

FFLA Newsletter – NY Chapter

October 2016

Northeastern Conference: It was truly a great pleasure to meet everyone at the conference! We had people who attended from 8 different states, from ages 13 to age 82! Thank you to all of the presenters and attendees who made the conference such a success! Many thanks goes to; Keene Fire Department, Cedar Run Bakery, East Organics, Lake Placid Spirits, Friends of St. Regis, Friends of Stillwater, Friends of Hurricane, Marty Podskoch, Ed Engelman, Dave Vana of Davana LLC, Larry Gordon of Cornell Hill, David Thomas-Train of Friends of Poke O Moonshine, the National FFLA folks Keith Argow and Gary Weber, Tom and Nancy Hayhurst of Friends of Poke O Moonshine and Mary Jean Bland from Friends of Hurricane for being hike leaders, my IT guy Tom Rankin, and all who attended.

While we will not be doing this on an annual basis, it did make me think that an annual New York picnic might not be a bad idea? Any thoughts?

Follow up on a few things from the conference

Carrier Pigeons: To follow up on the release of the Carrier Pigeons that were flown here courtesy of Nate and Mac from the USFS and Ute Fire Tower. What a great way to illustrate an educational program that connects history, fire towers and schools! We can't thank you guys enough for joining us and bringing along the birds. The thought was that the pigeons would require about one month to return home to Utah, a distance they had never covered before. Well 2 of them returned last week a bit short of a month from their release at Belfry. Maybe they should become racing pigeons? I'll update all of you on the return of the others if and when it occurs.

Observer Badges: Keith showed us an Observer Badge that was done by our friends at one of the California Chapters (Riverside to be specific). All of the volunteers in California wear them proudly. I followed up on this and discovered that all have USFS on them. I am chatting with the folks who made them to see if we could have something done that has FFLA on them that would work for our volunteers. It looks like we might need a minimum order of 50 to start, but I am negotiating that and think we could manage that. I know many of you showed an interest in having these badges and I really like them too. Any thoughts anyone has, please feel free to share and I will keep you up to date and we'll see if we can do something for next season.

NHLR signage: The National Historic Lookout Register is a cooperative effort of the [U.S. Forest Service](#), the [Forest Fire Lookout Association](#), state agencies and other private groups to recognize historic fire lookouts throughout the United States. For over a century, lookouts have been a proud symbol of forest conservation. Here, we recognize individual lookouts that have helped in fire detection and wildfire management for at least 50 years. Listing in the National Historic Lookout Register is often a first step towards nomination to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Sometimes necessary structural modifications preclude listing in the latter register, and the only appropriate recognition given to these historic lookout sites is that afforded by the NHLR. Do you know of a tower that needs to be nominated? If so, please let me know. Is your tower already listed, but you need a sign that designates that? If so, please let me know.

Trivia Question from August: Which fire tower is currently located at the lowest elevation in New York State? Historically, which fire tower was at the lowest elevation in New York State? Which fire tower was the shortest in New York State? Is it still standing? I haven't heard from anyone about this yet. I believe the lowest elevation tower was Oakdale at an elevation of 224 feet, located on Long Island in Suffolk County. This "tower" was an elevated platform that was only 9 feet high. I think Palmer Hill Fire Tower is located at an elevation of 1148' and may be the tower that is currently standing at the lowest elevation. The shortest may have been any of the 35' towers, of which several are still standing. Historically, it may have been some of the wooden or stone structures that were first used on mountain tops. I think of the ones on Whiteface or Ampersand as an example of that. Thanks to Paul Hartmann, NYS Forest Ranger, retired for his extensive research to obtain these answers.

Trivia Question for October: When did the 10:00am policy go into effect? This was a federal policy that said that every fire shall be extinguished by 10:00 am the day following initial reporting. Step right up with answers – we have those FFLA stickers ready to go to the winner!

Education: While headlines abound about the large number of hikers to the high peaks areas of the Adirondacks, we can help spread the impact made by those hikers and educate them as well when they come to visit our towers. This is not exclusive to the Adirondacks either. This can happen at any tower in New York State. You can educate through your brochures, signage (if included in your VSA), your panoramics, your map, your volunteer interpreters, doing educational programs with area schools and groups and with thoughtful handouts. You can educate about the history of the fire towers, wild fires in New York State, and responsible use of the area surrounding your fire tower. One item we started using at Balsam Lake this year is simply a laminated 8.5 x 11 paper that has 2 photos of orange peels and egg shells on the ground and a few statements about how long it takes for things to rot. We simply leave it on the picnic table when volunteers are present. We often here comments like "It takes 2 years for an orange peel to rot?" David Thomas-Train's presentation at the conference was a great illustration of working with area school groups. He incorporates lots of Leave No Trace information in his presentation. What are you doing or what can you do? Sharing ideas here would be very helpful. Thanks!

New York Updates

Request for assistance from Friends of St. Regis: *One of the major projects yet to do on the St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower is the total replacement of the diagonal braces. The Aermotor model LS-40 fire tower was built in 1918 and is 35 feet tall. I would like to talk with anyone from a group that has done or is working on a project such as this. Can you help them out? <http://www.friendsofstregis.org/>.*

Hunting Season Closures: We greatly appreciate the easements that allow us to work on fire towers, and access fire towers through the lands of private hunting clubs. Please thank them for that use and respect the times when the trails/towers are closed. This includes Stillwater Fire Tower which is closed from October 11th through December 20th. It also includes Spruce Fire Tower where access is closed from October 22nd through December 4th.

Membership: Our facebook page is up to 46 members and our state membership in FFLA is growing fast with nearly 50 members. If you are not a member of either, please consider joining! You can join our facebook page by simply sending a request <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1736798186564272/>. To join the FFLA, just go to <http://www.ffla.org/index.html>.

Fall Foliage/Drones: The best place to be to view fall foliage was in a fire tower in New York State! It has been one of the best years we have had in a long time. That said, one new concern is the use of drones. A number of drone videos have been appearing in social media that include fall foliage from fire towers. In speaking with the DEC, there are federal regulations in place concerning the use of drones. Specific height restrictions are in place about the flights of drones. If it appears from drone footage that those restrictions have not been followed, there may be a violation. Violations of those regulations may result in enforcement actions. So think before you use one for promotional purposes or hire one done for same. At the very least, speak with your DEC contact person before posting publicly.

Drought Watches and Warnings: We desperately need some rain!!! When all those leaves fall on the ground and dry out and the fall breezes kick up – look out! <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5017.html> . While this article does not mention wildfires, it certainly raises awareness of how difficult a drought can be in our daily lives: <http://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/32737/20161013/as-drought-lingers-across-the-region-wells-dry-up>. There is limited information available as I write this, but here is one wildfire: <http://www.lakeplacidnews.com/page/content.detail/id/525893/Forest-fire-near-Nye-Mountain-contained.html?nav=5005>. Here is an article about one step taken in Ulster County to help prevent wildfires: http://www.dailyfreeman.com/general-news/20160821/ulster-county-adopts-law-prohibiting-sky-lanterns?source=most_viewed.

New York State no longer actively utilizes the fire towers for spotting fires. However, many other states still do. Some have paid staff and some have volunteer staff. If our drought continues, perhaps that may change. Having a ready group of volunteers such as they have in California may be wise. <http://www.cbs8.com/story/32845334/dedicated-volunteers-watching-out-for-wildfires>.

Hudson River Valley Ramble: Some of our fire towers participated in this event this year. Perhaps your group would like to next year? <http://www.hudsonrivervalleyramble.com/ramble/about>

Magazine Articles: Check out some of the magazine articles that have given our fire towers some great press of late and a big shout out of thanks to all of the fire tower groups who are doing such a great job of promoting the towers! Of course, the Lookout Network's Late Summer 2016 issue, but also New York State Conservationist October 2016 issue on page 18, The Adirondack Explorer September/October 2016 issue pages 20 and 36, the <http://www.localadk.com/> page 9, and Adirondack Life October 2016 issue page 42. I am sure there are others out there. Please point us to them!

Centennial patches: I had a request for more of the NY Centennial patches. <http://ffla.org/lookout-store---patches.html>. They are no longer available, but it seems they are still selling and we have quite a few 100 year tower celebrations coming up, so perhaps I will have some more made. Would any of you have any interest?

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