



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
May 2024**

As always, Spring is one of the busiest times of the year and it is no different in the fire tower world. We try to get some things done prior to leaf out, and after the snow disappears. That window can be very small. Hitting it well can be pure luck. It takes a lot of volunteer coordination to get the Volunteer Steward programs up and running prior to the usual opening on Memorial Day weekend. Additionally, we plan work projects for the rest of the summer and into fall, so whew, taking a moment to get this newsletter done has actually been a bit of a break!

We love the photo that won the photo contest on Facebook, a great look out of the Hurricane Fire Tower cab submitted by Debi Tebano. Congratulations Debi! Thanks so much to all of you who submitted photos and voted. Debi's photo will be the new cover photo on our Facebook page until June 10th. Haven't found us on Facebook? Just search for FFLA New York State Chapter, answer the challenge question and you're in! This is a great place to share your trips to towers, your questions, and your photos! And to win a spot in our monthly newsletters!



AROUND THE STATE

Burn Ban: The annual burn ban has expired, but all should still be careful out there. As reported in the April 30th Ranger report in the Town of Hebron, Washington County there was a wildland fire. Forest Ranger Clute responded to assist local fire departments with a brush fire on Higgins Road. The fire was caused by a campfire that got out of control and grew to 3.7 acres before being contained.

Mt Adams: On May 11th, nine volunteers made a trip to Mt. Adams to install the new interpretive sign. Graphic Design on the new interpretive historical sign was done by Bob MacNamara of Art of the Wilderness in collaboration with Open Space Institute and production and installation was provided by ADK Highpeaks Foundation and volunteers. It was no easy feat, as reported by John Sasso: “Nine of us climbed 2.5 mi (ascent 1800 ft) to the summit with the sign, pedestal and tools to put the sign in place on the first landing. Ken 'Kenmore' Trichuk carried the pedestal and I carried the boxed up sign on a special frame pack (40+ lb. carry). We got the sign secured. On the way down we took out several good lengths of blowdown. A great day with a great crew led by ADK High Peaks Board Member Jack Coleman. We got the sign secured and greeted a young couple from NYC who were the first to see it. A great day with a great crew! As a side note, I've been one of the caretakers of the fire tower and trail to it since 2013. I think I've been up the peak more than 40 times (I no longer keep track). Being part of this day and carrying that heavy interpretive sign up this steep peak was very important to me and I am incredibly happy to be able to do so.” Thank you John, ADK High Peaks Foundation, and all of the volunteers who turned out to help!



In Memoriam: Our condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Forest Ranger Robbie Mecus. Check our website <http://nysffla.org/history.html> for the 2016 April Conservationist article. There you will see Ranger Mecus directing fire operations from the Roosa Gap Fire Tower. It has always been a favorite article of mine as Ranger Mecus was still utilizing a fire tower for its original purpose, taking care of wildfires! A lovely tribute to Robbie can be found here. <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2024/04/a-tribute-to-robbi-mecus.html>

Mt. Morris: On the summit of Mt. Morris sits a small, 22 foot tall Aeromotor LS 40 tower. It is one that not many have visited as the property surrounding it has been in private hands. There have been several mentions of changes to the surrounding properties and once again, it is in the news. This all still sounds pretty complicated and unsettled but, we will keep an eye on things in hopes that at some point in the future, the tower will be available for visitation. <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/wealthy-investor-prevails-in-tupper-lake-adirondack-club-and-resort-foreclosure>

Retired Forest Rangers: What do they do? Just sit around? No! A great story about one of the best: <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2024/04/retired-forest-ranger-bernie-siskavich-has-volunteered-in-wanakena-since-77.html> Like many others, when he got out of Ranger school, Bernie was assigned to a location in the southern parts of the state. When a spot came open to return to Wanakena where he went to school, he went back, found a home, and spent 31 years stationed there, a total of 33 ½ years as a Forest Ranger. Hear about all of the wonderful memories he has and about all of the contributions he continues to make in his community in this great article.

Bramley: On Saturday, May 11th, 27 volunteer stewards were trained to be on the tower on Bramley Mt. on weekends and holidays as soon as it is in place! What a wonderful example of local support for this project! It is hoped that the tower will be up sometime next month. We sincerely thank all of those who came out, those who are neighbors of Bramley Mt. and those who plan to travel from far away to see that view and interact with hikers! Friends of Bramley Mt. President Ann, Tom M, Barbara and John did a great job of putting everything together for the training! Many thanks to you 4 as well!



Stissing: Friends of Stissing Landmarks and Dutchess Land Conservancy have worked together for several years now to improve the Stissing Fire Tower and the Thompson Pond area to make it a remarkable place to visit. As reported on here in March of 2023, the new trail to the Thompson Pond to Tower Trail was completed. It is an excellent way to climb to the top. Now you can spend more time there, by actually walking around the Pond at the base and enjoying the new boardwalks and the bird life that abounds there! Spearheaded by Volunteer Brian S., both of these trails are a simply stunning, must see place to visit!:

<https://www.dutchessland.org/get-involved/events-and-programs/explore-thompson-pond>

Rock Rift: From The Reporter 5-18-24: Catskill Mountain Club Directors John Sandman and Rick Roberts, president, recently led a group of SUNY Delhi students on a trail maintenance trip to a section of the Finger Lakes Trail near the Rock Rift Fire Tower in Tompkins. Pictured are Logan Oliver, Rick Roberts, Melissa Diaz, Myles Cohen, and Jack Tessier, SUNY professor. This spring marked the 25th anniversary of the O'Connor Community Service Center at SUNY Delhi. The Catskill Mountain Club has been partnering with SUNY Delhi students on clearing local trails for the past six years.



Dickinson Hill: Check out these pictures where our Grafton Lakes/FFLA Steward Coordinator Chris is doing some recruiting for more stewards at Grafton Lakes State Park 'I Love My Park Day' Event! Thanks for representing Chris! One of the great perks about being a steward at Dickinson Hill Fire Tower at Grafton Lakes State Park is that before and after your steward hours you get to enjoy the park! How would you like that job? Let us know if you are interested and we will get you all the details!



Poke-O-Moonshine: From the Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine comes this from their 2024 Steward: “Hello! My name is Emmaline Bennett, and I am a sophomore at SUNY Plattsburgh studying geology with a goal to become a volcanologist. I have an interest in the geological history of the Adirondacks and the North Country and how these relate to the landscape/ecosystems we look at today across the region. In the fall/summer, I enjoy hiking, swimming, kayaking, and rock climbing with my friends! My favorite spots are the Poke-O-Moonshine and Chapel Pond Cliffs, and I want to expand my recreation to the winter months with skiing and ice climbing. The Adirondacks have a special place in my heart because they are the mountains my ancestors lived with, and I want to protect and learn more about their rich history. I am excited to be a steward, having it be one of my goals while in college, to be part of a team whose focus is respect, love, and protection of these mountains; I hope to inspire others to see their beauty as well.”

AROUND THE COUNTRY

I love coming across articles and videos about the job of being a Lookout/Observer. This one is a bit unique with hot and cold running water and a shower! Such luxury. Beautiful quilts too!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOWorVtQHtc>

“Tree Talk: How Do Trees Enhance our Health.” From our friends at National Woodlands Owners Association, I was directed to this interesting article. “Trees enhance life in a multitude of ways. They combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They muffle sound pollution and reduce air pollution, drawing in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. When rain pours from the skies, trees decrease storm water runoff, preventing flooding and soil erosion. They also provide valuable habitats to support biodiversity in insects, birds, and other animals, and microorganisms. The list goes on. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-do-trees-and-green-spaces-enhance-our-health-202404193034>

CALENDAR

June 1: Join us as we celebrate National Trails Day by doing our annual Trail Work at Stillwater Fire Tower trail.

June 6: 6:30 pm Galway Public Library, 2112 East St., Galway, NY 518- 882-6385

Topic: Adirondack Fire Towers' 115th Anniversary: Their History & Restoration by M. Podskoch

June 15 or 16: We will be doing our annual trail work at Lyon Mt. Fire Tower trail, perfectly timed for the lady slipper bloom! We will choose the best weather day.

July 13 and 14: We will be doing some repairs at Snowy Mt. Fire Tower which will require not only a long hike, but we will need to carry fencing materials and tools to repair the safety fencing on the fire tower. Can you lend us a hand please?

July 15 -18: Pillsbury Fire Tower has one small detail left in our work, stapling the fencing. Would you be willing to take a hike up with a hammer and help us finish this work please? We will choose the best weather day and the least buggy day from these dates.

August 13: 7:00 pm Lake Pleasant Library 2864 NY-8, Speculator, NY 518-548-4411

Topic: The 115th Anniversary of Fire Towers in the Adirondacks and Makomis & Hamilton Mt. Fire towers by M. Podskoch

August 17: 1:00 pm Blenheim-Gilboa Visitors Center 1378 St Rt 30 North Blenheim, NY

Topic: The 115th Anniversary of Fire Towers in Adirondacks & Catskill Preserves by M. Podckoch

September 21 or 22: Lyon Mt. Knowing that snow comes early to this spectacular mountain, we will try to get our fall trail work done before its arrival. We will choose the best weather day with the best views from these two days.

OPENINGS and CLOSINGS (See announcements on the webpage <http://www.nysffla.org>)

As of May 11th, Wakely trailhead from Cedar River Rd – access now open.

DONATIONS

Support from members and friends along with membership dues supports our work. We have been blessed with 3 significant donations thus far In 2024 that has allowed our work to continue. Very sincere appreciate goes to Tom and Nancy, Susan, and Ken for these donations!

HISTORY

The last couple of months we have talked about phones and radios, the importance of communication in fire towers and the changes that occurred over time in these different forms of communication. Today we are going to move along to another important piece of history and how it both worked with fire towers and changed the dynamics of financing fire tower work. We are very appreciative of the

information and photographs on this subject that was donated to us as part of the Podskoch Collection.

“The detection of wildfire smokes using fixed wing aircraft to cover the protected area of the State will continue to be phased in during the coming years, and the use of observation towers will be gradually phased out. All towers, however, will be maintained and kept in a satisfactory state of repair.” This historical document (undated) went on to describe the flight routes and aerial identifiers for each route and included maps of each route.

In the September – October 1984 issue of Adirondack Life, in the article by Sharon Brown entitled “Firewatch Flier” there are great descriptions from Pilot Jim Payne on his work in detecting wildfires. Jim's “flight route was a 150 mile figure eight pattern around Seventh Lake to Dolgeville and back, and included the Stillwater Reservoir area. Sometimes I fly men and equipment to fight fires, or else direct them to fires. Three years ago I had one near Fances Lake near Stillwater Reservoir. The whole point was covered with smoke, and I could see flames. I think that it started from a campfire. Jim used his radio to report the blaze to the local ranger and then stayed in the vicinity, waiting and watching until the conflagration was under control. The next day he double checked the site. Thanks to Payne's report the fire lasted less than a day, and only about three acres burned.”

Each year pilots would put in bids for the aerial routes. Retired Forest Ranger Captain Paul Hartmann is quoted in the article. “In populated areas the volunteer companies are faster, but in more remote areas we take over. The rangers are woodsmen, and fire control is part of their job.” Capt Hartmann went on to discuss how he assigns the need for these aerial routes. “A weather station in Lowville determines a fire rating system based on relative humidity, wind speed and precipitation. Based on that number and Hartmann's local knowledge and experience, he would send flights out. At the time there were 23 statewide aerial reconnaissance flights.

We will look further into aviation in next month's newsletter.



Enjoy!

Laurie Rankin, Director NYS Chapter Forest Fire Lookout Association/www.nysffla.org