



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

What a whirlwind of activity NYS has been this past month. We are a big state geographically and we are a big state meteorologically. The northern parts of the state remain unseasonably dry and the southern parts of the state are experiencing flooding with torrential rainfall.

From the NYS Ranger Report of July 17th: Wildland Fire in Madison County; At approximately 3:30 p.m. on July 13, Forest Rangers were requested to respond to a wildland fire off Johnnycake Hill Road. A 70-year-old landowner had attempted to conduct some residential burning on his property following a logging clear-cut operation this past winter. Wind conditions caused the flames to escape, resulting in a 10-acre fire. It took two Rangers, 120 local fire personnel, and two bulldozers two hours to contain the fire. The high temperatures made efforts to contain the fire especially difficult. 9 volunteer fire departments from Madison County responded. The Madison County Sheriff's Department and highway department staff also assisted in suppression efforts

The NYS Ranger Report of August 14th notes the following Wildland Fire Activity: While many areas of New York State have received rain over the last couple weeks, areas along Western New York and the north portions of New York State remain unusually dry. Forest Rangers aggressively responded to six wildland fires this past week and contained all of them to under a half acre in size. Unextinguished and abandoned campfires resulted in four of the fires - one on Long Island on Blue Mountain Lake; one on private property in St. Lawrence County; a third on an island on Lake Colby in Essex County; and a fourth one on an island on Flood Pond in the St. Regis area of Franklin County. An off-road utility vehicle rolled over on the John White Wildlife Management Area in Genesee County that resulted in a small grass fire. Lightning that moved through the Adirondacks last week ignited a small fire on conservation easement land in Essex County, which was eventually extinguished.

Altona Fire follow up, one of the largest in the upstate area in several years:

https://www.dvidshub.net/news/284379/ny-army-guard-aircrews-assist-forest-fire-fighting-mission#.W0z9LEo_fPI.facebook and a great video by the local PBS affiliate:

<https://www.facebook.com/mlpbs/videos/10156504171616774/UzpfSTE3MzY3OTgxODY1NjQyNzI6MjEyOTU1NTE0Mzk1NTIzOQ/>

Western Wildfires: Thoughts and prayers to the families, friends, and firefighters who continue to work this beast.

<https://www.firehouse.com/lodds/news/21017836/utah-ut-firefighter-killed-mendocino-complex-fire-clear-lake-ca>

Trivia: From Steve Canfield comes this month's trivia question: All the observers were required to supply communications between D.E.C. Aircraft and ground fire crews when there were forest fires and the planes were dropping fire retardant, (to make sure the drop area was clear). What was the call sign of the DEC aircraft? And who was the lead pilot? Stickers for the winner(s)!!! Thanks Steve!

Follow Ups

A whirlwind of fire tower events and celebrations around the state

Fire Tower Fever: This book signing event took place at the Adirondack Experience. The ADK had special guests from the following volunteer groups; Hurricane, Poke O Moonshine, Stillwater, Azure, Balsam Lake, Lyon, and St. Regis. Each spoke briefly about their restoration projects. They had copies of the book, *Views from On High* available for sale, and 2 of the authors were present to sign books. <http://www.saratogian.com/article/ST/20180711/NEWS/180719945#.W0ja-F5YfPo.email>

Azure Mt. Centennial Celebrations: With beautiful blue skies on Saturday, July 28, several hikers climbed to the restored fire tower. Many others gathered afterward at the Senior Center in St. Regis Falls. The comments in this article speak eloquently of the people who have been involved for many years at Azure Mountain Friends. <http://www.mymalonetelegram.com/mtg01/azure-mountain-fire-tower-celebrated-20180730>



Thompson Park Zoo Slide Show and Activities: While our slide show was lightly attended, we had a great opportunity to provide the children with some fire suppression activities out at the restored fire tower. We also liberally distributed Smokey swag to the young visitors at the zoo. Thanks for hosting us.



Arab Centennial Celebration: There was lots of activity in the parking lot, on the trails, and at the summit of Mount Arab on Saturday the 11th of August. Displays of old maps, plans for the future, and items for sale to help pay for the future were available.

<http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2018/08/hikers-salute-mount-arab-fire-towers-centennial/>

St. Regis Centennial Celebration: In December of 2017, Nancy LaBombard generously offered her time to help the St. Regis group with their centennial celebration. She certainly did a wonderful job! This event took place on August 5th at the beautiful Lake Clear Lodge where you can also see the Fire Tower Lighting on September 1st. Thank you for inviting me to speak and thank you for all of your restoration efforts through the years!

<http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/outdoors/2018/08/st-regis-tower-gets-100th-birthday-party/>



Swede Centennial Celebration: The Town of Horicon Historical Society invited myself, Author Marty Podskoch, and NYS Forest Ranger Scott van Laer to speak at the Centennial Celebration for Swede Mountain Fire Tower held on Tuesday, August 7th. A large turnout was generally in support of trying to move a restoration project forward for this historic fire tower.



Movie of the month: Thanks to our friends and neighbors from Massachusetts, this historic 1941 video was made available. Ahrens Fox & Chilson Video - *Fire In The Woods* is an excellent use of a half hour of your time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvAathuWS08&feature=youtu.be>

Updates

Team Rubicon: These good folks wrote a nice article about their work on 2 of our NY fire towers and their enthusiasm for the next project too! Thank you TR! <https://teamrubiconusa.org/blog/tr-restores-public-assets-one-fire-tower-at-a-time>

Mt Beacon: Volunteers worked on the fire tower on July 14th, removing chicken wire and graffiti.



Hurricane: The fire tower was added to yet another challenge, the Lake Placid 9er. Perhaps the new challenge folks will be willing to lend a hand with some work at the tower? <https://lakeplacid9er.com/>

Another new fire tower? Well, not exactly. When this article was first brought to my attention I was hopeful, but we stopped by a few days later for a first hand look. The playground apparatus does have a silver roof like a fire tower, but after that you need to use your imagination. Thankfully, the zipline is not attached! https://poststar.com/news/local/adirondack-inspired-welcome-center-work-begins-at-northway-rest-area/article_dee40b8c-1791-5077-950c-7e0af2376fc2.html#anchor_item_4



Vandalism: Grrrrr! Why must people engage in destructive behavior. The hours and hours of volunteer effort that go into restoring and maintaining the historic fire towers and other related structures is huge. Yet, in a moment, people seem hell bent on destroying things. Berry Hill and Poke O Moonshine both experienced vandalism this month. I hope the DEC can find the vandals and prosecute them!

Azure: The group announced the following; “Our 100th birthday present to the fire tower! Hurrah! The security fencing on the fire tower has been replaced. Great job by Dave Vana, Fire Tower Restoration expert. It took 2 men 13 hours. We thank you! And we have to thank Chad Rivers, [Town of Waverly](#) Supervisor. He and his student employees carried all the materials to the summit!”

St. Regis: The group announced the following; “Good news for the continuing restoration of the tower to ensure it will be around for the next 100 years. Fabrication of the steel for the 24 cross braces has been completed by Pat Lawrence of Pat’s Welding in Keeseville, NY. The pieces are being delivered to the supplier who will ship them out for galvanization. After that they will be delivered to the DEC maintenance facility where they will be prepared for the flight to the summit. When the preparation is complete, the DEC will finalize the request with the NYS Police Aviation Unit for the scheduled flight. Once the braces are on top of the mountain, the installation will begin!!! We’ll keep you posted on the progress by Facebook, website and newsletter. A Cloudsplitter Grant, DEC funding, some generous anonymous donations and hundreds of smaller donations are enabling us to move forward with this project, but we still have many more goals to accomplish.”

Are you going to the National FFLA Conference? September 14-15-16 will be the Western Conference. <http://ffla.org/conferences--events.html> Please consider this excellent opportunity to get together with others of like interest and to see fire towers in other parts of the country. Save the dates of June 8 and 9 of 2019 for the next northeastern conference of the FFLA, hosted by us! Would you like to be part of the festivities? Would you like to help with the planning? Please let me know.

Transitions: One of the things that really struck me as I attended the numerous events around the state that celebrated the Centennials of several fire towers was the truly astonishing number of volunteer hours that have gone into saving our historic fire towers. The continuity of that enthusiasm is vital to the future of so many local friends groups and the FFLA as a whole. Many people are passionate about

fire towers, but often think they do not have carpentry skills so how could they possibly help? I guarantee you, you can help in some way. To continue the work of these volunteer groups, they need energy from all walks of life; people who are organizers, good with numbers, make great press connections, are historians, historic researchers, graphic designers, web designers, grant writers, educators, love greeting the public, sales people, simply attending meetings to provide some feedback, have a knowledge of local resources.....and yes, carpenters too! Please consider joining one of the many Friends groups around the state and helping out with new energy, enthusiasm and ideas!

Lighting of the Fire Towers: Many groups rose to the challenge and are going to participate in the Lighting of the Fire Tower Event on Saturday, September 1st from 9-9:30pm. As I write this, we have 12 groups participating. To get an idea of where people can see the fire towers from, Tom put together information from Hey What's That here: <http://www.viewsandbrews.com/balsamlake/>. Just click on your tower for more information. Harry from Stillwater shared the light that he uses with me, the Caterpillar Rechargeable Work Light, a compact and bright light that is easy to carry, safe and then you will have it for other projects too. Thanks for the info Harry. Thanks for all of the links Tom. Thanks to all for participating! If I missed your name as participating, please let me know. Photo courtesy of Warren Johnsen.



Calendar

Wednesday, August 22nd: For those looking to learn all the reasons fire towers are amazing, The Adirondack History Museum will present its Adirondack Fire Towers and Land Stewardship Program Field Day Wednesday, Aug. 22 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. The free program for families explores the history and ongoing role of fire towers in regional land stewardship. The program is led by David Thomas-Train, a local fire tower expert and educator. RSVPs ARE REQUIRED.

Thursday, August 30th: “As Far as the Eye Can See A Centennial Celebration” You are cordially invited to stop in at the Goodsell Museum in Old Forge as they commemorate 100 years of steel fire towers in the Town of Webb from 5pm – 7pm. Learn the history of the six towers that were located in the Town of Webb in their exhibit "As Far as the Eye Can See"! <http://www.webbhistory.org/>

Saturday, September 29th: At 11:00AM there will be a hike to the Sterling Forest Fire Tower as part of the Hudson Valley River Ramble. The Fire Tower Ramble is a moderate 4 mile loop highlighted by scenic views of Sterling Forest. Hikers are able to observe the surrounding Hudson Highlands from a 60 foot fire tower built in 1922. <http://www.hudsonrivervalleyramble.com>

Saturday, October 21st: The 26th annual Ridge Walk and Run will be taking place. Several of the routes pass by the Alma fire tower and Observer's cabins which are on private property. This may be your only chance to get a photo! Register at <http://www.ridgewalk.com>.

Sunday, November 11th: Ravens Rock Run: <http://ravenrocksrn.org/>.

Laurie Rankin, Director NYS Chapter Forest Fire Lookout Association; www.ffla.org