

Forest Fire Lookout Association New York Chapter November 2016 Newsletter

I hear the welcome sound of rain outside my window as I type this. Welcome because we are very far behind on moisture and wildfires are kicking up. Harriman State Park, once the home of several fire towers, was glad to see the rain overnight: (<http://hudsonvalley.news12.com/news/wildfire-burns-in-harriman-state-park-1.12614561>) Earlier in the month, there was one in the Adirondacks: <http://content.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/?p=566454/Peacock-Mountain-fire-contained-not-out.html>. Some southern states like North Carolina are not faring as well. Hoping all involved in fighting these wild fires stay safe and hear the sound of rain soon.

Trivia Question from October: When did the 10:00 A.M. policy go into effect? This was a federal policy that said that every fire shall be extinguished by 10:00 A.M. the day following initial reporting. The answer was 1935. This policy was a major factor in our NYS fire tower detection system. I did not receive any answers.

Trivia Question for November: How much is a copy of “I Remember When” by FFLA Member Randy Kneer? This and many other titles found at the FFLA web pages store will make great Christmas gifts for you or someone on your list. And if the price is right, you could get an FFLA sticker for a bookmark!

Holiday shopping: The internet tells me it has been Black Friday all this month and I only have 40 shopping days left. Why not consider supporting the FFLA or your favorite fire tower group while doing your holiday shopping? Many have patches available, books, t-shirts and more. Donations are always welcome as well.



Facebook: On our Facebook page we now have 49 members. There has been an increase in activity of late thanks to several posters. This includes a google map of NY posted by young Jack Kelley, from the Massachusetts FFLA. Jack took a great deal of time to put together this interactive map of still standing fire towers in New York state. Many Facebook friends have made comments on it. I hope you were able to get some course credit for all this work Jack? Thank you!

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1JrZdmlFIGsQhS9A8mVwJnePotdE&ll=43.96979922242029%2C-74.1987111640625&z=9>.

Speaking of education: NYS DEC Forester Tate Connor, who spoke at our conference in September, put together a very thoughtful article for the Adirondack 46'ers publication *Peeks* in their Fall 2016 issue. In that article, Tate spoke about his own journey from an ambitious teenage hiker who decided a career in the outdoors was his goal, to the difficult task of being the land manager of the High Peaks, Dix, Giant and Hurricane Wilderness areas. Tate notes that managing these units is a team effort with more than a dozen volunteer groups involved. Friends of Hurricane Mountain is one of those groups. Tate states in part that there is a delicate balance between intense visitor usage and avoiding negative impacts on the land's natural resources. He pledges to evaluate, learn what works and what doesn't, and to continue to make decisions to protect the Wilderness. The new trail to Hurricane is a great example of that. I would also include the addition of outhouses as an example of this. Then there is the Interpreter's role at the fire towers as part of this same team. Hurricane volunteers took a training last spring to help prepare them to educate the hiking public. Discussions at the fire tower can be everything from the history of the tower, wildfires and their impacts, wildlife, leave no trace, and volunteer recruitment.

Next on the education front, the Connect Kids to Parks program has some educational grant monies available. See if your group or someone you know may qualify:

<http://nysparks.com/environment/connect-kids/grant-program.aspx>.

Mountain Lake PBS: In attendance at our conference in September was Jack Laduke of Mountain Lake PBS. Jack did a great job of putting together this piece on fire towers. Please take a few minutes to watch: <http://mountainlake.org/programs/mountain-lake-journal/preserving-fire-towers/>.

Historicorp: From our national office came this great link which includes a restoration project on a historic lookout. What great work and what heartfelt stories of saving history in just a few short minutes. <https://vimeo.com/178661467> Password: SPT

Corrections Department: In our trivia question from last month Fred Knauf, past Chapter Director of NT State, let me know that Mount Morris still stands and is 22 ft tall. Maybe I better send Fred an FFLA sticker?



Tower Updates

Poke-O-Moonshine: Tower Steward Kyle Pendell was on the job all summer meeting and educating hikers about the human and natural history of the mountain and fire tower. He also took the initiative to install an informational display at the kiosk. When Kyle was finished, the kiosk connected visitors to the interpretive brochure as well as provided maps of the trail system, the fire tower and its history, rock climbing and more. Nice work Kyle! Trail work continued throughout the fall on the Ranger Trail and was featured on Mountain Lake PBS and North Country Public Radio. See David Thomas-Train describe the great work done here starting at 5:20: <http://video.mountainlake.org/video/2365866123/>.

Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine have some birthday plans underway to celebrate the 100 year birthday of their tower. On July 28, 2017, they are planning a hike and celebration. There will be events at the mountain, at Ausable Brewery, and a juried Poke-O-Art Exhibit at the 1719 Block Gallery in Keesville. The art show will open on Friday the 28th, and the mountain celebration will be midday at the mountain on the 30th with an after party after at the Ausable Brewery! Let's put this on our calendars and plan to attend! What can you do to celebrate your tower's centennial?

Lyon Mountain: A new 5 year agreement has been signed approving repair and maintenance of the fire tower, activities in support of education and interpretation, and trail and trailhead maintenance. Anyone who is interested in helping with any of these, please let me know.

Moosehead Fire Tower: Dave Vana of Davana LLC completed his project to have this fire tower refurbished and re-erected in Brooklyn! Dave said this was an exciting project in what is known as Industry City. The former Moosehead Tower is in a courtyard between tall warehouses with some unique spaces surrounding it. Happy Birthday to the tower, now 100 years old and still standing proudly. As Ed Engelman stated: "Looks like a very interesting city destination. A fire tower, food, art, and waterfront all in one destination! <http://industrycity.com/things-to-do/>". Dave and his crew deserve a huge round of applause for saving this fire tower! I see this as a unique location that will create lots of interest in fire towers.



Fire Tower Closures: Please remember that both Stillwater Fire Tower and Spruce Mountain Fire Tower and their respective trails remain closed through December 20th and December 4th respectively, due to hunting restrictions. Also there is a trail closure at Loon Lake Fire Tower due to logging activity: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NYSDEC/bulletins/16e32c9>

We lost one - Ingraham Hill Fire Tower: An 80 foot tower in Broome County comes tumbling down. Thanks to Tom Vrooman for informing us of this sad event.

Swancott Hill: – We had the pleasure of visiting a new/old fire tower last month. Swancott Hill was (and is again!) the tallest fire tower in the State. See our July newsletter. We recently discovered that the fire tower had been purchased and erected on private property in Madison county. We were able to obtain permission for a visit and enjoyed a windy and long climb to the top of this 99' 9" beauty! That was followed by a great discussion with the owner of the tower, Doug Randall. Doug first recalled visiting nearby Morgan Hill Fire Tower with his Dad and deciding right then and there that he wanted a fire tower. After diligently looking for years, Doug was finally able to find Swancott Hill available. Doug fondly recalled some of the many challenges he faced to get all of the parts repaired, replaced, cleaned and ready to go up. I loved the solution he and his Dad came up with to clean the nuts and bolts – a cement mixer! It took about three years and more than a few dollars and perseverance, but finally in three different sections, it rose. Doug would be happy to share his information with you and to have you visit. If you would like his contact information, please let me know. Thanks so much for preserving this tower Doug!



Overlook UMP update: The Overlook fire tower is a gem with sweeping views over the Hudson Valley and the high peaks of the Catskills so close you can almost touch them. Its close proximity to the NYS Thruway and the eclectic village of Woodstock make it a huge hiking destination. On Labor Day weekend, Charlie Lutomski, Volunteer Coordinator, reported 1300 visitors! This high visitor usage often creates parking problems. There is a proposed amendment to the Unit Management Plan that will in part address this situation. A public meeting is scheduled for November 29th in Woodstock, where you can comment or send comments in writing until December 15th. The amendment includes an additional parking lot and a new CP-3 designation – see below. More information is available here: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/72985.html?utm_source=Catskill+Park+Advisory+Committee&utm_campaign=7e161360a6-OverlookWildForestUMPAmendmentNotice&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9fcd1e764-7e161360a6-161700645&ct=t\(OverlookWildForestUMPAmendmentNotice\)&mc_cid=7e161360a6&mc_eid=ba11b17f54](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/72985.html?utm_source=Catskill+Park+Advisory+Committee&utm_campaign=7e161360a6-OverlookWildForestUMPAmendmentNotice&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9fcd1e764-7e161360a6-161700645&ct=t(OverlookWildForestUMPAmendmentNotice)&mc_cid=7e161360a6&mc_eid=ba11b17f54).

The CP-3 designation is an initiative to provide motor vehicle access to those with disabilities. This initiative could affect other towers in the future. Background: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/76213.html>.

Thanksgiving – How do I explain this holiday to preschool and toddler age grandchildren? I think it best to say that a group of people worked very hard, gathered together to celebrate their successes, reaped the rewards of their hard work, and honored their history. We could easily be talking about the members of the New York State Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association. I will give thanks not only for those grandchildren, but also for the foresight that those who came before us had to put in place this fire prevention and early warning detection system we know as fire towers. The vision must have involved a great deal of hard work as it does today to keep those fire towers standing and in a good state of repair. They should have rightly gathered together to celebrate their successes and reap the rewards of their hard work with the view from one of those towers. I hope you will find yourselves doing the same this Thanksgiving.

Laurie Rankin, Director
New York State Chapter
Forest Fire Lookout Association
845-926-2182
lauriejrankin@gmail.com
www.ffla.org