



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
February 2025**

Since our January newsletter, the wildfires in California have subsided, but not without significant loss. Twenty nine people died in the fires. Heavy rain is expected to produce more dangers. In an excerpt from this article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/12/weather/la-rain-california-forecast.html>

“In Southern California, this storm is expected to be the strongest of the winter so far, raising the risk of flooding on roadways and streams and especially in wildfire burn scars. Daniel Swain was especially concerned bursts of torrential rain over the burn scars left by the Palisades and Eaton fires in the Los Angeles area could trigger rivers of water, mud and debris. Some evacuation warnings have already been issued.” More than 18,000 structures including homes and businesses were lost in the fires.

The dangers in fighting the California fires that are occurring in the interfaces between residents, businesses, and the forest were noted in this article: <https://www.eenews.net/articles/cancer-is-the-unseen-danger-in-the-los-angeles-fires/>. These dangers have been noted in New York State as well. In last month's newsletter, Retired Forest Ranger Lou Curth raised concerns about the health of those who are fighting these fires where not just wood smoke, but chemicals used in building materials are present. Wildland firefighters utilize different gear than those departments that generally respond to house fires. That lack of protective gear can mean exposure to real nasty stuff. Even once the fires died down in California, homeowners were not allowed back in for fear it was too toxic to do so. A brief video of the situation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odLFihFEIX4>

Ranger Curth also shared an article and how fighting those fires was dangerous to our Forest Rangers and local Fire Department Volunteers here in NYS. “During the dry 1960s, forest rangers and local fire department volunteers fought wildfires at contaminated dumps, landfills, and other areas, breathing through cotton bandannas or with no protection at all. Nobody warned us about chemical contamination and possible long term health risks to firefighters from PCBs.” From the Glens Falls Post Star written in the 1960's, “Within a stone's throw of the Fort Edward train station, Robert LeFebvre looked over a plot of land where he said hundreds of thousands of gallons of PCB-laden oil was handled during the 1960s before it was sprayed on area dirt roads. ‘GE would call us, ask us to send up a tank truck when their PCB waste oil tank was full, and we'd go get it, bring it here and transfer it into one of our tanks,’ he said, pointing towards a lot off 3 Center Street. LeFebvre, a former supervisor and plant manager of the now-defunct Defiance Asphalt, said his company routinely picked up PCB waste oil at General Electric's Fort Edward capacitor manufacturing plant, and that his company would later dispatch trucks to spray the toxic substance on dirt roads in Washington, Warren and Saratoga Counties as a dust-control measure.”

A friend of mine from Team Rubicon who was at the Palisades fire said everyone in fire base camp had a weird cough. As we go forward, let us try to keep the safety of our wildland firefighters and our volunteers in mind. Let's be certain they have the proper personal protective gear to protect themselves while they put their lives on the line for others.

Let's take a look out of the Blue Mt. Fire Tower cab to the surrounding area. It is our new cover photo on our Facebook page and was taken by Rebecca Gijanto in February of 2021. I must say our members outdid themselves with submissions for the contest this month. There were several awesome submissions. Congratulations to Rebecca and many thanks to all who submitted photos this month.



We hope you are staying warm. Bill Tindall shared this photo from the Kempshall Observer's cabin where his Dad, George, was the Observer on duty from 1952 through 1955, all ready for the colder days and nights of the late season. He said *"The tower stayed operational until snow, which was about mid September. The "living room" had a stove for heat that accommodate fairly large pieces of wood. Wood was plentiful from the blow down spruce trees from hurricane. The kitchen had a cook stove that was fed smaller pieces of the plentiful white birch."* Thanks for sharing this great photo and memories Bill!

AROUND THE STATE

Utsayantha: On January 21st, I met with the Stamford Village Board to discuss starting a steward program at this facility this summer. There appears to be good support for this program locally and we will continue to work with the Board to put together a quality program. If any of you who are reading this might be interested in being a steward there, please let me know.

Mt. Morris: As changes are occurring in the Tupper Lake area and near the Mt. Morris Fire Tower and Observers cabin, we hope that saving these historic structures will be factored in somewhere. A \$3 million dollar grant from NYS for the Oval Wood Dish Factory was just announced. Private investors have come forward to save the ski area, so we hope the same type of investment will happen for the tower and cabin.

<https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2025/01/what-should-be-next-for-big-tupper.html?>

Ward Pound Ridge: On January 22nd I attended the Zoom meeting held by Westchester County and the Ward Pound Ridge Park regarding the plans to return a fire tower to the Ward Pound Ridge/Cross River location. We first reported about this in our December of 2024 newsletter. I was very excited to hear about all that has been done thus far and greatly appreciate all of the support for this project. For more information check out <https://ravenrocksrn.org/fire-tower/> .

Kane: I attended a Town Tourism meeting on January 23rd pertaining to centennial events. There are lots of great plans underway for this 4 day celebration August 14th through the 17th.

Bramley: Friends of Bramley Mt. Fire Tower President Ann Roberti and I were guests at the WIOX Radio Station on January 24th. We joined Ray Pucci, President of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce for his Catskill Commerce show. The show provides an up close and personal look at the Catskill Region’s economic vibrancy, and we were pleased to represent the Bramley Mt Fire Tower. Ann will be speaking about her experience with the Friends of Bramley Mt. Fire Tower and returning the tower to its original location at our FFLA Eastern Conference in June! On a chilly February 1st, we had an opportunity to steward for the first time at this tower. See more under stewardship.

Kings Park: From time to time, new items come to light about our fire tower history here in NYS. At one time there were a number of fire towers on Long Island and a quick look at our website will provide you the basics of each of those towers. While looking at the tower listing, I realized we needed to make some corrections. We had the tower listed as removed. When in fact it was actually relocated to the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management area near Buffalo. You can still climb the tower in this public location. Photo here courtesy of Chris N. You can also visit the old site as that is in the Sunken Meadow Park, another public location.



Roosa Gap: So much potential at this site, yet so sad to see the level of criminal activity and lack of action by the NYS DEC. The Forester who covers that area tells me he *“is working to address the maintenance issues.”*



Whitehouse Fire: We knew there was some snow cover, but we wanted to get a look at the Whitehouse Fire area so we took a walk along the Long Path on the Bangle Hill trail. Thankfully, it did not take long to see that this fire was stopped by the trail which was an old road. All along the trail were signs of where a ground fire went through, catching downed logs on fire and running up some hollow trees. Most standing live trees were completely spared. We plan to visit this area again and again and see the effects of this fire and the regrowth afterward. We took some pictures to share.



Goodnow: After some photographs were posted on our Facebook page of the poor condition of this tower, I reached out to SUNY ESF for an update on their repairs. *“The repair project is scheduled to start this spring; a contractor has been hired and the work will continue through the hiking season (likely necessitating trail closure at some point for safety). We appreciate and share your concerns about the tower; the ESF Facilities department is following state procedures as required.”*

STEWARDSHIP

Some days, the visitors just don't come. But the day is never a loss. The opportunity to spend time in a tower on a mountaintop can be the best way to spend your time. On February 1st we were given that gift of mountaintop time, a perk of being a steward. They say there is no such thing as bad weather only bad clothing. So we were well bundled up for our hour of stewarding at Bramley and the weatherman was correct, the sun was shining brightly by noon. Our thermoses of tea were hot. A stunningly beautiful day with everything covered in ice or frost and views for miles. All against a gorgeous blue sky. Enjoy the close up views and the far reaching views as we did.



Would you like to be a steward in 2025? Stewarding Orientation Sessions are scheduled for the following dates. If you are interested, please let me know. Remember you get a point for attending the orientation session and a point for every day you steward after that. [Email to get involved](#)

April 6: Dickinson Hill
April 26: Dickinson Hill
May 3: Bramley Fire Tower
June 7: Stillwater

April 13: Berry Hill
April 27: Kane
May 10: Balsam Lake
June 14: Kane

CALENDAR

April 1: ADK Binghamton Chapter Programming
April 19: Earth Day event at Watertown Zoo – Thompson Park Tower
May 17: Mt Adams Spring Trail Sweep and Tower Maintenance: admin@adkhighpeaks.org to sign up
June 14: Get Outdoors Day at Lowville Demonstration Area
June 20, 21, and 22: FFLA Eastern Conference in Richmondville
July 19: Presentation at Bowman Lake State Park
August 14, 15, 16, and 17: Kane Fire Tower Centennial in Caroga Lake
August 30: Annual Lighting Event

Unless otherwise noted, for all of the above contact Laurie Rankin [to get involved](#).

Please keep an eye on the calendar on our website, as we will be scheduling work projects soon and hope you can plan on helping out at one or more. We will plan work projects on weekdays and weekends if possible so that all can get involved. Thanks for considering!

<https://nysffla.org/calendar.html>

Visits: Overlook and Tremper visits were done in January. Kane and Roosa Gap in February.

Recognition: Patches are in and they look sweet! [Start earning those points](#) and get the patch!



Mid-winter seems to be a good time for me to catch up on paperwork, organize some files, clean out others. I share all of the previous years reports with the governing agency and have meetings to determine our plans for 2025. I am not the only one who had to deal with reports.

HISTORY

Paperwork was always something that an Observer had to tend to on a daily basis. In a memo on Fire Observation Stations, lots of space was given to how to manage REPORTS!

“The Observer is required to make out weekly reports (Forestry Form 11) in duplicate. They should be filled out each day and kept strictly up-to-date. They should be mailed to the District Ranger as regularly as possible without making a special trip from the station for that purpose.

The Observer should read carefully the printed instructions on the back of the form. This report must be filled out every day, whether or not any fires are observed. If there are no fires one line should be used for each day. If more than one fire occurs on any one day, there should be as many lines as there are fires for that day. No more than one fire should be put on a line. If a fire reported previously is observed later, it should be given the same number as at first. A fire should be reported as many days as it can be seen and some comment made as to its condition.

Columns 1, 2, 4, 6, 13, and 15 must be filled in every day the Observer is on duty in the tower. If not on duty, the reason for such absence from duty should be explained on the line for that particular day. The figures in Column 13 and 14 should show the period of the day the Observer is on duty in the tower.

Column 3, the first fire of the season observed should be given the number “1” and other fires should be numbered in sequence throughout the year.

Under “remarks” should be given facts which the Observer has noted as to a fire reported by him, to show the length of time a fire burned, whether it deems to be properly handled, etc.”

