

**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
January 2018**

Happy New Year to everyone! I look forward to 2018 being a great year with many accomplishments across our great State. If you recall, we ended 2017 with another fire tower being erected at Grafton Lakes State Park. 2018 also began on a positive note when we got the temperatures above zero and were able to take a hike to Blue Mountain Fire Tower. Many of you may remember last spring when there was an amendment to the UMP for that area that included returning the fire tower to its historic appearance. As you can see in the photo below, the NYSDEC did accomplish that in the fall. It was great to visit on that cold day and not see anything attached to or under the fire tower any longer.

It is unfortunate that the bitter cold weather on January 1st caused postponement of several First Day hikes. I hope you will not be discouraged by this, but will mark your calendars and plan on participating in this event on First Day 2019.



Speaking of participation with NY Parks or NYSDEC, please be sure to connect with your liaison or representative to plan ahead for projects for this summer. In some cases, staffing changes have occurred. Winter is a great time to connect with whomever your rep is or to become acquainted with a newly assigned person and get everyone on the same page with what is happening at the fire towers.

Planning a get together in the middle of winter to increase interest in your fire tower group? It is always nice for people to get out and it is always good to combine food with a gathering too. How about a chili cook off, soup and ski (or snowshoe) party, or a grilled cheese fest? Everyone who comes has to bring a sample of the theme related item and they must name their food after something fire tower related. An example or two might be a Smokey Grilled Cheese, a Landing Lentil Soup, or a Western Trail Chili. Or by popular vote, the winner of the contest will get a patch? Would you like to have a slide show be part of the festivities? Just let me know. Get creative, have some fun, raise some money, recruit volunteers and increase interest in your fire tower. Invite the press!

Speaking of get togethers, here are a couple that you should mark on your calendar: Azure Mountain Friends has a Centennial Celebration planned for 7-29-18. Mark that date on your calendars!

Cornell Hill Fire Tower in partnership with the Town of Wilton Bicentennial Celebration, will have the tower open the weekend of 4-22-18. There will be an open house at Camp Saratoga the tower will be open 10-3, Stewart's shop owner Bill Dake is doing a Karner Butterfly Blueberry Ice Cream flavor for the event. It is also planned for earth day.

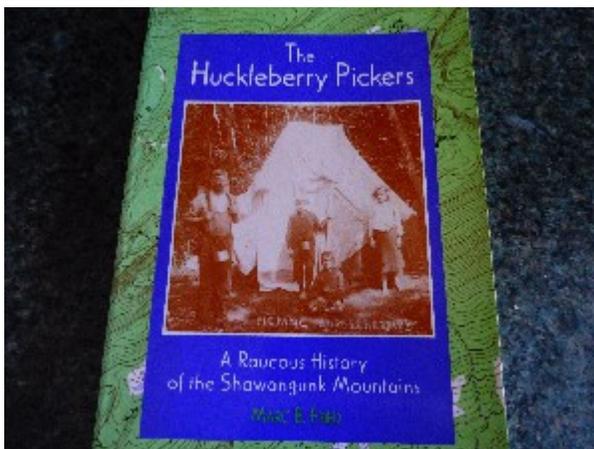
Centennial Towers for 2018 will be written about in our February newsletter.

Lost Lookouts: This is going to be a new section that we will do quarterly in the newsletter.

High Point fire tower once stood on the Shawangunk Ridge. The topography and weather, along with local uses, such as berry picking often created fires. There continues to be an impact in that area with three major fires along the Ridge in the last 10 years. The most recent one occurred in the Spring of 2015, burning over 2000 acres and leaving the trails closed until late last summer. Thus, we found ourselves exploring the burn area and the fire tower site this fall. The first tower at the site was erected in 1912 and was made of trees. In 1919, the steel fire tower was placed there. It was decommissioned in 1971 and removed in 1988. On our trip, we easily found the footings and some old telephone poles too. If the tower had been standing during the recent fire, you would have had a bird's eye view as the fire burned to within a very short distance. We will have more information on the burn area in next month's newsletter. <http://wamc.org/post/sams-point-fire-fully-contained> Do you know there is a website dedicated to Lost Lookouts? Some recent changes have occurred to the mapping on the site, making it much more accurate and useful. <http://www.firetower.org/lookouts/us/ny/>



2 photos on the left taken by Bob Eckler, 1974. Right, L. Rankin 2017



Book of the Month: To go along with the High Point Fire Tower, our book of the month is *The Huckleberry Pickers* by Marc B. Fried XXX Photos/FFLA Newsletters. This book is a well written history of the families who once lived near the High Point fire tower. The Park has left some of the shacks and has some kiosks along the trail to help tell this important historical story.

If you are interested in some other possibly related ADK history there was a recent article featuring several options to consider: <http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/weekender-a-e/2018/01/warming-up-with-adirondack-history-lectures/>

A great write up of accomplishments was sent to me by Peter Slocum, the Chair of the Friends of Hurricane group. Enjoy reading all about their accomplishments and plans. Thank you to Peter and all of his group for their efforts to date and the efforts that are planned going forward! Well done!

If you would like to have information about your group included here, please let me know. I will be happy to accommodate and pass the information along as space allows. Here is his article:

“Hurricane Mountain's fire tower continued to benefit in 2017 from a strong partnership between dedicated community volunteers and the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

In addition, the tower restoration project attracted generous financial support from the 46er Trust and daughters of the Longware family, who organized the "Save the Tower" Campaign back in the early 2000's.

The result was a highly successful year that sets the stage for more progress in 2018 and beyond.

Most significant, the tower was staffed again for the first time in nearly 40 years, since the state officially closed the station in 1979. (The tower was re-opened to hikers in late 2015, after safety repairs.) This time, the staffer was a paid summit steward, outdoor education specialist Jonathan Trzepkowski. His job was not to spot fires, but to educate hikers on how to protect the Adirondack Wilderness from being 'loved to death.'

He saw and spoke to more than 2,000 people up at 3,674 feet. Many hikers were ill-prepared, with no map or any real idea of where they were in the Wilderness. Most visitors found their way via social media. But most were also very receptive to the Leave No Trace message that is the basis of efforts by the Friends of Hurricane Mountain, the State of New York, the 46ers, the Adirondack Mountain Club and other groups struggling with the exploding number of hikers.

A dozen volunteers organized by Kathleen Blaisel of the Friends spoke to hundreds more hikers on another 17 days when Jonathan could not be there. Volunteers with the Friends also coated the entire tower with bright silver protective paint. This was particularly challenging for Tom DuBois and Jon Trzepkowski, who braved a high wind to dangle from the 35-foot structure in rock climber's harness. Other volunteers participated in National Trails Day work projects, and cleared brush and blow down from the three trails leading to the summit.

State and local government cooperation was key. Keene Town Supervisor Joe Pete Wilson agreed to hire the Friends summit steward. The Town was reimbursed by the state DEC, with a little supplement from the Friends. DEC also paid for the painting project carried out by volunteers, and loaned the steward a radio for emergencies. Fortunately, it was not needed.

A new roof is the top priority for the coming year, as one-quarter of the old one is gone, and more sheets of metal are threatening to blow away daily in Hurricane's high winds. That will be another cooperative project, with Friends volunteers working to assemble the roof that is paid for by the state DEC.

The \$2,500 contribution from the Longware sisters, and another \$2,500 from the Adirondack 46er Conservation Trust, will help fund new interpretive signs in the tower cab, including panoramic photos of surrounding mountains. A map table replica is also planned, to sit atop the radio repeater being installed in the cab to help DEC Rangers with emergency communications in the Eastern High Peaks. New trailhead signs are coming, too, and a marker identifying the site of the observer cabin, which was removed in the 1980's.”



***The first photo is DEC Wilderness Land Manager Tate Connor surrounded by Friends of Hurricane Volunteers as material is airlifted in prep for the restoration from 2015, taken by Mary Jean Bland; 2nd photo is of Summit Steward Jonathan Trzepkowski painting and the third is of Volunteer Tom Dubois. Both photos taken by Peter Slocum

Are you an FFLA member? It is easy to join: [Click here](#). At our recent annual meeting it was great to hear from other chapters across the country who are engaged in the same type of good work as yourselves. Much was accomplished in the last year by our members and our leadership. Chairman Keith Argow; Secretary Ray Grimes; Treasurer, Membership Chair, and Magazine Editor Gary Weber and other committee chairs and deputy chairs all volunteer their time to keep this organization running smoothly and moving forward. A big thanks to all of them for their hours and hours of service!

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