that was done: "Today the 46er Trail Crew made a total of 63 water bars on the trail to Poke-o-Moonshine from the Observers trailhead. We remade all of the existing water bars, widening and flattening them out, with downward slope, to ensure not only that the water gets off the trail, but that hikers walk through rather than around the water bars." Thank you to the 46er Trail Crew! Poke-O-Moonshine has also received a significant grant: <https://www.pokeomoonshine.org/> (Photo from John Sasso)

This month's photo contest winner fits here very well. The winner was Emil Klymkow with a photo of the Blue Mountain Observer's cabin and fire tower. I never vote in the contest, but in this case I was thrilled with the winning photo for several reasons. Most of the submissions are current tower photos. This one is more historical, taken in the early 90's according to Emil. Secondly, we have been working with our DEC liaison, Nick, on restoring the tower and cabin for the last several years. There is a work project coming up to do work on the interior of the Observer's cabin in September. Check out the schedule and consider lending us a hand please? <http://nysffla.org/calendar.html>

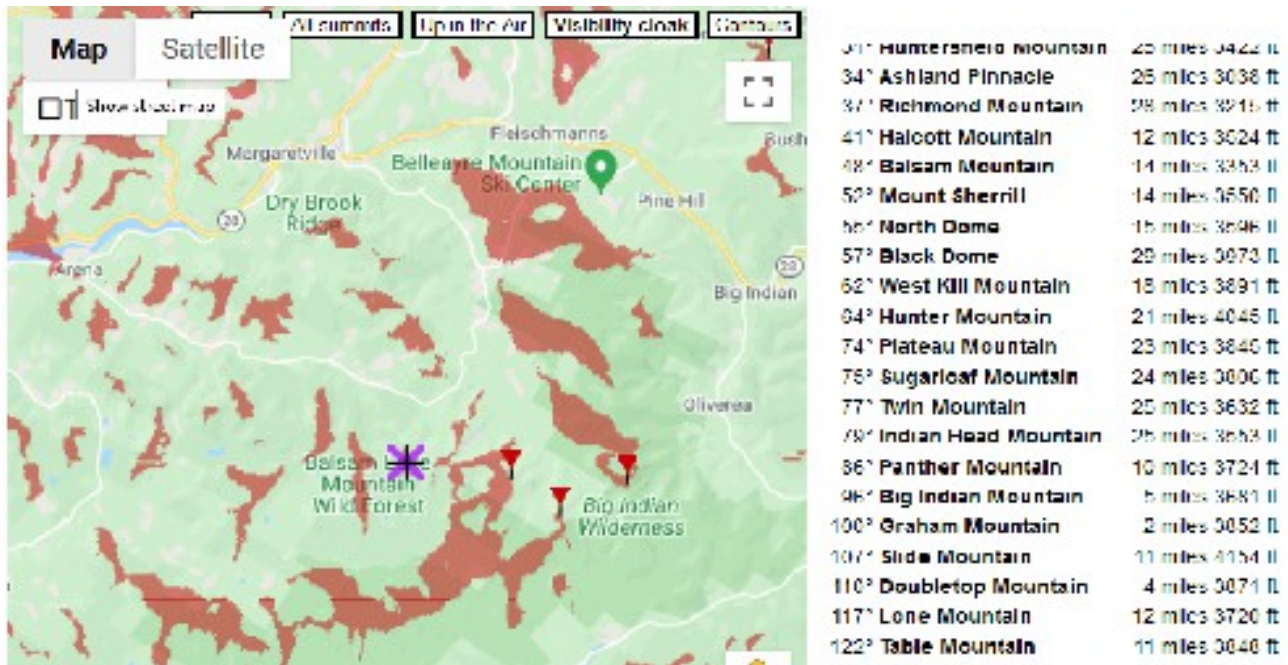


8th Annual Lighting Event – are you ready????

Participating towers this year include; Arab, Azure, Bald, Balsam Lake, Belfry, Dickinson Hill, Hadley, Hunter, Hurricane, Owl's Head, Overlook, Poke-O-Moonshine, Randall, Red Hill, St. Regis, Sterling, Stillwater, Stissing, Swede, Tremper, Wakely, and Woodhull.

I encourage all of you to take the time to consider that Observer who worked in our fire towers for many, many hours, year after year, protecting neighboring communities and the forest they loved so much. We commemorate that through our annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event on September 4th. You still have until August 25th to sign up to be an Illuminator. Don't forget that to publicize this event, you should reach out to local media outlets and let them know of your plans. I have been busy sending out press releases, but you may know more local media outlets than I do. <http://nysffla.org/light.html>

Some people are not sure what locations can see the tower. Simply go to our web site and click on the link by the fire tower. That will take you to the “Hey What's That” web page and will show you what can be seen from a given tower. Then you can “reverse” that and determine a spot where you can go to see the light come on at 9:00pm! For example if you went to the top of Black Dome, you could see Balsam Lake light come on some 20 miles distant!



While this is not a hiking event, you can get very creative with coming up with an event around the lighting. At Lake Clear Lodge, they serve dessert right on time for the lighting! <https://www.lakeclearlodge.com/events/st-regis-fire-tower-lighting-celebration-dinner>

Dickinson Hill – The Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park has an afternoon and evening filled with events: - 3 pm Hike to Tower from the Welcome Center, 4 pm hike from the head of the Fire Tower Trail on North Long Pond Rd., 6:30 pm: Regroup at the Welcome Center and departure by autos for Petersburg Pass for BBQ and/or vegetarian picnic, dinners may be purchased in advance (estimated \$25). You may also skip the hike and join us at the pass! At 7-8:30pm there will be a Picnic Dinner & Viewing of the Fire Tower at the top of Petersburg Pass, which should start at 9PM..

Swede Mountain Fire Tower Re-opens!

Open Dec 16th through Sept 10th each year for day hiking only.

What an honor it was to attend the ribbon cutting for the official re-opening of Swede Mountain Fire Tower on August 13th. I thought it appropriate to use nearly an entire page for the announcement of this. My notes tell me it was over 5 years ago when I was first approached by local citizens if there was anything that could be done to re-open this fire tower. Many people came to the table to make this happen over the course of the last 5 years. Retired Forest Ranger Bill H. and his wife Joyce, Barb B. and her husband Rich, Forest Ranger Chuck K., Town of Hague and Horicon Supervisors, Horicon Historical Society, Marty Podskoch, Senator Dan Stec, Assemblyman Matt Simpson, Warren County, Lyme Timber, FFLA Volunteers and the Warren County DPW crew who did the most work of all. I am certain I am missing someone and apologize for any unintentional oversight. This group came together many times to discuss plans to make this happen. Then they made it happen. No excuses. They found an obstacle, they overcame it. They needed some funds, they found them. They needed some volunteers, they grabbed them. What an amazing accomplishment!

Assemblyman Matt Simpson writes: “It was a proud moment this past week being able to take part in the inaugural hike on the new Fire Tower trail at Swede Mountain in [Warren County, New York](#). This is the culmination of a public/private partnership with Warren County and Lyme Timber Company that began while I was still Chairperson of DPW on the Warren County Board of Supervisors. The collaboration of so many made this happen including the Warren County DPW team including Kevin Hajos and Tim Benway, Town of [Hague, New York](#), [Town Of Horicon, NY](#), [New York State Forest Rangers](#), [NYS Department of Environmental Conservation](#), NY Chapter of the [Forest Fire Lookout Association \(FFLA\)](#), my good friends Bill & Joyce Houck and many others. It was great to be joined by [Senator Dan Stec](#), Warren County Chairwoman Rachel Seeber Conine, Hague Supervisor Edna Frasier and Horicon Supervisor Sylvia Smith and Supervisor Craig Leggett from the Town of Chester”

A few news articles to go along with the successful story! [The Hague Chronicle](#) and from Warren County Tourism: <https://www.visitlakegeorge.com/recreation/swede-mountain-trail>



How did it all get started, this task of saving fire towers? How did the FFLA organization start? You can read all about this in our 5th installment from Past FFLA Chair, Fred Knauf. Here he describes that first conference. Thank you for the excellent article Fred!

Early Days of the Forest Fire Lookout Association- Part V

Today I am completing the summary of 1991's Forest Fire Lookout Association Conference which was held just about 30 years ago to this day in Old Forge, NY. I lost track of the gentleman who ran the Northern Forestry Loggers Association Museum, Mr. George Mitchell, but I still think about him from time to time hoping he is doing well or that his soul has passed into its glory.

Mr. Mitchell was very gracious to the FFLA and allowed us to use the basement rooms of the Museum for the conference. I had heard of a number of FFLA State Directors who were coming, but until you see them in person, you are never too sure just who will be present. Many were camping at the KOA campground just up Route 28, but my wife, my infant son, and I were staying in a motel in Eagle Bay.

In some conferences, there is a Friday night session where the Directors talk business, but due to travel distances, this was not held in the Old Forge conference. I heard, however, that some of the Directors held a "mini-conference" around a wet campfire at the KOA, as the weather that weekend was mostly cloudy and passing rain. I also had found out that a group actually had arrived on Thursday and spent Friday tower hunting going to Rondaxe, Penn, the old Moose River tower, Gomer, New Boston, Castor Hill, and an attempt at Swancott Hill that stopped due to flooding. What a trip!

Our first stop on Saturday morning was to get some Eagle Bay donuts for the conference and add them to the drinks we had already procured and get up to the site to get the coffee going. When we pulled in, Bob Spear from New Jersey and Mark Haughwout from Vermont were already at the door awaiting Mr. Mitchell, who came a minute or two behind me. After getting the drinks set up, some displays were arranged and I brought in the 100 or so tee-shirts which were made for the conference and which I had outlaid my own money as a means of off setting the cost of the conference's food, drinks and a donation to the Museum. I still have two of those shirts and I do get lots of looks when I wear mine up Rondaxe Mtn, the tower featured on the shirt.

The conference officially started at 9 am, I think, and the first hour and a half were the boring business of building a national association – 501C3 rules, Roberts Rules of Order, finalization of the bylaws, responsibilities of Directors and other positions, and all that foundation work that was necessary to keep the eastern and western groups together. Arriving for that morning Directors meeting was Steve Cummings from PA, our appointed Chairperson and PA Director, Mark H. – Vermont Director, Chris Haartz – New Hampshire Director, Carolyn Parmenter – Maine Director, Bob Spear – NJ Director, and a handful of other interested parties including Roy Schweiker from PA, Bob and Sandy Wolf – NJ, Ray Grimes – NJ, Iris and Bill Baird – NH/Maine, and our DEC liaison for the day, Mark Clark, DEC ASF in the Old Forge area. Gary Weber (ID Director) and Keith Argow (VA) came in a short while after we began, as well as a few others and at least one DEC Ranger (Doug Reidman) popped in for a while.

After lunch, we had Chapter reports on the use of fire towers, which towers had come down, repairs, reports from missing states, and other news pertinent to the subject. Remember that this was the year after NY State closed down their last towers and Maine was teetering on following suit (which they did). There was much sadness in the talk – almost like losing an old friend. Prior to closure, the Chairman presented George Mitchell with a certificate in appreciation for the use of the Museum and another to Gary for the longest distance traveled.

Dinner was held at the Glenmore Hotel in Big Moose and we made it there before darkness so the group could see the beautiful lake. After dinner, we headed back to the conference site where Carolyn Parmenter put on a one-hour slide show of her experiences as a fire lookout atop Pico Peak in Vermont and Mt. Harris in Maine. Oh to have a video of that slide show, as her sunrises, sunsets and general working images of the life of a fire lookout would be treasured by many today. A few other presentations took place, but my memory doesn't remember them.

On Sunday, we arrived around 9 am for a small Directors meeting to tidy up some issues and clean up the room, then we went off to visit a few towers. The first stop was the Woodhull Mtn. fire tower, which we were granted use of the Adirondack League road to use the ½ mile approach trail from their property. Leading the way was ASF Mark Clark, who had picked up the key to the property from retired Forest Ranger Mart Allen. The clouds were rather low and a passing sprinkle hit up here and there, but we all made the summit safely. Ruins of the old observer's cabin could plainly be seen only 10 or so years after its demise, and both the summit view and trees around the tower were more open than they are today. The repeater inside the Woodhull cab had only been there a few years back then.

Our next stop was Rondaxe Mtn. and when we made it to the top, ASF Mark Clark reopened the cab, which still had its windows & glass, radio, antenna, and flag inside. He reopened the tower under DEC approval and officially logged the tower on duty, making Rondaxe the last official tower used as he remained atop the tower the rest of the day to complete his shift before logging off. At the parking lot, the group said their good-byes, as some were going to head home while others were heading up to Stillwater Mtn. From Stillwater, those remaining headed back home and the conference was finished. The conference was a fun time and we did bring in a small profit which was sent to the FFLA treasury to help grow the young Association.



Around the State Announcements

Vandewhacker Fire Tower: Road Closure Notice - Expect to walk the Moose Pond Rd to the Vandewhacker trailhead for the foreseeable future. The bridge is closed due to needing repairs, so the road is closed to motor vehicles. People can still hike in there and should be parking across the bridge in the parking area, not along the shoulder of the road. Note - Moose Pond Rd is a 2.6 miles road walk to the trailhead. From there it is 2.7 miles to the summit – total 5.3 mi one way.

Kane Mountain Observer's Cabin: Successful weather allowed for the materials to restore the Observer's cabin to be flown in the first week in August. Stay tuned for more information about this project and please think about participating in a Stewardship Program there in 2022.

Excellent Articles about Lookouts Nationwide

[Northern Woodlands](#) and [Nat Geo](#) and from the [BBC](#)

Provocative Reading

From our Friends at National Woodlands, came this article about replanting fire areas. Here in NY it scares me that the good intentions of the CCC in the 1930's and 40's to replant forests to prevent fire are now all dying at the same time, providing huge amounts of fuel, particularly during times of drought. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/tree-by-tree-scientists-try-to-resurrect-a-fire-scarred-forest/> A quote that I think makes the most sense “Instead of arranging them in rows, like most timber companies do, the crew plants them in clusters with open ground in between. “The goal is for the tree islands to fill in the gaps between them on their own” by producing seeds that will be carried into the gaps by the wind, says Jens Stevens, who until recently worked on the project as a research ecologist at the USGS’s New Mexico Landscapes Field Station. This technique, called “nucleation,” mimics natural regeneration. It also provides a sort of insurance policy against future blazes: the open areas between the clumps act as natural fire breaks, so even if one patch of trees is destroyed, others are more likely to survive.”

Calendar

September 3rd 12 Noon: – Paul Smith's VIC Adirondack Fire Towers Their History and Lore by Marty Podskoch. A free presentation in connection with Lighting of the Fire Tower Events

Saturday, September 4: Lighting of the Fire Tower Event Statewide - check out our web page for the guidelines to participate in this event. It is not too early to begin your planning. [Info](#)

Saturday, September 18 or Sunday, September 19: Lyon trail work - best weather day [Info](#)

September 18 through September 23: Blue Mountain Observer's Cabin. [Info](#)

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