

Forest Fire Lookout Association New York State Chapter October 2017 Newsletter

Wildfires in the State of California have claimed the lives of more than 40 people. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those families and with the persons on the line trying to fight these fires in crazy winds. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/science/2017/10/12/california-fires-map-how-deadly-wildfires-spreading/759038001/>. NYS is assisting and as of this writing working on the Nuns fire.

Our own New York State Forest Rangers were recently in Montana and Oregon helping to fight fires. Three Forest Rangers returned from assignments assisting with wildland fire suppression in western states over the last two weeks. Forest Ranger Robbi Mecus, from Essex County, was a Resource Unit Leader trainee promoted to Plans Section Chief trainee for the North Pelican Fire in the Freemont/Winema National Forest in Oregon. Forest Ranger Michael Thompson from Fulton County served as the Crew Boss, and Forest Ranger Evan Donegan from Warren County was a Squad Boss for a 20-person inter-agency crew from several northeastern states assigned to the Moose Peak Fire in Montana.

In 1970, aerial detection got off to a difficult beginning with a fatal accident on one of the first detection flights of the fall fire season in western New York. Just after take-off, the plane piloted by Jack Marvin crashed in the village of Hammondsport seriously injuring himself and District Ranger Bob Roche. The only immediate fatality was Forest Ranger Murray of Addison, New York. Several days later, pilot Marvin succumbed to his injuries. Forest Ranger Raymond Murray's name was added to the NYS Fallen Firefighters Memorial at a ceremony on Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at the Empire State Plaza in Albany. The ceremony honored 117 other firefighters who gave their lives in the line of duty. Members of Ranger Murray's family were in attendance and a contingent of Forest Rangers. You can read more about the memorial and the ceremony by going to the site at: <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/ofpc/memorial/>. If you click on the 2017 link you will find the flag presentation to Ranger Murray's family just after the 44 minute mark. I do encourage all of you to listen to the video as it was a solemn and beautiful ceremony.

Drone Use: From a DEC press release dated 9-25-17: "DEC has a wide range of responsibilities in protecting the state's environment and ensuring the safety of our citizens and visitors, and well-being of our communities," Commissioner Seggos said. "The use of drone technology will help us do our jobs better and faster while saving taxpayer dollars. We live in a changing world with technological advances being made at an exponential rate, and UAVs give us a safe and efficient way to collect and analyze data, assess threats to the environment, and quickly respond to emergencies. This technology is helping DEC with everything from petroleum spills and wildlife surveys to search and rescue missions, forest fires, and natural disasters." DEC has jurisdiction over the public's launching, landing, and operation of drones on DEC land. If you launch or land from private property and operate over DEC lands, the FAA has jurisdiction. DEC is in the early stages of determining what kind of public drone use will or will not be allowed on most state land. The allowable uses and the regulatory mechanism for such use will depend on the land designation. **Drone use will not be allowed on lands classified as wilderness in the Adirondack and Catskill parks and areas classified as primitive and canoe in the Adirondack Park..** DEC's proposed policies and regulations will be subject to a robust public comment period in the coming months.

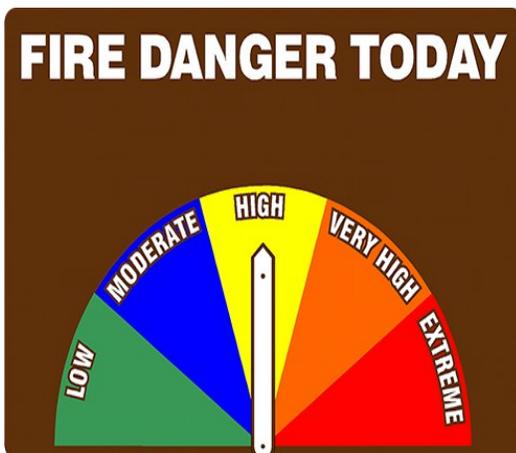


Book of the Month: Lookout Cookbook – Have you looked at the book selection on the FFLA web page? <http://ffla.org/lookout-store---books.html> As you consider gifts for the upcoming holiday season, this unique cookbook can become a special gift for the chef in the household. In addition to some unusual recipes, I am thinking some of you may have some special memories of cooking on the mountaintop. My Dad's most often used item in the kitchen of the fire tower cabin was evaporated milk. Keeping milk cold was difficult so evaporated milk became his milk of choice and he used it at home as well. Speaking of keeping food cold, does anyone have some memories to share? I know many cabins had a “trap door” in the kitchen floor where a small metal box was buried and in there items like butter and milk could be kept cold. I've a photo of a unique 'refrigerator' near the Balsam Lake summit, supposedly made by Mike Todd.

Trivia Question for September: How many fire towers had two-holers? I got a little grief for the phrasing of my question which should have more accurately read something like 'How many outhouses near fire towers were two-holers'. I did not get a correct answer, though some tried. I believe the answer is 2, Chapin Hill and Red Hill. If anyone has an answer to the contrary, please let me know.



** A little follow up from this trivia question which I first thought of while reviewing Marty Podskoch's book on Chapin Hill where he notes the recollection of Observer Marge O'Neill that there was a two seater at Chapin Hill that she tried not to use often due to rattlesnakes in the area. It turns out that Marge and her husband, Retired Forest Ranger Charlie O'Neill will be getting a copy of this newsletter. Their friend Betty reached out to me regarding the slide show in Livingston Manor and now they are all getting a chance to keep up on NYS News. Hi to Charlie and Madge! And coincidentally if you have a copy of your Summer 2007 Lookout Network available, there is a discussion on page 6 about this very same issue. Red Hill's is still standing, although now one side is being repurposed as a storage shed.



Trivia Question for October: How many towers had and ran a USFS Fire Danger Station like this? Thanks to Steve for the question. An FFLA sticker to anyone with the correct answer.

Follow Up

Thanks to **Morgan Outdoors** for hosting us for the September 15th slide show. We had a great turn out and heard from young persons who came from an hour away and we found Charlie and Madge! Thanks Lisa!



The **Mount Tremper Centennial Event** was held on September 23rd. A plaque was placed in the tower to honor the Observers who stood watch in this 100 year old tower. Many thanks to Mark Atchinson, Mount Tremper Coordinator for organizing this event.

Our **FFLA Picnic** on September 23rd was poorly attended, but fun for those of us who did go. We had perfect weather, good food, and a nice hike to Dickinson Hill Fire Tower too.

A bit more follow up on the **Hunter Fire Tower centennial celebration**; an article in the October 2017 issue of the Conservationist contained a snippet, but a very personal article in the Times Union is really worth taking time to read: <http://www.timesunion.com/sports/article/Outdoors-An-honor-for-a-job-that-helped-shape-a-12256912.php>

Here is another unique fire tower from Dave Vana: <https://www.abqjournal.com/1073451/nuclear-museum-unveiling-gadget-and-trinity-tower.html>

Planning on visiting the western United States? Check out this **great place to stay**: <https://www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2017/9/11/washington-s-heybrook-lookout-tower-just-reopened-and-we-re-in-love>

Hunting Season Closures Reminders: **Stillwater** Fire Tower is closed from October 10th through December 20th. **Spruce Mountain** Fire Tower closure per the NYSDEC web site as of 10-4-17: The upper section of the Spruce Mountain Trail will be closed for big game hunting season beginning October 21st through December 3rd. The fire tower will not be accessible during this time.

Journey to the Fire Tower Trail: On Saturday, September 30th we had the pleasure of attending the ribbon cutting for the Journey to the Fire Tower Trail at Grafton Lakes State Park. The trail takes you to the Dickinson Hill Fire Tower. The 10 interpretive panels that were installed by the Friends of Grafton Lake State Park occurred because of the countless hours they spent in applying for a Park and Trail Partnership grant, and then once awarded the grant, all of the effort in making it happen. That effort included designing the interpretive panels as well as actually installing them. The support of the Grafton Lakes State Park was essential. The FFLA was pleased to provide several photos for the interpretive panels. Despite the rainy weather there was a great turn out, delicious and warm refreshments and a lovely hike to the fire tower with its new coat of paint. Thank you Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park, particularly to Dick Gibbs, Chris Roe, and Dorothy Surprise! Well done!



Grant opportunity available: NYS Parks and Trails Partnership program is offering matching grant funds for certain circumstances. Does it work for your fire tower group? To be eligible for the matching grant funds, you must be a 501c(3) and you must have a VSA with the DEC. Note a December 8th deadline to apply and carefully read all of the details. If I can help you look through the information, please let me know. All details are here: <https://www.ptny.org/our-work/support/park-trail-partnership-program>

Our Centennial tower of the month is Belfry. Beginning in 1912 an Observer was able to keep an eye out for smokes without a tower. A telephone line was strung to the summit for communications that year. In 1916 a cabin was built to protect the Observer on the summit. In 1917 the current 47 foot Aeromotor LS-40 was placed on the summit. Situated on the western edge of Lake Champlain with wonderful views into the high peaks and around the surrounding hillsides once used for mining. The site of our pigeon release in September of 2016 makes it historic in that matter as well as at least 2 pigeons made it all the way back to Utah. This tower was closed in 1988 and now serves a couple of special purposes. One of those purposes is emergency communication for State Police, Essex County and Forest Rangers. The other is that this tower does remain open to the public and with its relatively easy access, is often a fire tower hiker's first tower. Be it a child or an adult, the sense of accomplishment one gets and the view is a great reward and a great way to promote fire towers. So thank you Belfry for all of the promotion that you continue to do after 100 years!



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