

Forest Fire Lookout Association

New York Chapter May 2017

Thankfully our May fire season has been somewhere between non-existent and minimal in New York State, with plenty of rain and snow melt combining to keep things wet. Of course that also keeps the trails to fire towers muddy and the stream crossings to fire towers difficult. Those south facing slopes are drying out a bit faster when the sun shines, which is not often. So plan a trip to a fire tower with a southern facing slope, and enjoy the wild flowers along the way before the leaves come on and the black flies get hungry! If you see some damage from the winter, let someone know. It is not uncommon for a piece or two of safety wire to come loose, following winter snows and winds tugging on the fasteners.

Meanwhile in the southern part of the US, they are wishing for some of our rains. The fires continue to grow and spread and some great videos are being produced. The map for current fire conditions in the state of Florida is crazy: <http://www.nbc-2.com/story/34677658/fire-alert-issued>.

Here is a link to some great Smokey Bear educational resources. Take a look at what pieces you might be able to share at the fire tower you are involved with this summer. Plan on sharing with friends who are teachers too. This is a great opportunity to promote fire prevention at no cost. <https://smokeybear.com/en/for-educators>

Wakely Mountain Fire Tower was closed last fall. Wakely Mountain Fire Tower Trail was closed the week of May 8th. The NYSDEC sent out press releases that stirred up quite a number of concerns. I had spoken with the NYSDEC prior to the closure and am confident that they are not only concerned with public safety, but also with repairing the fire tower as quickly as possible. As I type this, work is scheduled to begin May 15th. That is pretty quick work for any organization. Their efforts in saving the historic structure are greatly appreciated! Some of the news articles are here: <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/outtakes/wakely-tower-closure-raises-questions-anew>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/NYSDEC/bulletins/199aa22>

<http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2017/05/state-closes-wakely-mountain-trail-and-fire-tower-citing-safety/>

<http://www.timesunion.com/allwcm/article/Wakely-Mountain-Fire-Tower-under-threat-of-11138245.php>

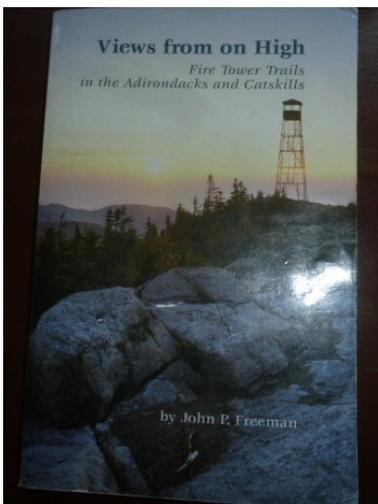
Drones: <http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2017/04/drone-regs-are-on-decs-radar/?platform=hootsuite>

Trivia question for April: What was “The Goose?” It was an amphibious airplane that the Conservation Department acquired in the 1940's. It was utilized for transporting manpower and equipment to fight fires and for other personnel to access backcountry areas. In this 1947 photo courtesy of Marty Podskoch, the Goose is delivering A. Smiley, owner of Minnewaska; F Jadwin, District Forester; E Gaiser and 2 young fire fighters to Lake Awosting to visit a fire that burned 9000 acres. Council Rakes and Indian Tanks in the photo were the tools to have on the ground for wildland firefighting. Andy Liddle is the winner of the FFLA sticker for sending in the correct answer last month.



Trivia Question for May: When was the Adirondack Fire Tower Challenge created? When was the Winter Adirondack Fire Tower Challenge created? To go along with this question, the Glens Falls Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club will be hosting my presentation on the Fire Tower Challenge From a Historical Perspective on Wednesday, May 17th at 7:00 pm at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls. Come join us!

Corrections: Photo Credits were missing from my April newsletter. Apologies to Randy Kneer who had taken the photo of the Hunter Mt Fire Tower and Cabin. The photo of the tower, privy, cabin and garage was from the NYSDEC archives. All other photos were from the State Chapter collection.



Book of the Month: “*Views From On High: Fire Tower Trails in the Adirondacks and Catskills*” by Jack Freeman was first published in 2001 and has become the “bible” for a lot of folks to refer to when visiting fire towers. The book was published by the Adirondack Mountain Club and they have been working tirelessly to print an updated version. It was hoped that it would be available by this month in time for the summer climbing season, hence the reason it made our book of the month. I am sorry to report that the reprint of this book is not quite ready yet, but hope it will be any day now. Nonetheless, it fit well into the start of another fire tower season and remains here as a reminder to look for the new version any day now.

Meanwhile, as discussed back in March, Marty Poskoch's new edition of “Adirondack Fire Towers: Southern Districts” is now available. There is a new restoration chapter, an index, and the book is in hardcover. If you order your book prior to May 19th, Marty is offering free shipping. The book is \$24.95 and you can let Marty know if you would like it autographed. Send your check or money order to Marty Podskoch, 43 O'Neill Lane, East Hampton, CT 06424. Please include local sales tax.

National Trails Day Events: Saturday, June 3rd – it is not too late, you can still host an event: <http://nationaltrailsday.americanhiking.org/>. If you or your group are the official adopters of your trail, this is a great way to showcase your work and have the public lend a hand too.

Catskill Fire Tower Project: All 5 fire towers open Memorial Day weekend for the season. They will be open from 10 am to 4 pm every weekend and holiday weather permitting. Tremper and Hunter fire towers both turn 100 years old and are planning some events. Keep checking for the dates and details.



Safety Kits are done! 2 safety kits have been put together to lend out to members who are working on a fire tower project. The kits contain 6 each of personal protective equipment such as: hard hats, work gloves, rubber gloves, eye protection, ear protection, masks, and garbage bags. If you would like to borrow one, please let me know. If you have suggestions for other items that we may be able to include, please let me know that too.

COMMENTS NEEDED

Please take time to read the draft amendment for the Blue Mountain Forest. To open the amendment, simply scroll down the page and click on the PDF. The proposed changes will affect the Blue Mountain Fire Tower in a good way and include a plan to "Restore the Blue Mountain fire tower to a condition approximate to its historic appearance, and in keeping with National Historic Lookout Register Guidelines." Comments must be received by June 16th. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/22609.html>.

SAVE THE DATES

Poke O Events: The weekend of July 28-30, 2017 will see the celebration of the Centennial of the restored Poke-O-Moonshine fire tower and the 20th Anniversary of The Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine. Friday, July 28 at 5 PM the juried Poke-O-Moonshine Art Exhibit will open at 1719 Block Gallery, Keeseville. * On Sunday, July 30th there will be a hike to Poke-O-Moonshine summit and fire tower. Meet at the summit at 1 PM to tour the tower, eat lunch, and enjoy singing by the Essex-based singers, The Wannabees. Between 3 and 4 PM, gather at the Campground at the base of Poke-O-Moonshine for cake and speeches by some who have been closely involved in the history and restoration of the fire tower at Poke-O and fire towers on other mountains. Cap off the events with a party at Ausable Brewing Company in Keeseville. * (see attached flyer for directions to submit art work)

Hadley Events: Save Saturday, July 15th for celebrating the Centennial of the Hadley Mountain Fire Tower. More details will be available soon on their web page, see below.

Fire Towers from a Historical Perspective, a slide show, will be presented at the Pine Hill Community Center on July 27th at 7:00 pm.

HELP WANTED

That wet, rainy spring weather is creating a lot of postponements. Check your calendars and see if you can help out on the new dates.

Mount Adams fire tower project coordinator Jack Coleman of the Adirondack High Peaks Foundation had planned on a trip to the tower on Saturday, May 13th to repair the safety wire. That has been postponed until a later date. I'll let you know as soon as I hear when this will occur.

Sterling Forest Fire Tower renovations were scheduled for the weekend of May 13th and 14th and have been rescheduled to July 8th and 9th.

Hurricane: The Friends of Hurricane Mountain are recruiting Volunteer Summit Stewards for weekends during the months of June and September and Memorial and Columbus Day weekends. Volunteers enjoy meeting and greeting fellow hikers while discussing the history of the fire tower and explaining points of interest. Hurricane mountain enjoys 360 degree views of the High Peaks, Lake Champlain, Vermont and Canada. Volunteers may enjoy hiking up any of the 3 distinct and diverse trails on the way to the summit. Volunteers are also needed for trail and tower maintenance. Training will be provided. If interested, contact Kathleen Blaisel at kblaisel987@gmail.com or call [518-946-2622](tel:518-946-2622).

Sterling Forest: Sterling Forest Fire Tower renovations were scheduled for the weekend of May 13th and 14th and have been rescheduled to July 8th and 9 due to rainy weather. If you would like to help out in July, please let me know. The tower is open to the 4th landing at this time.

Bald: They write, "FoBM committee is very much in need of more volunteers to help us on our spring and fall workdays. Several of our original members are not able to work anymore due to health issues. You don't need to live here in Old Forge to volunteer. A simple DEC form needs to be filled out to be covered by workman's comp. Send us a note and we'll provide the form and details and notify you of scheduled workdays. If necessary, we'll find you accommodations with a committee person here in Town and reimburse you for your travel expenses. We would love to find a volunteer willing to put up and maintain a Facebook page for us to network and share stories with other hikers".

Azure: Azure Mountain has a long history of educational programming, beginning in 2003. They are looking for individuals to volunteer for the 2017 summer season. The Friends promise that no two days will be alike. Deadline is May 15th. For more information check out their website: <http://azuremountain.org/volunteer.htm>.

Stillwater: We need volunteers to be Summit Stewards (SS) on holiday weekends and weekends thru the summer. We're asking people to be up at the tower from 10:00 to 2:00. We'll have a Summit Steward Manual to refer to that tells about the tower, history, and what you can see. (You will not be tested. This is a low key project). Photos too. We'll have a lock box to keep the manual for the next SS. We need coverage for 26 days, so let me know what Saturday or Sunday or holiday weekends you can volunteer. <http://www.friendsofstillwaterfiretower.com/>.

Jackie Jones: This tower is currently closed to the public due to its condition. A project to restore and repair the tower has been approved. A date has not yet been set for the work, but if you are interested in helping out, please let me know. We would be very grateful for your help and work with everyone interested to get a date set as soon as possible.

Pillsbury: We have someone who has stepped up to lead the project. Please let me know if you might be interested in helping. We are currently discussing this with the NYSDEC and hope to move forward.

Our Centennial Tower for May is Hadley.

The 40 foot Aeromotor LL-25 steel fire tower was erected on the summit in 1917. The tower blew over in 1919 during a Hurricane. It was re-erected in 1920 with guy wires attached to stabilize it. Check out the details regarding the LL-25's on our web page: <http://ffla.org/fire-lookout-types.html>. The last ladder into the cab in this model is of a sharper, steeper angle than the LS-40.



It is believed that in 1915, Observer William Madison dug the root cellar that can still be seen near the cabin. This allowed him a cold storage area for perishables like milk. Observer John Briner kept the idea of provisioning himself by keeping chickens at the summit. He also had a garden. Observer Peter Burnham had a garden with a wide variety of vegetables. They had to carry water to keep it moist and thriving. In 1950 Peter also used his horses in the off season to supply the summit with the materials for a new cabin. David Dietze, the last Observer to man the tower is said to have kept the tradition of a garden going. There were also blueberries and apple trees on the summit as well. In the photo, you can see a fence, perhaps the garden? Or was it for Peter's horses? Photo credits Albert Brooks and FFLA.



Hadley fire tower closed in 1990. By 1995, a group of concerned citizens was working tirelessly to restore the fire tower for all to enjoy the views. With assistance from the NYSDEC to fly in materials, the tower was restored. The cabin got a new roof in 2000. Through a partnership between the Hadley Fire Tower Committee and SUNY Potsdam, each year a summit steward greets visitors at the tower. This year Andre Turcotte, will act as steward from June 1st till September 4th. The Hadley Mountain Fire Tower Group also maintains the trail, does fund raising and has a great web site – check it out: <http://hadleymtfiretower.org/index.php>. We thank each and everyone of the group for all of the time and effort they have put into maintaining the historic fire tower, other buildings, summit area and trails!



Don't forget you can join on line on our web page. Membership benefits include a beautiful quarterly magazine packed full of information from New York and other locations, opportunities to attend conferences with like minded people and more. And all for just \$15.00! I am considering adding a "This month in history" section to the newsletter. Would you have something to contribute? Like us on Facebook – FFLA New York State Chapter.

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